

How to Pray a Good Prayer

Ali Reza Panahian

Why have we made it so difficult for ourselves to pray a good prayer?

What is a simple way to pray a good prayer?

What are our misconceptions about prayer?

How can we convince ourselves to pray?

Why doesn't prayer affect us very much?

What is the most essential and important attribute of a good prayer?

How can we enjoy prayer?

What is the important problem with our prayers?

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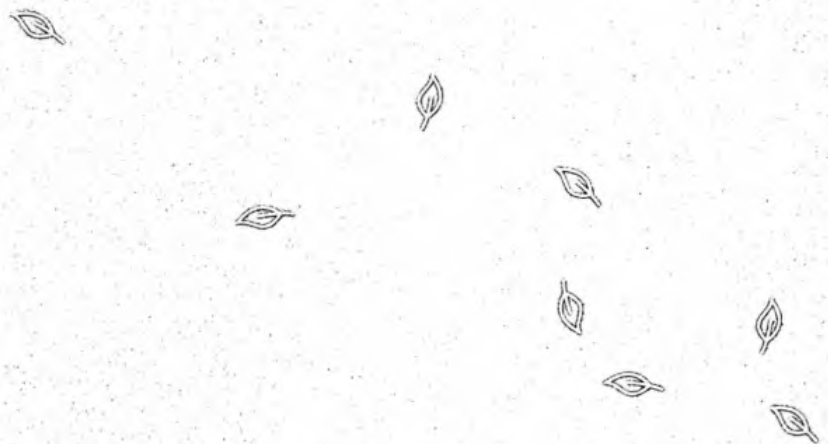
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How to Pray a Good Prayer

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Many benefits from praying have been mentioned in the traditions. If you ask mystics or scholars about how to reach heights in spiritual matters, they will emphasize "prayer." If prayer is truly this important and effective, why doesn't it affect us?! After praying all of these prayers, why haven't we become mystics? If "prayer is the ascension of the believer" and it is enjoyable, why don't we ever enjoy praying?! And actually, prayer has become a repetitive and tedious task for us! What's wrong with our prayers?! What can we do for our prayers to help us to grow and have an effect on us?

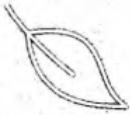


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HOW TO
PRAY
a Good
Prayer

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A Note from the Publisher

The current book is a compilation from a series of Mr. Panahian's speeches under the topic "How to pray a good prayer." These speeches were given in the holy shrine of Imam Riḍā (as). Their audio files were widely welcomed by various parts of society, especially schoolchildren, university students, educational centres, and the Department of Education. Numerous requests were received for the publication of these speeches in the form of a book. The book, which is now before you, has been composed and edited based on this series of speeches in order to bring these speeches into the form of a book. This work was carried out by the Bayan Manavi Institute, the Official Office for the Compilation and Publication of the Works of Ali Reza Panahian. In preparing this work, effort has been made to maintain the order, structure, and highlights of the discussion. At the same time, the book has been composed in a fluent and flowing style as much as was possible.







Chapter 1
**The Role
of Prayer in Life**

The Relationship between 'Worshipping'
and 'Buoyancy and Vitality of Spirit'

'Prayer,' the Acts of All Worship Acts

'Prayer,' the Mentor to Take a Person
to God

Some of the Effects of a Good Prayer





THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “WORSHIPING” AND “BUOYANCY AND VITALITY OF SPIRIT”

A person should have a happy life, and he should always be buoyant and energetic. We human beings should not be despondent or dispirited in our lives at all. A person can only see well when he is energetic and full of joy. A person's mind works well and is creative when he is buoyant. A person's heart works well only when he feels fortunate. In addition, when a person's heart works well, he will love others and be kind to everyone.

When a person has a sweet life, he will become dear to the Almighty God too. “Worshipping God thankfully” is the most beautiful kind of worshipping. But, this kind of worshipping is for the fortunate people who are filled

with vivacity and blessings. They prostrate due to their happiness, and their prostrations are long. This is due to the fact that they are very much drowned in the enjoyments of the world, and they want to thank God very much.

What should we do so that our life will become sweet and we will be able to live with sweetness and consequently serve God with sweetness? What should we do not to be so thirsty for enjoyments that we pursue any enjoyment from any sin that we see, or imagine that we see?

The answer is clear. If we nourish our spirit by worshiping God and remembering Him,¹ our life will be full of vitality, happiness and energy. It will become sweet with even minimal blessings and gifts. The main need of us human beings is for God Himself. Our main need is not for the blessings that we want to get from God.² We need God Himself, and we should get energy and life from Him directly. Otherwise, the battery of our spirit will become weak, and we will die little by little. I mean, we become dejected.

The way that we get energy directly from God, is through "worshiping." Worshiping is the connection of our soul to the source of power and life.³ It regulates the life force of our spirit and nerves. Worshiping even has a good effect on our body. By worshiping, the cells of our body become kinder to us. This is because all these cells love God and praise Him.⁴ Worshiping is the way to charge the soul to gain more power and vitality. Naturally with worshiping, life and servitude will become sweeter.

After worshipping well, a person will live more buoyantly like a child who has gained enough calmness from his mother's embrace and is ready to experience life better.

However, if our worshipping is not done in the correct way, no matter how much enjoyment is present in our life and the tools for gaining benefits are ready for us, we will still feel frustrated and broody.⁵ This is because we are not as energetic and balanced as we should be. No enjoyment can satisfy and enliven us as it should.

It is possible that we need to bring reasons for some people about why worshipping brings energy and life for the soul of a person. They ask what the reason for this apparent buoyancy that we see in Godless people is. However, this is not the time or place to explain more about this here, because our main topic is "How to worship well," and we must pass through these introductions briefly.

Anyway, that which causes a person to be able to enjoy the minimum blessings of the world and not to feel that he needs to sin, is worshipping. Worshipping in the special sense of the word means that you stop doing everything that you are doing, stand in front of God in the way that He says, and think about Him. You must keep remembering Him, and all of your movements should be in accordance to His orders. Worshipping in the special sense of the word means the ritual prayer (Ṣalāt).

Don't say, "We don't need to be buoyant and energetic!" You will receive formidable answers! Yes, the group of people, who don't need to be buoyant and who have more important needs, are the thieves. Their only

need is for policemen not to arrest them. They don't think about anything else.

Another group who feel no need to be buoyant and energetic are the drug addicts who are poor. They only think about the money for their drugs, which if they don't have, they will die from intense pain. Therefore, all of their happiness is in escaping from the deadly pain of being addicted. They don't think about the enjoyments that they are no longer able to use. Some depressed people are more comfortable to be drowned in their sorrows, and perhaps they even enjoy their illness. They are satisfied with judging about themselves and thinking that they are miserable people who will never see happiness again.

But, whoever is faithful and a believer should know that Imam Bāqir (as) said, "Whoever is lethargic in the affairs of his life, will be even more lethargic in the affairs of his spiritual life and the Hereafter."⁶ Such a person won't enjoy his worshipping either.

O God, relieve our sorrow and depression and grant us everlasting happiness, and genuine and lasting buoyancy! Show us the way to achieve spiritual power and energy, and remove lethargy and dejection! Make us the source of deep and real happiness for others! Grant us the grace of worshipping thankfully because of a life full of happiness!

I wanted to give an introduction about vitality and happiness in order to enter the topic of prayer, because the Holy Prophet (s) said, "The light of my eye is prayer."⁷ This means that whenever I stand for prayer, I become wholeheartedly happy. It means that prayer is my love.

It makes my spirit happy.⁸ Of course, you can reach this understanding from other standpoints besides feeling the necessity for vitality and being happy in life.

Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "What prevents you that when one of you is stricken by a grief among the griefs of this world, from making the minor ablution, going to his praying niche, praying a two cycle prayer, and supplicating God in it? Haven't you heard that God says, 'Seek assistance through patience and prayer?'"⁹

■ "PRAYER," THE AXIS OF ALL WORSHIP ACTS

If we first talk about the importance of worshipping, then talk about prayer as the most important worship act, we have travelled an extra distance. All of us know that prayer is the axis of all worship acts and obedience to God to the extent that it has been said, "If the prayers of a servant are accepted, his other deeds will be accepted too. And if his prayers aren't accepted, his other deeds won't be accepted either."¹⁰ Therefore, we will start with the importance of prayer itself, and the importance of worshipping will become clarified too.

Worshipping in the general sense includes all of our acts of obedience. But, worshipping in the special sense, precisely means reciting God's Names and according to the specific rituals that the Lord of the universe has ordained. Naturally, the first example of worshipping according to its special meaning is "the ritual prayer."

Indeed, prayer is the pinnacle of all worship acts.¹¹ God has determined this Himself.

Many traditions have been narrated about the importance of Prayer. For example, the Holy Prophet of Islam (s) said, "Prayer is the pillar of your religion."¹² It is very good if we have a two cycle prayer, which has been accepted. As Imam Şādiq (as) said, "Your God is very kind that He appreciates even a small act. For example, His servant prays a two cycle prayer with sincerity and for God's satisfaction, and God enters him into Heaven because of this deed."¹³ In another tradition it has been said, "From whoever God accepts one of his prayers, God won't punish him."¹⁴

In addition, we have many traditions which reproach someone abandoning prayer. For example, the Holy Prophet (s) said, "Whoever abandons prayer without a reason will be separated from the shelter of God and His Prophet (s)."¹⁵ The Commander of the Faithful, Imam `Alī (as), said, "O God, curse the person who has abandoned the ritual prayer on purpose."¹⁶ It has also been narrated from the Prophet (s), "Say Salam (hello and peace) to the Jewish and the Christian people. But don't say Salam to the people of my nation who don't pray."¹⁷

This much anger being shown from the side of God, the Prophet of God (s), and the Household of the Prophet (as) toward a person who doesn't pray, truly means that the blessings of prayer are more than can be counted. And yet, we benefit from prayer very little.

If a command wasn't that valuable, the Great God wouldn't have insisted on it this much. So, it is necessary

for us to pay special attention to prayer and discuss this very repetitive subject, which at the same time is very unknown. My intention is not to give advice either. There are a few secrets about praying, which are rarely talked about. We want to talk about these and see how easily we can reach to high spiritual levels. Unfortunately, we have deprived ourselves from benefiting from such an effectual worship act.

A way to encourage people, who do not pray, to pray

Basically, the most important factor which shows the rightfulness of a believer is for others to see how much he has benefited from his faithfulness to enhance his sense of happiness. How much has his religion and faith been able to keep him happy and buoyant? Being buoyant and having vitality are the most important factors to attract others to your belief. Otherwise, people will say, "Your religion's claim to provide for all aspects of a human being's well-being is a lie." That is why people don't tend toward your religion, and in a way, they are right.

I am talking to people who pray here. If they pray well, people who don't pray will love to pray. We say that it's the fault of people who pray that some people don't pray. This is because if the people who pray, pray beautifully, enjoy their praying and benefit from it, naturally most of those who don't pray will tend toward praying. This is

the way to propagate religion.¹⁸ The way to propagate religion is not for a group of people to become partly Muslim. Then, before fixing this, we go to fix other people in the world without having enough good examples.

The way to propagate religion is for the people who have entered the path of religion to travel to the end of this path and become an example to attract others. They become a witness¹⁹ to the truth of religion. The way for people who don't pray to start praying is for a group of people to reach the highest levels in praying. Therefore, if we want to do something to help people who don't pray to pray, the way to do this is for us to first pay more attention to our own prayer and improve our own prayer.

“PRAYER,” THE MENTOR TO TAKE A PERSON TO GOD

Certainly, if someone asks us, “Do you need a professor or a coach in ethics?” we will say, “Yes. We need one. That would be very good!” Let me give a few examples for the prominent role of a mentor and guide in a human being's life.²⁰

You have probably heard many of these kinds of stories about the mystics:

There was an engineer who was a land developer. His job was constructing and selling buildings. He had constructed a hundred buildings, but because of much debt, his economic situation was bad. His creditors were prosecuting him and had obtained an order for him to be arrested. He went to the home of one of the mystics, discussed his problem, and said, “Since I'm afraid of my

creditors, I can't go home. I will hide myself so that no one can find me." That great mystic paused, looked in the special way that some mystics can, and said, "Go and satisfy your sister!"

- My sister is satisfied.

- No, she is not!

The engineer thought a little and said, "Yes, when our father passed away, we inherited from him. One thousand, five hundred tomans was her share. I just remembered that I haven't paid her share." Immediately he got up, went, came back after a short time, and said, "I gave five thousand tomans to my sister and satisfied her."

The mystic was silent briefly, and after he had looked again, he said, "She is not satisfied yet... Does your sister have a house?"

- No, she is a tenant.

- Go and put one of the best houses that you have built in her name and give it to her.

- Sir, I have a partner. How can I?

- I don't know any more than that. She isn't yet satisfied.

Finally, the engineer went and put one of those houses in his sister's name. He put her furniture in that house and came back. Then the mystic told him, "Now it's fixed." The next day, the engineer was able to sell three of the houses, which he had built, and was rescued from his problem.²¹

How good it is for a person to have a mentor who can detect his pains and say, "You have to do that

certain action for your problem to be solved.” One of the students of that same great mystic said, “My small child had done something wrong at home, and his mother hit him so badly that he could hardly breathe. After an hour, my wife came down with a fever. It was a high fever for which we went to a doctor and spent a lot of money for the prescription and medicine. Not only her fever didn’t come down, it increased too. We went to a doctor again and spent a lot of money to treat her, which was too much for me in the economic situation at that time. That night, I picked up Shaykh (the same great mystic) with my car to take him somewhere. My wife was in the car too. When Shaykh got in the car, I pointed toward my wife and said, ‘She is the mother of my children. She has a fever. We have gone to a doctor but her fever doesn’t come down.’

He contemplated a little and told my wife, ‘No one should hit a child like that! Ask for God’s forgiveness. Soothe your child and buy something for him. You will get better.’ We did this and my wife got better.”²²

How good it is for a person to have a mentor! Sometimes a mentor guides a person very well. A mentor not only guides, he also helps a person to resolve his problems. Perhaps you have heard many stories about people who were in pursuit of spiritual wayfaring toward God, and if they found a good mentor, how that mentor helped in different stages and helped them in surmounting the obstacles. There are many examples in the accounts from ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāyī and Ayatollah ‘Uẓmā Bahjat about their mentor, Ayatollah Sayyid ‘Alī Qāḍī or in the accounts of people who were in contact with Ayatollah Bahā’udīnī.

You would probably like to have a mentor too, and you ask God, "O God! Show us a good teacher and a good mentor for coming closer to You!" Now, if I introduce a mentor to you, will you accept it? If you accept it, I will immediately introduce a good mentor to you: "Prayer!"

All of us have a mentor named "prayer." Prayer is the mentor for taking a person to God. Prayer is alive, has reason, moves, is active, is clear-sighted, and is aware. Prayer is not a personal habit or a public ceremony. Prayer is not a dead, spiritless activity that doesn't have any use for us. The prayer of each person works for him in accordance with him. If I love holding a position, my prayer will eliminate this love for a position. If I love money, it will eliminate that love of money. If I love carnal desires, it will resolve my carnal desires. If I am arrogant, it will eliminate my arrogance. If I don't have love for God, it will bring love for God. The prayer of each person knows what to do with him to correct him.

- Does this mean that if we pray well, prayer will correct us?
- Yes
- So, we don't need a mentor anymore? But, there is a famous sentence which says, 'Don't travel on this path without a mentor. It is dark. Be afraid of the dangers of being alone.'
- If it is necessary for you, God will certainly send someone to help you.

Some people think that the mentor can take the place of the good and bad deeds of a person. However, it is not

like this. You have heard in stories about the 'Friends of God' (Ūlīā' Allāh) that how one of the Immaculate Imams (as), or one of the Friends of God like Ayatollah Qāḍī or Ayatollah Bahā'udīnī, took someone's hand in a special way and crossed him over a spiritual obstacle on the path of his spiritual journey. Do not think that whoever went to that Friend of God received special help from him. Certainly that person who received special help had a good background. Due to that background the Friend of God distinguished that this person deserves this help. For example, consider the story of the engineer who went to the mystic, and the mystic showed his problem. This was based upon Divine Destiny, which is according to the good points of a person himself. Otherwise, if I do not deserve to hear those special instructions, even if I am the neighbour of that great mystic, there won't be this special help for me.

For example, 'Unwān Baṣrī went to Imam Ṣādiq (as) and said, "O Imam, I want to learn something!"

The Imam responded, "You may go. I don't have time to talk to you!"²³

At another time, a person was sitting quietly next to the Imam. Without this person asking anything from the Imam, he spoke with him and told him that his death was near.²⁴ We must fix our internal being. If a mentor is needed, God will show him to that person.

For the beginning of the way, the general awareness that most of you have is enough. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as), said, "What you need more is to act on

what you know, than to know what you don't know."²⁵ We have more of a need to do what we know rather than knowing new things. People used to go to Ayatollah Bahjat (r) frequently and ask him, "What should we do to understand mysticism and approach God?" He would respond, "If you act according to what you know, and do not trample beneath your feet what you know, this is all of mysticism."²⁶

Or, a person asked this question, "Does a person need to have a mentor to move toward God? If there isn't a mentor, what is the remedy?"

He wrote, "In the name of God. Your mentor is your knowledge. Act according to what you know. You will be helped sufficiently for what you don't know."²⁷ In another case, he said, "If we realize that a person's affairs will be amended based on him amending his worship acts, and at the top of them is praying, everything is done! This is gained through humility and humbleness. And, these are gained by avoiding that which is vain."²⁸

How do you think our elders and the mystics reached high levels? With prayer! Going toward God is not reserved for just the scholars and mystics. Going toward God is not something requiring expertise. It is possible that someone is an expert in talking about God. It is possible that some people are experts in religious knowledge. But, going toward God doesn't need a special expertise.

A prayer itself is a person's mentor. For example, do the following each time after praying, when you want to get up quickly from your praying mat to go and do your work. Tell yourself, "Let me read the

recommended invocations for after the ritual prayers too." Contemplate some and read the invocations. Doing this will remove one evil from your soul.

SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF A GOOD PRAYER

God would not select a deed to be the pillar for the shelter of religion without any reason.²⁹ God has selected prayer as the pillar for the shelter of religion. This shows that there are many secrets in prayer. If we fix our prayer, we won't need anything else, because the prayer itself fixes others deeds.

The effects and the blessings from prayer are very great. Prayer is a special and specific facility which has been given to us to help us solve our material and spiritual problems. Prayer has many functions and amazing effects on a person's soul. For example, it has been narrated that when "Abu `Alī Sina" wasn't able to solve a scientific problem, he would go to the mosque and pray a two cycles prayer. Then, he would solve that problem.³⁰ This shows that prayer can do many things, but unfortunately, we haven't used it correctly. In the following, we will mention some of the effects and blessings from prayer.

1 Reducing the Deficiencies in Life

Whenever you see a deficiency in your life, material or immaterial, spiritual or physical, check your prayer as the first step. Maybe you are not putting enough effort

into your praying.³¹ Of course, a believer has problems and difficulties in this world. Sometimes he becomes sick, becomes entangled, or has an accident. A believer becomes entangled with problems. However, if you feel that your problems have become too many and are overwhelming you, or you feel that these problems shouldn't bother you this much, you probably haven't put enough effort into your prayer. Fix your prayer, and if God wills, your problems will be solved too.

It is the same way in spiritual matters too. Sometimes a believer wants to sin, or Satan tempts him. Sometimes a believer makes a mistake. But if you see that your mistakes are taking you out of the circle of life, and your spiritual situation is getting worse to the extent that you are not in contact with God, the first thing you have to do is to fix your prayer. Tell yourself, "It is obvious that I am praying badly."³²

Surely you have seen how sometimes when people are entangled in problems they say, "God, what have I done that I have to suffer this much misery?!" If a person wants to state this correctly, he should say, "O God, am I praying badly that I have become so entangled in problems?!"

2 Regulating a Human Being's Soul

After having worked for a length of time, the synchronization of the inner parts of any machine will become mixed up, and as a result, it won't work well. Therefore, it needs to be regulated occasionally. The

engines of cars should be regulated periodically so that they work better. Today they regulate engines with special computer devices. Whoever has a car should take his car once in a while and have it regulated with these devices.³³

A human being's soul is more delicate, more complicated and more vulnerable than the engine of a car. The material, which is used in making the engine of a car, is steel. However, the soul of a person is delicate and sensitive. The soul of a human being is hurt, becomes disordered, and its regulation may become impaired in the course of everyday life. Prayer is the device to regulate the soul of a person. A person should regulate his soul five times a day. When the regulation of a person's soul becomes impaired, he should quickly regulate his soul with praying.

If you see that your memory is becoming weak, or if you have problems like depression, being nervous and many other mental illnesses, first of all check your praying. See what is wrong in your praying. If your thinking isn't working correctly, you should guess that it may be because of your praying. Maybe the amount of prayer in your blood has decreased and you should inject a few units of prayer into your soul. Most probably, you will find peace in this way.³⁴

3 Reforming Our Worldly Affairs

Prayer is not just for building our life in the Hereafter. It is also for building and repairing the worldly affairs of

a person too. It is wrong if we say that the result of prayer can only be seen in the Hereafter.³⁵

If a person is supposed to worship for the Hereafter, should he first be a normal and balanced person so that he will be able to worship and be a servant?! If a person wants to worship correctly and reach God, he must first live correctly. If a person wants to live correctly, he has to pray first. Pray so that with all the sufferings that exist in the world, you will enjoy your life and feel satisfied. Then, you will become friends with God Who has gifted you this beautiful and pure life.

As long as a person doesn't enjoy his life, he won't become friends with God. A moody, bad tempered person won't go toward God. This kind of person is always entangled with himself and with others. A person must first live correctly. For him to live correctly, he must first pray correctly.

4 The Key to Reaching Spiritual Stations

The late Ayatollah Qāḍī was the mentor of Ayatollah Bahjat. Imam Khomeini said that Ayatollah Qāḍī was a mountain of mysticism. Ayatollah Bahjat constantly narrated this sentence from the late Qāḍī when he gave advice, "If a person prays his obligatory prayers on time but doesn't reach to high stations, he may curse me."³⁶ Or, at another time he said, "He may spit on my face."³⁷

One of the scholars related, "Many years ago I went to visit Ayatollah Bahjat. I told him, 'Show me a way so that I can become a real human being.' Ayatollah Bahjat

said, 'Pray on time!'" This honoured scholar thought, "He didn't pay much attention to me. I am praying my prayers on time!"

He continued, "One year passed after that meeting. I was going to a gathering where I would meet Ayatollah Bahjat too. I told myself on the way, 'Let me ask again this time and see if he will introduce a way so that I can reach to everything. What way will he introduce?'

When I went, there were a few of us, and he was talking. I still hadn't said anything when he said in the middle of his talk, 'Some people ask me, "What should we do to become a real human being and grow?" I say, "Pray on time." They go and come back the next year and tell themselves, "He didn't pay attention to me! I should ask him again to see what I should do." They haven't listened or done exactly what I said. Now, they want to ask again! As I said, the answer is the same. The answer is always the same.'"

This honoured scholar said, "I didn't say anything. Ayatollah Bahjat was right. I hadn't prayed some of my prayers on time. I started to fix those too." Gradually that honoured scholar reached to the station that he wanted, and even more than what he had imagined.

A Note on the Necessity for a Good Prayer

Now, we should see what kind of praying helps us to obtain these valuable results and blessings? Which kind of praying helps us to reach to such an entranceway leading to energy and happiness? It is obvious that it is not just


any kind of prayer, which has these effects. For example, a prayer, which is performed only due to our duty before God, or a prayer, which is done lazily,³⁸ doesn't have such effects. Moreover, a lethargic prayer torments the conscience of a believer. A person constantly feels that he hasn't paid his debt to God. After each lethargic prayer a person will be even more in debt. A lethargic prayer cannot remove a soul's lethargy. Therefore, we need a good prayer. Of course, these are only some of the dozens of reasons for the necessity of a good prayer.

Don't say that if a person's motivation in praying a good prayer is to gain a benefit for himself, I mean living happily, this is not a motivation that is pure and based on mysticism. Because, you can look at prayer as being something, which gives energy and happiness, without having a selfish outlook, and consider it to be an indicator of purity in worship. If your untainted heart really desires mysticism and purity, you probably know that a worship act that is pure and based on mysticism gives the most energy to a person and brings the most vitality. Make your prayer beautiful, not to have a happy life, but because a worship act is only valuable and brings us closer to God if it has been done nicely. Of course, it will bring these results too.

In order to start this discussion, we must have arrived at this question, "How can we pray a good prayer?" What can we do for our prayer to be a life spring and give us liveliness and vitality? Prayer can reduce the torment of our conscience before God, allow us to benefit from

the best opportunity to improve our spiritual state, and provide the background for the improvement of our other actions. As the Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), said, "Know that all of your deeds are in accordance with your prayer. (The value of your other deeds depend on the acceptance of your prayer.) So, whoever ruins his prayer will ruin the rest of his deeds even more."³⁹






Chapter 2
**What kind of prayer
is a good prayer?**

Let's correct our way of looking at prayer.

The Necessity of Paying Attention to God's
Greatness

The Way for God's Greatness to Enter Our
Hearts





LET'S CORRECT OUR WAY OF LOOKING AT PRAYER.

How can we pray a good prayer? If we want to give value to our prayer, pay more attention to it, and do it in a better way, what should we do? First, we have to correct our way of looking at prayer. Then, we can try to pray a good prayer.

A common belief about a good prayer is that a good prayer is a way of praying with love, which we have heard described when talking about the "Friends of God." Many think that a good prayer is a prayer where you cry from the beginning to the end. They think you must have fear of God and tremble because of this throughout the entire prayer. As soon as someone talks about a good prayer, many people think that he means a prayer in which a

person talks to God directly, sees God, says hello to God and His friends, and hears their responses. However, this is not what we mean by saying a good prayer, and the criteria of a good prayer are not these things.

Usually, when people want to give advice to us, they tell us, "Why do you pray like that?! Do you know the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as), used to go pale when it was praying time due to his fear of God and the way he felt?"⁴⁰ Sometimes this way of promoting prayer makes us completely hopeless. We tell ourselves, "I'll never become like this." As soon as people talk about a "good prayer," we start thinking about the prayer of the "Friends of God." However, the good prayer of the Friends of God is a tall peak. In order to move toward that peak, we must first reach the stage of praying a good prayer.

It is true that when the members of the Household of the Prophet (as) would start to pray, all of the parts of their body would tremble due to their fear of God. They would also turn pale because of their enthusiasm for their Lord.⁴¹ But, for now we can't pray like this. Maybe we won't be able to pray like this until the end of our life. Therefore, it is logical that a "good prayer" for us is a different kind of prayer.

We are still in the beginning of the way. Praying with love or praying with fear of God in our heart is not reachable for us for right now. A person doesn't fear God five times a day that easily. Maybe we haven't feared God once in our whole life. Experiencing this verse, "However, those who have feared their Lord..."⁴²

is for the "Friends of God." Fearing God's eminence is different from fearing God because of our sins. For now, we are not able to pray with fear of God in our hearts and we are not able to pray with love. We don't miss God for us to say, like the Prophet of God (s), "O Bilal, give us comfort!"⁴³ This sentence means, "O Bilal, recite the Call to Prayer so that I may be comforted and enjoy!"

The Call to Prayer is not a lovable tune for us. In the first stage, we can't pray a loving prayer. Many people don't put any effort and say, "If God wants, someday we will love God and pray well!" They are not doing anything, just waiting, and saying, "If God wants, we'll become a real human being and we will love God." I don't know where they have learned this way of carrying out the religion?!

- If one loves God and misses talking to Him, are you against him praying as one who has fallen in love?!
- No sir, no one is against this matter. At that time, I will certainly die for God. That is obvious. What will you do now (that you still haven't fallen in love with God)?
- Nothing! I am waiting that when God wants, I will start loving Him.
- Maybe you will never fall in love with God! This is not the way to fall in love! You have to suffer and struggle. What kind of suffering or effort have you put that now you expect to fall in love?!

On the other hand, we shouldn't look at the peak of prayer in such a way that we become disappointed from our prayer like some people do, and when you tell them to pray they say, "I should pray?! 'Alī (as) should pray, and no one else!" With this excuse, they don't pray. How easily a person excuses himself! He says one true thing and gets several wrong results from it! He says, "We can't pray. Our prayer is not a true prayer. Prayer is only for the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as). We only stand up sluggishly, bend and get up!" If such words and thoughts are making a person disappointed and reducing his motivation and seriousness in praying, and this is often the case, these are satanic words, which the accursed Satan has brought to us.

The soldiers who had to pray their prayers very quickly while running due to the situation of the military operation, asked Ayatollah Mishkīnī⁴⁴ about the correctness of their prayers. Ayatollah Mishkīnī started crying and told the soldiers, "I am willing to exchange my years of worshiping with one cycle of your prayer."⁴⁵ I remember one time I was talking with some of these soldiers, whose prayers were very dear to God. I asked them, "Have you ever turned pale because of your fear of God while praying so far?" Those dear soldiers said, "No!" But, later these same people became martyrs. This means that we shouldn't consider crying and trembling because of our fear of God to be the only criterion for a good prayer.

Sometimes we look at the peak of praying, like the prayers of the Household of the Prophet (as), and make

ourselves disappointed rather than gaining motivation to continue our way with determination. We have to look in front of ourselves so that we can take one step forward. The way to praying a good prayer is open. We have to start praying a good prayer. In order to do that, we have to change our way of looking at prayer from the outset. We must change our concept of and expectation from a good prayer to a reasonable and attainable expectation. A good prayer is not necessarily accompanied by crying and moaning, or with fervour and passion.

In the beginning, prayer is not being in love with God.

In the first stage, prayer is not being in love with God. In the beginning, prayer is enduring hardship and not attaining spiritual enjoyment. The Almighty God knew that in the beginning of the way, we are not in love with Him and we don't know Him. The Almighty God knows that after forty years of worshipping, we will gradually be able to taste the sweetness of talking to Him. That is why He has given us such a command. Nonetheless, we think our prayer is good only if we enjoy it!

Sometimes it is not nice if we are in pursuit of tasting the sweetness of prayer and enjoying it. Sometimes, it is not right to ask, "What should I do to enjoy praying?"

Someone asked me, "Sir, how can I enjoy my prayer?" I said, "You're not supposed to enjoy praying. You're supposed to pray well for God to enjoy and like your

praying. After He likes your prayer, God willing He may become friends with you, embrace you, gradually everything will become fixed, and you will enjoy too.

Sometimes a person is not after praying. He is in pursuit of enjoying something and his own desires. He wants to taste the sweetness of prayer, because he wants his whole life to be full of sweetness. He thinks that prayer is like a "Tom & Jerry" cartoon that when he goes to it, he will become magically drowned in it and enjoy it! Sometimes, a person thinks that praying is like watching a movie. If God had wanted, He could have made prayer sweet and enjoyable for everyone so that everyone would be attracted to prayer. Actually, God causes a person to become disgruntled by prayer. Of course, God is wise in doing this, like all of His other actions.

Once, a father told me:

- My son doesn't pray. He is lazy in praying. He is 18, almost 19, and goes to the university. But, I don't know why he is lazy in praying. We have done everything to train him. Tell us what we should tell him.
- How have you introduced prayer to your son?
- We introduced it to him in some way.
- No! Tell me exactly how you have introduced prayer.

He stated some of the common definitions of prayer until he came to the following sentence, "Prayer is being in love with God, chatting with the Lord, telling your secrets and needs to the Creator of the universe, etc." By

defining prayer in this way, when his son started praying, he probably told himself, "Telling secrets and needs? If I have a secret, I'll just tell God!" This means this young person started praying and saw that he didn't feel that he is in love with God or that he had a spiritual feeling. Then, he told God, "I'm not in the mood for being in love right now. God, I will come later to fall in love. At this time, I'm in the middle of my work and studies."

I told that honourable father, "You have introduced prayer incorrectly. (With your definition) your son will pray for a while, then when he doesn't enjoy praying, he won't pray anymore. Because, he thinks that he hasn't benefited from prayer. Therefore, he thinks that he has failed in praying."

For now, don't be in pursuit of enjoying your prayer!

Prayer is not a worship act which must be done with a special spiritual mood, with crying and lamenting, or which one must necessarily enjoy. Because, even if a person easily cries and grieves, this doesn't mean that he is always in the mood for worshipping. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as), said, "Hearts are imbued with the power to advance and retreat."⁴⁶ Therefore, sometimes a person is in the mood for worshipping, and sometimes he is not. This is why we should always pray our obligatory prayers, whether we are in the mood or not.

It is obvious that for a worship act, which a person should do every day, five times a day, it is not necessary

for us to definitely cry while doing that worship act. If it was compulsory for you to cry whenever you prayed, God would say, "Pray whenever you are in the mood." Actually, the Almighty God has ordered us to pray in a way that disgruntles us too! This means that we must pray, even when it is hard for us. Therefore, praying a good prayer for us who are in the beginning of the way doesn't mean at all that we must enjoy it. And, this is exactly the conversation I frequently have with young people:

- What should I do to enjoy praying?
- So, when do you want to become a real human being?
- What do you mean? What is the relation between not enjoying and becoming a real human being?
- If a person wants to become a real human being, he should fight with his own will, and this is not enjoyable in the beginning. God has designed and suggested a worship act for you, which you don't enjoy! Naturally, the fact that prayer is repetitive eliminates its enjoyment. God wanted you to become a real human being, grow, and move up by way of the hardships and bitterness of this repetitive action. If you want to enjoy praying in the beginning of this way, you won't grow.

Prayer starts making a person grow when he doesn't enjoy it. Prayer removes the filth of a person's soul when the sharp edge of prayer scrubs his soul.

For example, you're busy playing, working or resting and suddenly you hear the sound of the Call to Prayer. You have to get up and pray. Naturally, it disgruntles you. But, it's alright. Get up and pray right away, so that you can become a real human being. Let prayer prod you. Tolerate its bitterness, so that you can become a real human being.

Some people become friendly with God very quickly, as if they're His close friends, and say, "God, I'm not in the mood for praying now!" Did you think that it is like a soccer game for you to go toward it whenever you are in the mood? Have you ever thought about why God has ruined your nice, sweet sleep and ordered you to wake up at the time for the Morning Prayer and pray? It is because He wants to disgruntle you and help you to grow. You must allow yourself to become disgruntled with praying and train yourself.

One day I was playing ball with my son, and it became time to pray. I told him:

- Ok, they have said the Call to Prayer. I have to go and pray.
- No! Let's continue playing!
- No, it's time to pray now, and I have to go and pray. Afterwards, I will return and we will continue playing.
- Shall I come too?!
- I don't know. Come if you want!
- But, it's hard for me to pray now. Playing is enjoyable.
- Actually, it's hard for me too. Playing is

- enjoyable for me too. But, since God has asked me to do this, I have to say "I consent."
- Is it really hard for you too?
 - Yes!
 - If it is hard for you, why do you want to go and pray now?!
 - A person won't become a real human being if he doesn't do things that are hard for him. I want to become a real person.
 - So, I will come to pray too.

That was it. We didn't tell anyone in our house to pray anymore.

You should understand that God wants to disgruntle you with praying. Put yourself in God's Hands and say, "I believe in You!" Let Him prod you if He wants to. How hard is it to pray? How hard is it to get up on time and pray? How hard is it not to take away from praying? How hard is it to spend enough time to pray? Don't say, "I'm in a hurry." Where do you want to go? Fear God!

- Sir, in the past you have talked about loving God and these kinds of topics very much. So, why do you now keep saying, "Fear God"?
- It is because most people enjoy it when there is talk about loving God, but this doesn't change our behaviour.

Some young people say, "I can't control what I am looking at." Another one says, "I can't control what I say." If there is any good action, which a person says he can't do, it is due to the fact that he could have done a good action, but he didn't. That good action that he could have done was to pray on time, but he didn't.

If we want to define a good prayer for ourselves and know what it is, naturally the best one to introduce it is God Himself, Who has said in the Holy Qur'an, "*Prayer keeps one away from indecency and evil.*"⁴⁷

Based on this fact, the more a person's prayer keeps him away from evil, the better his prayer is.⁴⁸

They told the Prophet of God (s), "That young person who prays behind you, ogle women too. He also does some very bad sins." They probably wanted to say, "Give him some advice, so that he will put his fault aside." The Holy Prophet of Islam (s) said, "His prayer will correct him." There is no need to advise him. The narrator of this tradition said, "It wasn't long after that the young person repented and put his fault aside."⁴⁹ If prayer is carried out correctly, it brings this much blessing.

Someone asked Imam Şādiq (as), "Why don't you consider an adulterer to be an unbeliever, but you consider a person who doesn't pray to be an unbeliever?"⁵⁰ Imam Şādiq (as) replied, "Because an adulterer and people like him do this action due to their lust overcoming them. But a person who doesn't pray, hasn't stopped praying except for the reason that he has scorned it. You won't find an adulterer who has done such a thing except that he has done this because of the enjoyment, which it had. However, a person who doesn't pray, finds no enjoyment in not praying. When a person doesn't enjoy what he is doing, he is scorning it. When scorning is involved, disbelief is involved too."⁵¹ How much enjoyment is there in not praying? How much enjoyment has he experienced because he didn't pray? Was anything else

involved besides him wanting to abase praying? Was anything else involved besides him wanting to disrespect God?! We should also pay attention to the fact that in the same way that not praying is disrespecting God, praying late is disrespecting God a little too.

What is praying for? It is to disgruntle you some. It is to suddenly bring you out from your work, so that you will get up and say, "God is the Greatest."

See what a beautiful religion God has brought for us. God doesn't suggest that you sleep on a nail for a while for you to grow. He says, "You don't need to sleep on a nail. You don't need nails to go into your body, for you to tolerate it and not say anything, and then you will gain some powers. If you want to fight with your own will, do it while praying."

- Sir! We want to pay attention to God when praying!
- Do you and I understand what paying attention to God means?! Did you know that the capability of being able to pay attention is a gift that God should give to a person?! The capability of paying attention isn't gained without tolerating the toil of praying a good prayer.

Prayer means saying "I consent!" to God.

Before anything else, prayer is saying yes to God and obeying his commands, and this is very beautiful. Try to look at prayer in this way. Put your face on dust and say,

"You wanted to see me with my face on dust? You wanted to see how much I love You? See, I have put my face on the ground. I have put all parts of my body, from head to foot on the ground. In front of whom do I prostrate except You?" Show that you are obeying Him fearfully while praying. This is easy to do.

People who have gone for military service know that when they go to boot camp the first thing they tell them is, "From now on whenever you see your commander, you should stamp your foot on the ground, raise your hand as a sign of respect, and greet him with this military salute. When your commander wants to leave and they have told you to be ready, you shouldn't stand comfortably until they have allowed you to relax or the commander has left. If you wish to move your feet, the commander should have given permission. When you enter a place with a ceiling, you should take off your hat, and..." They teach these things to the soldier, and he should follow these rules from the very next day. If he doesn't, he will be punished.

No one says in boot camp, "Actually, the commander is my close friend. He is a very humane person too. Whenever I go to his room, I hug the commander tightly. I tell him, 'Hey dude, how you doin?!'" There is no such thing in boot camp. If a soldier goes into the commander's room and acts in such a way that they are close friends, they will intimidate him by saying, "Stamp your foot." This means, "Be aware of who you are standing in front of. He is the commander. Show respect."

Why do they do this in the military throughout the world and are so strict about respecting the commander?

At the same time, there is no need for a bank employee to stamp his foot in front of the manager or the head of the bank in those same countries in a bank or other organizations. There is no need for him to raise up his hand and give a salute. Why is it that in a supermarket, when the head of the supermarket wants to give a command, there is no need for his employee to stamp his foot like a soldier and raise his hand to give a salute? The employees are more comfortable there.

Why is the military so strict throughout the world? Because, the commands given during a war are "life and death" commands. The enemy is shooting. The commander says, "Soldier, go forward. Move." If the soldier moves forward, it is possible he will be killed. And, naturally he loves his life. But, when the commander gives a command, the soldier should forget the danger of dying and forget the danger of his spinal cord being injured. To be more precise, he should fear the commander. However, there is no need for a supermarket employee to be afraid of his manager very much. It is enough if he doesn't oppress anyone else, doesn't steal anything, and works well. But in a war, a soldier should be afraid of his commander very much.

Don't only look at the 8-Year Holy Defense (war between Iraq and Iran) in which the soldiers went forward themselves with love, and they fought. They loved martyrdom, and they saw God. What do the military forces in the world do since they don't have a concept like loving martyrdom? They say, "We should internalize the commander's greatness and grandeur in the soldier's

heart. How should we do this? With military discipline and the prestige of the commander, which we create in the eyes of the soldier, we internalize the grandeur of the commander in the heart of the soldier. With the military discipline and strict discipline in boot camp, which we create, this discipline internalizes the greatness and grandeur of the commander in the heart of the soldier. Then, any problems in those sensitive moments will be resolved and the commands of the commander will be obeyed. Even if the commander causes the soldier to be killed with his command, the soldier will obey."

THE NECESSITY OF PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD'S GREATNESS

Why don't we say "Allah is Beneficent" or "Allah is Merciful" instead of "Allah is the Greatest" while praying? Don't we say in supplications, "O the One Whom His Mercy has surpassed His Anger?"⁵² Wasn't it better if we said "O Kind God" instead of saying "God is the Greatest"? Wouldn't the hearts be more attracted to prayer in this way? Why do we talk about God's Greatness as soon as we start praying?

When reading the Kumayl Supplication, the readers of this supplication continuously talk about God's Kindness and we cry. Why shouldn't we use this method in praying and say "God is Merciful" instead of saying "God is the Greatest," and then cry a lot? For example, instead of saying "God is the Greatest" we could say, "O my dear God! You are so kind!" What is wrong with being in love

with God like this?! A person can't fall in love with God's Omnipotence and Greatness and cry because of these!

Why do we say, "God is the Greatest (Allāhu Akbar)" so much? Why is prayer full of God's Greatness? Why do we put our forehead on dust in front of God's Greatness? Why is it that we should necessarily bow and prostrate in each cycle of praying?

We must do these things because prayer, like a boot camp, wants to teach us something, and that is God's Greatness and Grandeur. When a commander needs his greatness to become internalized in his soldier's heart, he doesn't say, "Mr Soldier! I will buy you a car and in return you listen carefully to what I say!" During the several months of training when a soldier is in boot camp, the commander won't continuously give little snacks to him and say, "My dear, today I have bought another tasty snack for you. In return, listen to what I say. If a war starts, promise not to escape! Ok my dear?! You don't need to shave your head completely. I myself will fix your hair any way that you like, and I'll put gel on it too! But, in response to me paying attention to you here, you must pay attention to me in the battlefield!"

Some people say, "O God, solve my problem so that I can then pray for You!" What they are saying is like a soldier who goes to boot camp and says, "Pay special attention to me and do my work now, so that I will fight for you tomorrow!" If a commander behaves like this with a soldier, his greatness won't enter the soldier's heart. The outcome will be that the soldier won't listen to the commands of the commander in sensitive and dangerous

moments of the war in the future. If the commander tells him, "Go forward," he will say, "Wait, let me see. Why should I go forward?" Rather, there is a famous saying from the past, which says, "There is no 'questioning' in the military." The purpose of our discussion is not to say whether this behaviour in the military is correct, or not. Or if it is necessary, what are the limits? Nonetheless, the commands of a commander in the military forces are important and sensitive. The organization must be strong in the military forces. Therefore, they have a military discipline and special practises, which everyone must obey. The same thing should happen when we are standing in front of God, so that the Greatness and Dignity of the God of the universe may enter our hearts.

Understanding God's Greatness, is a necessary condition to obeying Him.

Why should God's Greatness be engraved on our hearts? One reason is that a person won't obey God's commands in the correct way until the Greatness of God enters his heart. For example, whenever he is in a good mood, he will obey Him. Whenever he isn't in a good mood, he won't obey Him!

Some people ask:

- Sir, whatever I do, I can't abandon sinning. What should I do?!
- Abandon sinning because of God.
- I can't abandon sinning because of God either.
- This shows that you are not afraid of God

very much. This shows that God is not Great in your eyes for you to obey God's commands due to His Greatness.

If God's Greatness is engraved on our spirit, this will bring many results and blessings. Other than causing us to obey God and do His commands correctly and accurately, understanding God's Greatness has other effects and blessings, which we will present in the following sections.

Having Greatness, a Beginning to Being Beloved

Is it necessary for us to feel the Greatness of God in our hearts, or not? If I ask, "Is it necessary for us to fall in love with God?" everyone confirms this willingly. But, if I ask, "Is it necessary for us to feel the Greatness of God in our hearts?" some people will start thinking about it and say, "Sir, what you mean by all of your discussions, conversations and speeches is that in the end we should fall in love with God, sacrifice ourselves for Him, become His, and listen to Him. It is natural for us to go in that direction. But, what is the purpose of this discussion about 'God's Greatness'?"

Many people don't know that the path, which they have to pass along in order to reach to the "house of God's love," is a pathway in which the feeling of God's Greatness should first become engraved on their hearts. On whoever's heart God's Greatness becomes engraved, he will gain a love and fondness for God, which others only talk about.

There is a supplication, which we read after each ritual prayer during the month of Ramadan, which almost everyone has memorised. The first sentences are these, "O the One Who is Sublime. O the One Who is Great." Then it continues, "O the One Who is Forgiving. O the One Who is Merciful."⁵³ First it talks about God's Greatness, then it talks about God's Mercy. If anyone wants to enjoy "O the One Who is Forgiving. O the One Who is Merciful," he must first understand "O the One Who is Sublime. O the One Who is Great."

If God is kind to us, and if He grants us what we ask for, we will understand that God is "Forgiving" and "Merciful." But, what should the Almighty God do for us to understand that He is truly Great?

Do you want to wait until the Day of Judgment to see God's Greatness there? This is the place about which a supplication says, "O the One Whose Grandeur will be recognized when He evaluates His servant's deeds. O the One Who shows His Power (to His servant) in the grave."⁵⁴ When a person is dying, that is the time when he will understand what is going on in the world and how powerful God is. Do you want to understand this there? How can one understand God's Greatness in this world? With a "good prayer"!

- Sir, is this a problem if we love God without Him being Great in our heart?
- It is impossible my dear one! I wouldn't have said anything if it was possible. Up until now, we have listened to many stories and discussions about the love, affection,

beneficence and kindness of God, and cried with these. Actually, we have cried a lot with these. But after we leave these meetings, our situation is like before and not much change has occurred within us.

Do you know why you love `Alī bin Abī Ṭālib (as) this much? Because, you are aware of `Alī's (as) Dhūlfaqār (sword), his anger, and his grandeur. Why do you like Qamar Banī Hāshim, Abā al-Faḍl al-`Abbās (as), more than all the other martyrs of Karbala? It is because of his strength, his grandeur, and his protecting the flag in battle more than others. `Abbās (as) is something very special, and we love him very much. This intensity of our interest in Ḥaḍrat `Abbās ('s) appears in our hearts after we realize the intensity of his greatness and grandeur.

If they tell you, "Abā al-Faḍl al-`Abbās (as) was a very good man. He was very loyal to his brother, Imam Ḥusayn (as). It was a pity that he was very weak, frail and thin to the extent that whenever someone shoved him, he would immediately fall to the ground! Furthermore, he was martyred in the very beginning of the war!" If he was like this, was `Abbās still this dear to you?!

Deleting God's Greatness in Some False Mysticisms

Some people like to delete God's Power and Greatness and only love Him! Even right now, they are putting mental land mines in our dear land, which is full

of spirituality and spiritual blessings! Imported and false mysticisms, which are coming from the east and west of the world and have an attractive appearance, prevent people from reaching to true mysticism and spirituality. Many books from eastern and western authors have been translated. These authors, who don't have any religious belief, speak about God and say that they are in love with God! Their books are filled with good words about the fact that God is so Kind. God hears our words. God loves us. They say these and other such things.

It is possible some people will ask, "What is the problem with these good words?" Do you know what the problem is in the Christian world? Their problem is that their God doesn't have Greatness. He is only Kind. The only thing their God knows how to do is to forgive. A God Whom no one fears, no one will fall in love with either.

The problem with these false mysticisms is that their God is only Kind and Forgiving, but He doesn't have Greatness. Do you know what a disaster this results in? They describe a God, Who is not great, and Whom everyone wants to love. But in practice, no one will love Him. Everyone wants to love this God, Who brings love, but actually, no one will love a God without Greatness.

Paying attention to God's Greatness is necessary for understanding His Kindness.

A person who hasn't realized God's Greatness within his heart will enjoy to a certain extent when people tell

him about God's Kindness. However, he will not be able to respond to this Kindness. On the Day of Judgment, God will tell him, "Didn't I tell you how much I love you? But, what was your answer?!" This means that a person who hasn't realized God's Greatness within his heart, is not able to understand God's Kindness toward himself correctly and to respond to this Kindness.

You can see a part of God's Kindness in the following tradition. The Prophet of God (s) called out, "O God, the Day of Judgment is the day of ignominy. Can You please not humiliate my nation? These are my followers. I ask You to evaluate their deeds in a corner on the Day of Resurrection so that only You and I will be aware of their sins and no one else will know." See how much the Prophet of God (s) loves us.

The Almighty God replied, "O My beloved one, I am kinder to My servants than you are. I will evaluate them alone, so that no one except Myself will become aware of their deeds."⁵⁵

This means that, "O My beloved one, I am kinder to My servants than you are. I am the source of this kindness that you have toward your nation. Since you have said this, I will take your nation to a corner on the Day of Resurrection so that only I Myself will understand their deeds. I won't even inform you of what they have done, so that their dignity may be kept safe in front of you too."

Are we able to respond to the Prophet of God's (s) kindness? Are we able to answer God's Kindness toward us? Are we going to become real human beings due to this Kindness? Usually, no matter how much people talk

about this Kindness, we won't become good. If we want to understand God's Kindness and for this Kindness to affect us, God's Greatness should enter our hearts first.

There is a verse of the Holy Qur'an, which everyone has heard the first half of, "*Call upon Me, I will answer you.*"⁵⁶ Everyone knows this part of the verse, because it is full of kindness. Usually, all of us know the "kind verses," but many don't know the rest of this verse. Why? Because, the rest of the verse talks about God's Greatness and says, "*Surely those who are too proud for My service shall soon enter Hell abased.*"

This is God, Who talks about His Greatness in different parts of the Qur'an. In your opinion, if God talks about His Own Greatness and shows His Greatness, then no one will go toward Him or love him? Actually, loving God starts from seeing the Greatness of the Lord's position. Which types of people will meet God? "*And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord...*"⁵⁷

Now, pay attention to the meaning of the verse again. At first, God says, "*Call upon Me, I will answer you.*" Then, immediately it says, "Those who are proud and don't come to Me and don't ask for anything from Me, if I take others to Hell in a regular way, I will take them in humiliation due to their arrogance." In fact, it means, "I am your God, Who is saying to call Me so that I will answer you. But, you have put your head down and not said anything! Or, do you just not care, and you leave?" This kind of behaviour is a sign of a person who is arrogant in front of God.

When you go to a memorial ceremony, if a child offers you a date to eat and says, "Help yourself," you won't ignore him carelessly, because it is not polite. This is the case even though the one who is standing in front of you is just a child. Even if you don't want any dates, you say, "Thank you very much. I don't want any. Thank you." You will respond to him. Now, God with His Greatness and Glory has come in front of you and says, "Ask Me for something so that I will give it to you!" But, you have put your head down and are passing by carelessly? So, are you being arrogant before God? Are you refusing God's Kindness? Are you announcing your satiety?! God doesn't joke with anyone.

Do you know why a ritual prayer isn't accepted without its recommended supplications, which are read after it? Because, God tells you after the prayer, "My servant, did you pray? Did you obey My commands fearfully? Did you carry out My order? Good job! Now, you have an accepted prayer before Me. Ask Me, so that I may give it to you."⁵⁸ Then, suddenly God looks and sees that His servant is getting up from his prayer mat and leaving without asking for anything! What does this mean? Isn't this ignoring God? Isn't this being arrogant and announcing that a person has no need of God?

The Holy Prophet of God (s) said, "About a person who doesn't read the recommended supplications after the prayer and doesn't ask God for anything, God tells His angels, 'O My angels, look at My servant. He carried out My command but didn't ask Me for anything. It is as if he has no need of Me. Take his prayer and strike him in

his face with it.⁵⁹ Why does a servant who has no need of Me come to carry out My command? With this action does he want to say, "Neither are You a God, nor am I Your servant"?!"

Not supplicating Him and not asking for our needs in a place where God has said, "If you ask for a need, I will answer you," is being impolite toward the God of the Universe.

Fearing God is the result of believing in His Greatness.

First, you have to believe in God's Greatness, and this should enter into your heart. You must obey God's commands fearfully, and then gradually fearing God will become engraved on your heart. In this case, fearing God will gradually become sweet and enjoyable for you. This fear is the key to having a loving relationship with God!

Do you know why during the time of the 8-year Holy Defense, the light of spirituality shone so much? Because, at that time death had come forward and could be easily felt. Death enters God's Grandeur into a person's heart. They told the soldiers, "Getting close to the night of the operation means getting close to meeting God. Do you know what this means?" Suddenly, God's fear entered their hearts. When God's fear enters a servant's heart, God embraces His dear servant and caresses him.

Certainly, you have seen how a mother hugs her child who is frightened and caresses him. Similar to that mother, when God sees that His servant is obeying His

commands fearfully, He starts caressing him and says, "My servant! Don't be afraid!" He will quickly put His Own love in His servant's heart and make him taste His Kindness.

This is called, a loving relationship with God, and its key is in fear. A tradition says, "Nothing will correct a believer except fear of God."⁶⁰ However, we haven't started talking about fearing yet. For now, we are saying that we have to obey God's commands fearfully and believe in His Greatness a little.

THE WAY FOR GOD'S GREATNESS TO ENTER OUR HEARTS

In this world, a person himself generates God's Greatness. This means that you yourself should generate God's Greatness in your heart. Now, how should we generate God's Greatness in our hearts? We can do this by obeying God's commands fearfully and being polite in praying. When you carry out the rules and the rituals of prayer more completely and in a better way, it shows that you have obeyed God's commands fearfully. In this way, God will become Great in your heart. With whomever you are politer, his grandeur will become internalized in your heart. Don't you like God's Grandeur to become internalized in your heart?

Some people say,

- Sir, I am not afraid of God. What should I do?
- Certainly, God doesn't have Grandeur in your eyes. You probably haven't prayed

your prayer well. You have probably been scratching your head while praying! Certainly, you haven't been polite while praying and your attention has been other places. You probably haven't pronounced the recitations in your prayers carefully.

God can easily punish us severely for us to learn to fear His power! But, God is Kind and gives us time. He says, "My servant should understand this himself and do this action correctly."

If your fear God's Power when praying, God's Greatness will increase in your heart. Then, there is no need for God to shout at you. He says, "My dear, I don't like you doing this." And, you reply, "Ok, I won't do it." This is how servitude is. Otherwise, it is useless for a person to try to convince and force himself to do simple things. For example, he tells himself, "Don't do that, or do this!" God says, "Why are you torturing yourself in trying to come toward Me for a few minutes? Go away and be comfortable! Relax!"

When you tell some people, "Let's go to the gathering for reading the 'Kumayl Supplication,'" they reply, "I don't have time for the Kumayl Supplication right now. I'm busy." He is telling the truth. He is really busy. But, why is he busy? Why doesn't he have time? Because, when God dislikes a servant, He does something so that person won't come toward Him. Even if he or she comes to God with a request, God answers his or her request quickly so that He won't need to hear his or her voice

again.⁶¹ What has happened that you don't have time for God? Who has made you so busy that you don't have time? God makes some people so busy that they don't have time to talk to Him.⁶² But, there are some people whom God loves to hear their voice so much when they call Him that He awakens them when they are sleeping. For example, Shaykh Murtidā Zāhid Tihirānī was one such person.

It has been related about him that they would call him at midnight, "Murtidā! Murtidā!" He said about this, "I hear them calling me from the four sides of the room, 'Murtidā!' This means, 'Wake up for the midnight prayer!'"

God has a heart too! Maybe He missed His dear Murtidā's talking to Him. Why shouldn't we say that a God Who has eyes and hands⁶³, has a heart too?! Yes, God is not like us to have eyes, hands and a heart. When we say these things about God, we don't mean the apparent physical senses. We mean something else.

It is even more interesting to say that Shaykh Murtidā Zāhid said, "I paid attention and saw that some nights they call me, 'Mr. Murtidā' and some nights, 'Murtidā.' I asked myself, 'Why do they sometimes respect me more and use the term "Mr." with my name? At other times they aren't as welcoming and only say, "Murtidā.'" I paid attention and realized that the days that I'm more careful about my behaviour and deeds, and when I am more careful of my desires, they call me, 'Mr. Murtidā.' But, the days that I am not very careful they only call me, 'Murtidā.'"⁶⁴

God keeps some people so busy and caught up that they don't have the time or feeling for going to God and talking to Him. On the other hand, God loves some people so much that He Himself calls them for them to come to Him. What is the difference between these two groups? The difference is in how much God's Grandeur and Greatness is in their hearts, and how much they fear His power. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as), said the following about pious people, "The Greatness of the Creator is seated in their hearts; therefore, everything else appears small in their eyes."⁶⁵

One of the most important things that the verses of the Qur'an do to us is that they internalize God's Grandeur in our hearts. For example, God says in the Chapter Zilzāl, verses 7 and 8, "*Whosoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whosoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.*"⁶⁶ If only the grandeur of these two verses becomes internalized in your heart, you won't be able to sleep at dawn.

Prayer is the induction of God's Greatness and Grandeur into the heart.

The first adjective of God, which should become internalized in our hearts, we should become fond of and understand deeply, is God's Grandeur and Greatness. If we pay attention for a while, pray our prayers correctly and adhere to the commands and rituals of prayer better, gradually God's Grandeur will become internalized in our hearts.

Why should God's Greatness become internalized in our hearts? Because, the most important barrier to a person's relationship with his God is the false imagination, which he has about himself with respect to God. The centre of this false imagination is the person "imagining himself to be great." We usually don't feel that we are small in front of God. As long as a person imagines himself to be great, hasn't understood this fact that he is small in front of God and hasn't understood God's Greatness, all of his efforts to communicate with God will be fruitless and no useful relationship will be formed. There will be no affection between the two of them. No prayer will be accepted, and nothing will be received.

The simple but very important function of prayer is to eliminate this barrier, I mean a person's arrogance.⁶⁷ The obligatory rules of prayer have been designed in such a way that when we reiterate them repeatedly every day, they induce two key concepts in a person. These two key concepts are "God's Greatness and Grandeur" and "a person's humility before God."

A fundamental sentence of prayer is, "Allāhu Akbar (God is the Greatest)." In other parts of the prayer, many of the other sentences focus on God's Greatness and Eminence too. The sentence, "Subhāna Rabbī al-'Aẓīm wa Biḥamdih (Pure and Immaculate is my God – the Greatest – and I praise Him)" is again talking about God's Greatness. The sentence, "Subhāna Rabbī al-'Alā wa Biḥamdih, (Pure and Immaculate is my God - the Highest - and I praise Him)" is again talking about God's

Greatness and Eminence. There is both bowing and prostration in prayers, which are the highest symbols of obeisance. It is as if prayer is nothing other than the induction of God's Grandeur in a person's heart.

Imam Riḍā (as) wrote the following in a letter answering the question of one of the companions, who had asked about the reason for praying, "Prayer is confessing to the Lordship of the Mighty and Glorious God, negating any partner for Him and standing in front of the omnipotent God, Whose Glory is Great, humbly, in poverty, with humility, confessing [to His Greatness], repenting for previous sins and putting our forehead on dust five times a day to respect the Almighty and Glorious God. Prayer causes a person to remember God, not forget Him, not to be ungrateful, be humble, and to be in pursuit of increasing one's religion and this world. In addition, prayer prevents a person from sinning and helps him to remember the Mighty and Glorious God day and night so that he won't forget his Master, the One Who plans, and his Creator. Furthermore, he won't become rebellious and disobedient. When a servant remembers his Lord and stands in front of God, this prevents him from sinning and from any corruption."⁶⁸

We are supposed to obey God's commands fearfully, and one of the first steps is for us to carry out the rules and rituals precisely. If we are careful about this while praying, gradually God's Greatness will enter our hearts. As soon as God's Greatness becomes internalized in our hearts, the springs of His Kindness will flow forth too.

The Effect of Prostration on Instilling God's Greatness in One's Heart

The part of the prayer, which we should lengthen and pay more attention to if we want our prayer to have more effect on us, besides carrying out the rules and rituals during the entire time that we are praying, is "prostration." A long prostration with awareness is very effective in destroying our pride and causing God's Greatness and Grandeur to enter our hearts.

Since God knew what amazing results and positive effects come from prostration in praying and how close His servants are to Him in prostration,⁶⁹ he has put two prostrations in each cycle of prayer. From the beginning of the prayer when you say "Allāhu Akbar (God is the Greatest)," wait eagerly for the moments when you go into prostration. Say, "So nice! I will bow now, and then I will go into prostration." When you get up from the first prostration, it is as if your heart is coming out of your chest. That is when God says, "Wait My dear. Do another prostration again." When you want to get up from prostration, it is as if you can't breathe anymore. You love prostration very much!

After the second prostration, you can't get up anymore. You say, "O God, I don't want to get up from prostrating before You." God replies, "Give Me your hand My dear. I know that you can't get up anymore. I know that you don't like to raise your head from prostrating toward Me. I know how much you love prostrating. I will help you Myself." Therefore, in praying you say, "Bi Ḥūlillāhi wa

Qūwwatihi Aqūmu wa Aq`ud. (I stand up and sit down with God's Help and Power.)"

It is because of this amazing effect of prostration that we can repeat the words for prostration three times or more. Try to lengthen your prostrations.⁷⁰ Don't say, "I should finish my prayer sooner so that I will be able to do that job!" Don't say, "I should go to my store. It's late. I will lose my customers!" Don't worry. Lengthen your prostration a little and the customer who will bring much profit for you will come. He will come two minutes later. Everything is in God's Hands. Imam Šādiq, (as) said, "If a servant hurries (and gets up quickly) to pursue his needs, God will say, 'Doesn't My servant know that I am the One Who provides his needs?!'"⁷¹

In order to become more familiar with the miraculous effect of prostration, deliberate on this beautiful story about the Prophet of God (s).

An old man named Rabī`ah served the Prophet of God (s) for seven years. One day the Prophet of God (s) told him, "O Rabī`ah, you have served me for seven years. Don't you have any request from me?" Rabī`ah replied, "O Prophet of God, give me some time to think."

He came to the Prophet of God (s) the next day. The Prophet (s) asked him,

- Did you think about it?
- Yes, O Prophet of God (s). I have decided upon my request. I have one request from you.
- Tell me, and I will do it for you.
- O Prophet of God (s), may I be sacrificed for

you. I like to be your companion in Heaven in the Hereafter.

- Has someone taught you this, or have you said this yourself?
- No, I thought of this myself. I thought that whatever I ask you for will finish. In the end, we will reach to a moment that from that moment on the eternal life will start. At that time, there will be a long distance between you and I! You will be at the highest point of the divine Heaven. If I am there with you, then I won't want anything else.

The Prophet of God (s) thought a little, looked at him for a while, and replied, "Alright, I accept. However, there is one condition. You must help me so that I will be able to carry out my promise." "How?" The Prophet said, "Help me by prostrating much."⁷²

This tradition means that this is my task that I must take you to that position. In order for me to be able to take you to that high position, only promise me one thing that you will "prostrate much."

Now, do you understand the value of prostration? You can say, "O God, I am very thankful to You because of this prayer that you have given us. This is a prayer in which you have put two prostrations in each cycle of it."

Prostration is very beautiful. A person practices becoming extremely small in front of God in prostration. However, this practice doesn't bring about a revolution in one's heart from the beginning. When I have done this action beautifully for a while,

God knows that there is no love, mystical feelings, and these kinds of things in my heart yet. But, He sees that I have held myself and am saying, "Subhāna Rabbī al-A`lā wa Biḥamdih, (Pure and Immaculate is my God - the Highest - and I praise Him.)" I say "Subhāna Rabbī al-A`lā wa Biḥamdih" again, and my will tells me to get up because that's enough. When I say this sentence one extra time, I am disgruntling myself. On the other hand, God is looking at me too.

The Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), said, "If a person who is praying understands what a blessing from God has surrounded him, he will never get up from prostration."⁷³ It has been narrated that sometimes a single prostration of Imam Kāzīm (as) lasted until morning.⁷⁴ God knows that if pious people have the time, what they will do when standing before God.⁷⁵

A person who still doesn't have much love and knowledge can force himself to prostrate in front of God with the help of the knowledge and intelligence that he has. He can tell himself, "It is good to be humble in front of God as much as possible. There is no problem in this." It is even possible that he may fall asleep while prostrating. But, this is alright too. Then, God tells His angels, "Look at My servant. He is just in the beginning of the way, but see how he is putting his energy for this for Me."⁷⁶ Whoever spends some time and puts himself through a little extra trouble, will be welcomed by God so much that he can't even imagine it.



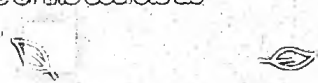


Chapter 6
**The First Step,
A Polite Prayer**

The first step is to be polite.

The requisite to good behaviour is politeness
and not affection.

Learning to be polite is one of the secrets as
to why prayer is obligatory.





THE FIRST STEP IS TO BE POLITE

We have said before that before anything else, prayer is being obedient to God's command. The first step for us to obey God's commands is to internalize God's Greatness in our hearts. Now, what should we do for God's Greatness to become internalized in our hearts? The way we can do this is for us to "be polite in front of God." The first place where we should start to be polite in front of God is when we are praying.

In fact, prayer is being polite in front of the God of the universe in the same way that being polite is the first action that a servant should practice and learn in his dealings with his master. Therefore, Imam Zayn al-

ʿĀbidīn (as) explained the necessity of being polite while praying in this way, "The right of prayer is that you should know that prayer means standing in the presence of the Almighty God. In prayer, you are standing in front of God. So when you have understood this, you should be an abject, humble, eager, hopeful, fearful, destitute, and beseeching servant. You should stand with calmness and solemnity, due to your respect for the One Whom you are standing in front of."⁷⁷

Praying a good prayer is very simple. For a while, try to be polite when praying. Gradually you will see what a love God has put in your heart for Himself. For a while, be polite when you are standing in the presence of God. Little by little, God will give you knowledge, which can't be described. For now, learn to pray politely so that God willing in the future you will be successful in being able to pray with love and like a mystic.

It is not easy for a person to become pale when he is standing in God's presence due to his fear of God. Since we are too far from God, we will only miss Him sometimes, if we are really able to do something. Fearing God is the behaviour of the mystics.

When a person considers Imam Ali's (as) prayer, he becomes hopeless of himself being able to pray with love. For us to be able to learn and start praying well, we need to look in front of ourselves and see how much we can move forward, although we should sometimes look at the peaks too.

If we want to progress in our prayer, the first step is to pray politely. What does praying politely mean? It means

that while you are praying you say, "God, whether I'm in a good mood or not, whether I love You or not, whether I'm afraid of You or not, whether it is hard for me to pray or not, no matter what, I have to be polite."

Someone asked Imam Javād (as), "What does being polite before God mean?" Imam Javād (as) said, "Reciting the Qur'an correctly."⁷⁸

The Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), said that it is due to reciting the Qur'an that the rest of the parts of the prayer follow, "During the middle of the night they stand up reading portions of the Qur'an and recite it in a well-measured way, creating grief in themselves and seeking a cure for their ailments from it. They become fearful due to the verses which are fearsome. They long for the things which God has encouraged them for. They become bent over due to the effect of reading the Qur'an. This means they bow down and then go into prostration."⁷⁹

Prayer is being abject in front of God. In the initial levels, we shouldn't say that prayer is being in love with God. It is too early for us. I'm afraid you won't be in the mood of being in love with God and will dishonour the prayer, while being polite when praying is very important.

Observing the rules for prayer is the first condition to being polite.

In the beginning, prayer is not falling in love. It means being polite. The first step to being polite is to carry out the rules of prayer. Pay careful attention to these few matters, which are about the rules for prayers.

Some of the rules of prayer:

- Laughing loudly when praying nullifies prayer.⁸⁰
- Making large, extra movements when reciting the obligatory sentences of prayer, nullifies it.⁸¹
- It is abominable to scratch yourself while praying.⁸² In general, even small movements while praying are abominable.⁸³

When praying, we should avoid any action, which is a sign of even a little impoliteness toward the God of the universe. It has been narrated from Shaykh Rajab `Alī Khayyāt,⁸⁴ "I saw that Satan kisses the places where a person scratches himself while praying!"⁸⁵

It is true that love isn't by force; however, politeness can be by force! Being polite when praying is by force and has rules. Being polite is so important that one of the important dimensions of many of the rules for prayer is to be polite.

Even if a person doesn't like someone, he will still be polite in front of him. Being polite is not hard. Pray politely. Does praying politely need a good mood? No, everyone can pray a polite prayer. Does it require that a person love the Almighty God? No, only a little understanding is needed, and thank God, almost everyone has even more understanding than that.

Why have they been so strict in the rules for prayer? For example, why has it been said, "Don't look around while praying"?⁸⁶ Why do we have all these strict rules? Are these for anything besides the fact that in the first place God wants politeness from us while praying?!

For example, they have said that when you are standing, you should look at the place where you want to put your forehead. But when you are bowing, if you look at the place where you put your forehead, your eyelids will come up and this is impolite. A person shouldn't raise his eyes this much in front of God. It is impolite. So in that position, where should you look? Look between your feet.⁸⁷

Where should you look when you say the testimonies (tashahhud) in prayer? Again, if you look at the place where you put your forehead (turbah), your eyelids will go up, and this is impolite. Therefore, when you are saying the testimonies, you should look at your knees.⁸⁸ So when you are saying the testimonies, you shouldn't look at the place where you put your forehead anymore. These are a part of the rules, recommendations and abominable actions of prayer.

At the warfront, I was friends with a certain person for a while. When my friend would prostrate in praying, he would gather himself tightly into a ball in such a way that the distance between his forehead and his knees was nearly a hand span. Instead of putting his toes on the ground, he would put the tops of his feet on the ground. This prayer is not acceptable; because, while prostrating, the distance between a person's forehead to his knees should be enough for his knees to be on the ground correctly so that he can be supported by them. In addition, a person should touch the tips of his big toes to the ground.⁸⁹

When this friend of mine would say, "Subhāna Rabbī al-A`lā wa Biḥamdih," he would pull out the words very much and say them in a special way like this, "Subāna Rabbī al-`Alā..."

However, he was in his own world and he prayed nicely. I mean his voice was nice, but his pronunciation was wrong. Instead of saying, "A`lā" he said, "`Alā" and instead of "Subhāna" he said, "Subāna".

I was struggling with myself, 'God what should I do? Should I tell him, or not? Should I hide my friend's fault for our friendship not to be ruined, or should I tell him for him to understand his mistake?' Finally, I made up my mind and told myself, "Let me tell my friend his mistake to himself." Our conversation went like this:

- Why do you gather yourself tightly into a ball while prostrating? Why do you moan like that? Your moaning was nice but your pronunciation was wrong.
- I enjoy being with God more when I do this!
- You're wrong to want to enjoy God! If God wanted, He knew how to make the rules of prayer simpler for us to be free and easily enjoy Him. God couldn't realize these things when He put these strict rules?!

For propagating prayer, it is not right for us to tell the youth, "O dear young person, come and enjoy. If you don't do the prostration, it is alright. Or, if you see that you're in the mood, you can prostrate three times! That's fine!" Instead, we must say, "Obeying the rules for prayer

is the first condition to being polite in front of God. Being polite comes before affection and being in love."

Which of these will nullify prayer, not pronouncing the sentences of the prayer well, or not crying while praying? Obviously, mispronouncing the sentences will nullify our prayer. So the main thing is to not mispronounce the sentences, and crying is not the main thing.

- Sir! Once I was praying the Morning Prayer, and it was a good prayer too. I was in a good mood! Then I doubted whether it is the first or the second cycle! I prayed an extra cycle just to be sure.
- As soon as you doubt whether you're in the first cycle or the second cycle, your prayer becomes null and you must pray again.
- Sir! But, I was enjoying the prayer!
- How quickly you become overfriendly with God! You have opened your arms and are saying, "God, I want to jump into Your embrace!" Be polite when praying! This is God and not your childhood friend!

Each one of us should look at how much time we have spent to pronounce the sentences of the prayer correctly in Arabic!?

- Sir! But why should we pray our prayers in Arabic?
- Excuse me. Why should you bow one time and prostrate two times in prayers? Bow two times and do one prostration!

- But, God determines these things!
- So, God determined that too. God has said to pray the prayers in Arabic. Prayer really reduces a person's arrogance.

Imam Bāqir (as) said, "Making the minor ablution is one of the limits of the divine limits, [which has been determined] by God to see who will listen to Him and who will disobey Him."⁹⁰

The Household of the Prophet's (as) Detailed Emphasis on Being Polite in Praying

A servant being polite in front of the God of the universe is one of the issues that the Household of the Prophet (as) paid attention to very much. They have given much advice about how to be polite while praying and even mentioned the details.

For example, Imam Riḍā (as) said, "If you want to pray, don't get up lethargically for praying. Don't pray while dozing off. Don't pray hastily. Instead, pray with calm and serenity... When you want to stand up in front of your God while praying, stand up in front of God like a sinful servant whom his master wants to punish. (This is being polite in prayer. Even if you haven't sinned!) Place your feet straight and firm. Be harsh with your own will. Don't look this way and that. Don't play with your beard or other parts of your body. Don't crack your knuckles. Don't scratch yourself. Don't touch or fidget with your nose and clothes. When you are standing in prayer,

always look at the place where you prostrate. Pray with eagerness, fear and enthusiasm."⁹¹

In another similar tradition, Imam Muḥammad Bāqir (as) said, "When you stand up to pray... don't fidget with your hands, head and beard... Don't yawn. Don't try to remove your fatigue by stretching your hands. Don't lean on this foot or that foot. Stand on both your feet. Don't stick your legs together, and don't separate them very much either. Don't put your forearms on the ground while prostrating. (Don't stick them to the ground.) Don't crack your knuckles loudly in a way that can be heard by others, because all of these cause imperfections in the prayer. Don't get up for praying lethargically. Don't pray while dozing off or when you feel heavy!"⁹²

Why have the Household of the Prophet (as) stressed these details in the rituals of praying? It is because being polite in front of God is very important, and the Household of the Prophet (as) wanted to teach us how to be polite in prayer.

Observing Propriety in the Preparations before the Prayer, Supplications after the Prayer, and Praying On Time

In addition to observing the rules and rituals for prayer, we must try to observe propriety in the preparations before the prayer and the supplications after the prayer. For example, when we are making the minor ablution, we must pay more attention and observe its rituals. We shouldn't pour water on our hands in such a way that it splashes everywhere.

We must pay attention to the fact that we are doing something that is respectable. If you want to wash a piece of fruit in front of a guest and hand it to him, how will you wash it? Very respectfully.

When you want to make the minor ablution in front of God, be careful that the purpose of making the ablution is not just to be clean up and neat, so that you can bang your hand quickly and impatiently, and leave! Are you upset at doing this task so that you do it impatiently?! Do you want God to not let you pray and say, "I don't want you to pray at all! Don't pray! Are you upset that I wanted to be your God and see your servitude someplace?!"

Whenever a person prays, gets up without reading the supplications, which follow the prayer, and leaves, God tells the angels, "Give him back his prayer."⁹³ I have told him that he may ask for something after the prayers and I will give him whatever he wants from Me.⁹⁴ But, he got up and left. Where is he going? Without reading the recommended prayer, which follows the prayer, which affairs of his world does he want to go take care of? Doesn't he know that all of his affairs are in My Hands?⁹⁵ O My angels! Do you want Me to ruin his affairs so that he will understand all of his needs are in My Hands?!"

In addition to observing the rituals of prayers, paying attention to the preparations before prayer, and the supplications after it, one of the important points, which shows our politeness in front of the God of the universe, is praying on time. Praying on time is a part of being polite. A person who prays late and delays his or her prayer is disrespecting God in a way.

The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei had a meeting with some officials. When the others had finished talking, it was his turn to talk. After talking for about a quarter of an hour, the Call to Prayer could be heard. He said, "If we continue our meeting now, it is a disrespect to prayer." He stopped his talk and continued after prayer.⁹⁶

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as), said, "Be careful that worldly affairs don't stop you from praying on time. God has blamed some groups of people due to their neglecting the time of praying. He has said, 'Those who are heedless of their prayer.' This means those who are neglectful about the times of prayers."⁹⁷

THE REQUISITE TO GOOD BEHAVIOUR IS POLITENESS AND NOT AFFECTION.

What is necessary in praying is to show politeness in front of God and not to express affection. Being polite is something we should always do, and it doesn't have anything to do with being in a good mood and having affection. I mean that one can always be polite. The Friends of God show their politeness more than showing affection in their prayers or in their supplications.

Do you know what the meaning of politeness is? It is possible that in many cases a person is not in the mood to show affection. Although he doesn't feel like doing so, he gets up and stands up in front of his father. This is being polite. If a person is polite, he will smile and greet his neighbour when he sees him, even if he is not in the

mood to greet him at that moment. Although you aren't in love with your neighbour, when you see him, you greet him very respectfully.

In a situation where there is no affection involved, politeness forces a person to behave well and correctly. Even when a person is not in need of the person who is in front of him, he will show a correct behaviour due to his politeness.

For example, when we meet each other we say, "Salam Alaykum. How are you? Are you alright? May your pilgrimage be accepted..."

Perhaps when a person who doesn't know the correct meaning of politeness sees your behaviour, he will say:

- Do you want some money from this person, or are you in need of him that you greet him so warmly?
- Not only I don't want any money from him, if he asks for money from me, I'm willing to lend it to him!
- So, why are you so courteous to him like this? Do you like him that much?
- Since he is not a very good person, not only don't I like him very much, in addition, even if they tell me that he has passed away, I won't get very upset! It is only politeness that requires me to be courteous to him. It is politeness that tells me to smile. All smiling is not due to affection. Being courteous is not always due to begging and needing.

Whenever you smile at someone, is it because you want something from him?!

It is politeness that tells a person to have this behaviour even without feeling affection or a need. It is interesting that politeness tells a person to behave like this even if he or she is not in the mood. A polite person won't yawn in front of others even if he is very tired and bored. He says, "I'm a polite person. I have to control my esteemed mouth!" It has been related that no one ever saw Imam Khomeini yawning.

A polite person doesn't look at his own mood. Even if a polite person is tired, he won't stretch out his legs in front of an older person. Even if a polite person is upset, he won't forget to smile. A polite person doesn't look at himself. He looks at others. He looks at what is required and the situation of his environment. He doesn't say, "Since I'm not in a good mood, everyone should be quiet!" A polite person says, "It is true that I'm not in a good mood or I'm upset, but other people haven't harmed me. Therefore, I have to treat them politely."

When a polite employee sits behind his desk to work, even if he has had an argument with his wife, he doesn't show his unhappiness to the first client who comes in. Instead, he smiles like a calm and placid person. There is no need for you to love the client or have a need for him to behave in this way.

May we be safe from impolite people! A believer's personality is such that, "His sorrows are in his heart, and his happiness is on his face."⁹⁸ Why? Because, politeness requires this.

Politeness is what controls a person's carnal desires.

Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "The best thing that fathers leave for their children is politeness."⁹⁹ It has been narrated that when they took the captives of Karbala to the Levant, one of the soldiers of the cursed Yazid reported, "No matter how much we hit Husayn's children, none of them said even a single bad word to us and they weren't impolite at all." This is an honourable family. These children are polite. When a person has reached the end of his tolerance, that is when it becomes clear how polite he is. A person who behaves well in the worst situation is polite.

If our children stand up against their parents and aren't polite after finishing middle school, it is clear that the educational system hasn't worked well. In a meeting where the authorities of the educational system were present, I said, "More important and more basic than all the religious teachings that you give our children, is teaching them politeness and telling them, 'A person should be able to oppose his own will. Furthermore, politeness controls a person's carnal desires.'¹⁰⁰ Teach them that when a person wants to do an action, he shouldn't always just look at what he wants. Teach our children that it is such an ugly behaviour to say, 'That's what my will wants.' Should a person do everything he wants?!" If they teach us this fact in our movies, it's more effective than them teaching us about God, the Prophet and the revolution. If they do this, the unbelievers will lose their influence.

It is enough for our media to teach politeness to our children instead of many Islamic movies and educational programs as the main and most important priority in religious teaching. One of religion's commands about learning politeness, is that if a son wants to walk with his father, he shouldn't stay behind so that his father is forced to turn around and say, "My son, hurry up and come." The son shouldn't walk ahead of his father for his father to say, "My son, walk a little slower so that I can catch up to you. I'm out of breath." A son shouldn't even walk shoulder to shoulder with his father to show that he is as tall as his father. If a son wants to walk with his father, he should accompany him one step behind him. When sitting, he shouldn't sit before his father sits down.¹⁰¹ This means, "I'm your assistant and servant."

Imam Muḥammad Bāqir (as) said, "My father (Imam Sajjad (as)) avoided eating with his mother from one dish and said, 'I'm afraid I will unwantedly take a morsel of food that my mother wanted to take just at that time.'"¹⁰² In the school of thought of the Household of the Prophet (as), how important it is for a child to be polite in front of his parents!

First off, prayer means a servant being polite in front of God, not falling in love with God. Then, when you have been polite for a while, love will come about too. At first, prayer is supposed to disgruntle a person. That is why when you are busy doing something, they suddenly recite the Call to Prayer. You say, "I'm not in the mood now." The reply is that, "Actually, prayer has been designed in a way to disgruntle you. In order for you

to become polite, you should disgruntle yourself some. The basic idea is that prayer should disgruntle you, so surrender yourself!"

Do you know what is the end of people who aren't polite and do whatever they want? They get to a point where they don't enjoy anything. A person who does whatever he wants, says whatever he wants, is impolite, curses, makes fun of others, shouts, etc. will gradually get to a point where he doesn't enjoy anything in life, even if he says thousands of bad words and makes fun of thousands of people.

Whoever isn't polite, will reach to a state where his soul is shattered. He won't be able to enjoy from thousands of sins, drinking alcohol and howling anymore. The Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), said, "I looked for a happy life, but I didn't find it except in abandoning carnal desires. Therefore, abandon your carnal desires so that you may have a good and happy life."¹⁰³ This means that you should oppose your saying, "This is what I feel like doing," so that you can enjoy your life and your enjoyment won't be ruined. Whoever controls himself more, will enjoy more.

- For example, what is wrong with high school students wearing a uniform? Do you know how close this is to being polite and disciplined?
- Forget it! It's too hard.
- Wait! Why did you tell me to forget it?! Who has told you that this is hard? Who has told you that you should dress any way you

want?! Who has told you that you will enjoy more this way? Who has said life will become sweeter this way?

Actually, it will become more bitter.

The Prevalence of Being Impolite among Western People

How do you think the Media that has spread debauchery in the world, has done this? How have they done this that its result is today's situation in Palestine. The Palestinian children are being killed in this way, and no one protests. What are the roots of this situation?

In order to find out, it is enough if you watch Hollywood movies for a while. You will see how easily you become impolite. The root of this great lack of conscience in societies is "impoliteness." A person who becomes impolite will gradually stop being humane too.

Why has the family system been torn apart in the west? Because, they have become impolite. They have taught people to stand up to each other. They say, "If your father prevents you, firmly stand up to him!"

Do you know how Jewish people live in the United States? Many Jewish families believe it is necessary to be polite and to preserve the father's honor. For example, in many cases it can be seen that when they want to go somewhere, the father moves first and his spouse and children follow him. Or in many cases, when children meet their father even after they have grown up, they bend and kiss his hand in order to be polite to him and honor him. This means that the child is at the service of his father.

Why are Jewish people so polite and why do they honor their fathers so much? This is because being polite is part of the teachings that have been emphasized in all religions, and in fact, it is a heritage from all the prophets. On the other hand, they know the only way to gain success, wealth, and the ability to manage is through practice and being polite.

Although such polite behavior was customary among the nations and followers of different religions, today such politeness can rarely be seen among the non-Jewish families and in western societies. One reason for this is that in many movies and TV serials, they implant in the minds of the children and youth that, "Behave in any way you like and say anything you like. Stand up to your parents..." In addition, women are encouraged to stand up to their husbands and disrespect them and husbands are encouraged to be impolite to their spouses in front of their children. Such behaviors cause politeness to gradually become eliminated in families.

The Beauty of the Combination of "Politeness" and "Affection"

Should children be polite or comfortable in front of their father? In fact, it should be a combination of these two. Sometimes a child should be polite in front of his or her father, very strictly polite! And, sometimes a child should be comfortable with his or her father. Pay attention to this interesting combination in Imam Sajjad's (as) words. Imam Sajjad (as) said, "O God, in front of my

parents make me like a servant in front of a strict ruler. Meanwhile, make me kind to them like a mother who is kind to her baby."¹⁰⁴

Think about how a servant behaves in front of a strict ruler and how he obeys him fearfully. The Imam (as) asks to be made humble like this in front of his parents so that he will obey them fearfully. With this beautiful phrase from Imam Sajjad (as) everything has become clear.

If you obey your father fearfully very much, he will say, "I love you my dear. Don't be so strict with yourself. Be comfortable my dear!" But, if you become too intimate with your father and get out of balance in being kind to your father, naturally he will feel humiliated and say, "But, I'm your father, not your son!" Therefore, the combination of these two is beautiful, and not one of them by itself.

You should learn to work with this combination and bring these opposites together. For example, you should learn to smile when you are sad.¹⁰⁵ Being able to combine these opposites makes a person grow. It is in the same way toward the Almighty God too. Do we have to be polite in front of God, or should we behave in any way that we want?

Sometimes we can be comfortable, not think about special rituals, and say whatever we want. But, sometimes we should be polite. And, that is a very strict and precise politeness. The combination of these two is very beautiful. So, one should sometimes behave very politely when talking to Him. And the peak of our politeness in front of God is when we are praying. On the other hand,

sometimes you can comfortably say whatever you want to God.

As soon as your father enters the room, stand up in front of him, like a soldier who stands up in front of his commander. I don't know why some people become intimate with their father so easily! When their father enters the house, they just sit there with their legs stretched out! Your father was the medium for your creation! If you put your father on your shoulders and take him to Hajj 70 times, you are not able to repay his right. About your mother, you definitely can't repay her right!¹⁰⁶ Stand up in front of your father and show that motherly affection, which Imam Sajjād (as) mentioned, toward him. Say, "My dear one has come. May I be sacrificed for him!" See how beautiful this combination of obeying him fearfully and being kind is.

When you go to Imam Riḍā's (as) shrine, sometimes you stand at the door politely and say, "My dear Imam! I won't enter the shrine until you let me. I won't be impolite. Good for all these people whom you have allowed to enter. I'm not talking about them! But, you must allow me to enter so that I can come in. I know myself..." If you are polite like this, your pilgrimage will be much nicer. Sometimes you go on a pilgrimage politely like this, and sometimes you put your face on Imam Riḍā's (as) grave and say whatever is in your sorrowful heart. You say, "My Imam, my dear one, I'm tired and helpless. I don't have anyone else except you. Take my hand..."

Everyone likes to be able to talk comfortably to God in a loving way. Everyone enjoys loving and sweet

worshipping. But, whoever wants to comfortably talk to God lovingly, must first talk to Him politely. One of the factors for being polite when talking to God is to recite the sentences correctly.¹⁰⁷ Recite the verses and the phrases of prayer so that I may see if you are reciting them correctly or not! Why do you say, "Bismillāh al-Rahmān?" Raḥmān is correct and not Raḥmān! Why are you being impolite? Do you talk in the same way when you see a dignified person too? For example, do you say, "How ya doin?!" instead of "How are you doing?!" Talk nicely! Fix the recitation of your prayer. Say, "I want to pray politely."

When God sees that I am fixing the way that I recite my prayer, He calls the angels and says, "Look! My servant is putting himself to so much trouble to be able to talk to Me politely." I mean God becomes proud of His servant.

Even if a person has gone to a "Tajwīd"* class before, and recites well, it is better if he goes to a mentor or guide to fix the way he recites the prayer occasionally. This is because our native language is not Arabic, and it is possible that our reciting becomes incorrect itself after a while and we don't pronounce the Arabic letters correctly.

What is the meaning of being polite in praying? It means to pray on time, to recite correctly, to pray correctly, and to do the minimal recommended actions of prayer at least. It means to spend time for praying and not to pray hurriedly. Why are you in such a rush when you pray? God forbid, are you trying to declare to everyone, "My God is not someone that necessarily needs to be

* A class for Tajwīd is a class to teach one how to recite the Qur'an correctly.

respected"! Have you come to God to ruin Him in front of His other servants?! What kind of behaviour is this that you have with God?!

God says, "Did you think that if you spend a small part of your time only for Me, I won't thank you? I didn't tell you to come to Me with your heart! I know that people's hearts don't fall in love this easily. They escape. I only said to bring your body and pray politely."

We should realize that if we aren't with God and aren't devout to Him while praying, we naturally won't be with Him at other times of the day either. If we are far from God while praying, we will naturally be even further from God when we aren't praying.

LEARNING TO BE POLITE IS ONE OF THE SECRETS AS TO WHY PRAYER IS OBLIGATORY.

What is the secret behind God commanding all of us to pray and making this repetitive action obligatory for us? One of its secrets is being polite in front of God. Based on many traditions - some of them have been mentioned - the Almighty God wants His servants to pray politely.

Praying a good prayer, involves accepting the obligatory rules for prayer and carrying them out. The obligatory parts of the prayer are designed in such a way that they are usually boring for a person. After a few days of praying it becomes repetitious for people. It is enough to accept this duty and show this acceptance in our face and behaviour.

We shouldn't tell God, "O God, prayer has become repetitious and boring for me. Suggest a different worship act to me that will be more attractive for me, and I will worship You with joy!" We should think about why God has made prayer so repetitious, with a fixed routine, toward a fixed direction, and with a series of fixed sentences.

We should stand before God and tell Him, "O God! Don't You want prayer to have something new in it? What benefit do You want us to derive from it? Grant that benefit to us! Prayer is not a new act to be enjoyable for us due to its being new.¹⁰⁸ The process of praying is so repetitive that its enjoyment disappears. Does this mean that You wanted us to do an action, which doesn't have joy or sweetness for us? If it doesn't have these factors, so what does it have? Grant me that."

Praying is a polite worship act. As was mentioned previously, praying should be polite in the beginning. It doesn't mean showing our affection toward the God of the universe. We love God, but this love doesn't compel us to pray five times a day. We are usually unable to pray lovingly. We become tired very quickly when praying. Sometimes we even become disgruntled when it is praying time, and we don't feel in the mood for praying.

God knows we usually don't have a nice relationship with prayer. So, why has He made it obligatory for us? Isn't it better if God waits until we fall in love and become a mystic, then we pray? If you give a command to someone and know that he is not able to obey that command correctly, you have made yourself and your words worthless. Why has the Wise God made His own command worthless?!

God, You know that Your servants don't enjoy praying. Why have You made it obligatory for everyone? God, You know that usually Your servants don't pay attention while praying. Why have You made it obligatory for everyone? God, You know that people get tired of praying five times a day and it becomes boring for them. Why have You made it obligatory?

God responds,

- I know these things. Did you think I don't know these things?! I have created human beings Myself. Now, you want to guide Me?!
- My Lord! If Your servants become tired of praying, what's the use?
- Be silent! It is obvious that prayer has many benefits. I didn't ask people to pray lovingly. Where is love? I didn't ask them to pray like a mystic from the age of 14. Where is understanding involved? However, it is possible that these beautiful things come about for them in the future. But, there won't be any love or mysticism involved for now.
- So, what is the philosophy behind prayer for many of Your servants who are in the beginning of the way?
- I wanted My servants to pray politely. Being polite means that even if they are not in the mood for loving Me, showing affection, and are bored, they should still show their respect.

The first philosophy behind a repetitious prayer is that

it teaches "politeness" to a person. Many know that when they meet a person whom they do not know, they should smile. But, doing something extra means respecting and smiling at the people who have become repetitious for you, even if you are not in a good mood. I mean when you see your father, mother, spouse or children, smile at them in the same way that you smile at the people whom you do not know. This is what shows that you are a polite person.

A person who is impolite won't smile at repetitious people. He only smiles and welcomes strangers. When he sees the people that are repetitive for him, he looks at these people without seeing them! In fact, such a person is impolite. I mean, he does whatever he wants. Prayer repeats so much that it doesn't bring the enjoyment of being something new. That is when it teaches politeness to a person.

When you go on a pilgrimage to one of the shrines of the Household of the Prophet (as), one of the customs is that you return quickly after you have visited and don't stay there very long.¹⁰⁹ If you see that when you stay in the shrine for a long time, your spiritual mood decreases, return to the place where you are staying. Stay in that city for a few days then return to your own city. Let the grandeur, greatness, and sweetness of the shrine not leave you. Let there always be a place that whenever you go there, your heart will flourish. Don't let the novelty of that environment, the luminous grave, and the glowing dome of the shrine of the Imam (as) fade away for you. This should be the place where you have spiritual hope. Whenever you go there, its environment should bring a good spiritual mood for you.

This recommendation not to stay in the shrine for a long time, so that its environment will not lose its attraction, is about making a pilgrimage. However, it is impossible to do the same thing for praying. It is interesting that God has not made going on a pilgrimage to be obligatory for you so that you would always be forced to go on a pilgrimage. On the other hand, He has obliged you to always pray. Perhaps many have told God,

- God! Let us just pray at times so that prayer may stay sweet for us!
- It's impossible! Prayer is something that you should always do. Don't be in pursuit of its sweetness. Be in pursuit of changing yourself.

Since we always pray, its sweetness has been taken away from us. God knows this too. Since the sweetness of prayer has been taken away, what is left from it? "Politeness."

The Condition to Becoming Polite with Prayer

If you really wish to become polite and disciplined with prayer, there is a condition. The condition is that your spirit should not escape from prayer. In the past when some teachers wanted to punish a student and beat his hand with a stick, some of the students would become frightened and pull their hand back. These kinds of people do not become polite with a teacher's stick.

Prayer is bitter for some people, and when they want to pray their spirit escapes from prayer in the same way that some students would escape from the teacher's stick!

Find a brave person who is willing to become polite with a teacher's stick. A person who believes in the expression "a teacher's stick is a flower" brings his hand forward and says, "Beat me!" Although it is painful for him, he says, "Beat me so that I will become polite!"

I am sorry that I am making such an analogy for prayer like this! The truth is that prayer is bitter for some people. For whomever prayer is boring for him, when it is praying time he should say, "God, although I get tired, it's fine. I am standing here firmly." As soon as you see that you have become bored and you want to finish prayer quickly, for example when you are prostrating, say the sentence in prostration one more time. How painful is God's stick?! Do not be afraid of prayer! Do not escape from it! Do not be in pursuit of its sweetness! If you are after its sweetness, you will say, "I will pray whenever it has become sweet." Accept the bitterness of prayer.

The necessary condition for prayer to make a person polite is that he should accept its hardships. If you were not in the mood for praying, stand up and pray firmly. If you saw that you are making the minor ablution (wuḍū) too quickly, tell yourself, "Wait! Make the minor ablution slower. This is not acceptable. Make the ablution again!" Go against your own desires. This is called, "Fighting with your own will." For a worship act like prayer, fighting with your own will, will be very sweet!

Sometimes a person doesn't fight with his own will for praying. I mean he doesn't oppose his desires. Then he says, "O God, return the 'Imam of our Time,' Mahdi (a.j.), to us!" If Imam Mahdi (a.j.) comes, you must go for

holy war! You are not spending even two minutes for God and prayer. Then, you think you will go and help the Imam (a.j.) and die in the way of God?! As long as you and I aren't spending time for our prayer, we cannot be sure our Imam (a.j.) will come. If we become corrected, God willing Imam Mahdi (a.j.) will come, because Imam Mahdi (a.j.) is not waiting for all the people in the world to become good then come. It is enough for only his Shi'a to become corrected and not to sin. Therefore, Imam Mahdi (a.j.) has said, "Nothing keeps us away from our Shi'a except for the things which reach us from our Shi'a that we abominate and dislike (the sins of the Shi'a)." ¹¹⁰

Karbala, the Cradle for Observing Politeness

Karbala was the cradle for observing politeness. The polite and loyal companions of Abā `Abdillāh gathered in Ḥabīb bin Mazāhir's tent on the night of Ashura. They agreed together that on the day of Ashura they would be the first ones to go to the battlefield, and as long as they were alive not let the Banī Hāshim (the children of Hāshim) go to the battlefield and become martyred. ¹¹¹



Therefore, when the Banī Hāshim wanted to go to the battlefield, the companions came forward and said, "We are still alive. We should be martyred and cut into small pieces first, so that we will be able to say to our Lord, 'God, the children of Ḥusayn (as) went into the battlefield when we weren't alive.'" See how beautiful the displays of politeness are.


Learn politeness from the politest person in the world, Abā al-Faḍl al-`Abbās, the Qamar Banī Hāshim (as). He was so polite that whenever he would see his brother, Abā `Abdillāh, he would not say, "Brother!" Instead, he called the Imam in this way, "My master!" The ones who are in love have always been polite. If you want to find love, you should start from politeness. O Abā al-Faḍl al-`Abbās (as), help us to pray two cycles of prayer politely...





Chapter 4
**The Effects
and Benefits of
a Polite Prayer**

1. It eliminates arrogance.
 2. God becomes Great and this world becomes small in a person's heart.
 3. It builds a person's character.
 4. Our wills are corrected by praying on time.
 5. Good characteristics are strengthened in a person's soul.
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A polite prayer can have abundant benefits for you and me. Why shouldn't we benefit from it? Why shouldn't we pray politely while observing some simple points, which we are able to do, and benefit from its effects and blessings? If we pay attention to the benefits and profits that we gain from a polite prayer, we will naturally have more enthusiasm for it.

A polite prayer has many effects and benefits, and we will mention some of them in the following sections.

1 IT ELIMINATES ARROGANCE.

The most important benefit from prayer, or the most important influence that prayer should initially have on us, is "understanding God's Greatness."¹¹² The most important barrier to understanding God's Greatness is our own "arrogance" and feelings of grandeur. We can

destroy or lessen our feelings of grandeur with a "polite prayer."

Hadrat Fātimah Zahrā (as) said, "God has made prayer obligatory in order to distance a person from arrogance."¹¹³ Therefore, prayer is for removing arrogance from a person's heart. A polite prayer means, "God! I try to be polite so that your Grandeur may become internalized within my heart. I am polite so that my arrogance may be destroyed." God has made prayer in such a way that we are not usually willing to get up and pray at the moment when it's praying time. But, if you oppose your own will because of God, gradually your stone heart will soften and your arrogance will be crushed.

Pray politely for a while! Say, "God, is my prayer beautiful? See how politely I am standing, and I'm not moving my hands." No matter which sentence of the prayer you or the Imam of the prayer is saying, pay attention to the beauty of your prayer. Say, "God, I have corrected the recitation of my prayer because of You although I'm not even talking correctly in my own native language. I, who have put my face on the ground in front of You, am an important and valuable creature. Satan became wretched because he didn't prostrate to me. I am valuable for You. But, I'm humbling myself in front of You. See I have put my face on the dust!"

When you put your face on dust because of God in prostrating, do not raise your head very quickly. Say like a poem says, "You wanted to see me putting my face on the dust, and me perishing because of You. See, I have

thrown myself to the ground in front of You, and I have put myself from my head to my feet on the ground in front of You."

A person may ask, "What is the benefit of being polite in praying? God doesn't need our politeness! Will it harm God if we aren't polite? So, why has He forced us to be polite?! God sees all of our actions. He sees our impoliteness. For example, in many hours of the day and night we stretch our legs out and sleep in front of God. So, why should we get up and stand up straight in front of this same God?! Let us be intimate with God! Let our hearts love God! Why do you scare people about God with these words?!"

We should respond to this person by saying, "Don't you want to fall in love with God? The first condition to loving God is that arrogance should be removed from your heart. It is true that God does not need your politeness and He sees the times that you are impolite. But, if there are times when you become polite in front of God, your arrogance in front of God will be crushed and gradually be destroyed."

The first step for a person to fall in love with God and for him to gain insight and knowledge, is that he shouldn't be arrogant. Human beings are creatures who like to become like God. They like to become great and they themselves become a god (great). They first need to stand in front of God and stop being arrogant. The first and the most important fault that should be destroyed in our hearts is arrogance. Therefore, the first sentence that we repeat in prayer is "Allāhu Akbar (God is the

greatest).” This means, “God You are Great, but I’m not! I’m very small in front of You. The whole world is small in front of You. Grandeur and arrogance befits You. I am abject in front of You.”

A person who wants to say, “God You are Great,” shouldn’t act childishly! If you want to announce your abjectness, you should be polite. The benefit of politeness in front of God is that it takes away arrogance from a person’s heart. According to the verses of the Qur’an and the traditions, arrogance is so dangerous that it has been said that the people who deserve to go to Hell are arrogant people.¹¹⁴ The worst place in Hell is for arrogant people.¹¹⁵ The most painful verses about the divine punishment, which talk about being in Hell and torment forever, are addressed to arrogant people.¹¹⁶

Arrogance is so dangerous that the Holy Prophet of Islam (s) said, “A person who has even a small amount of arrogance in his heart will not even smell Heaven.”¹¹⁷ What is meant by this arrogance is being arrogant in opposition to the truth and being arrogant in front of the “Friends of God,” not small or common arrogance between people.¹¹⁸

People say,

- Sir! I want to teach the principles of belief to my child.
- Wait! First see if his or her senses and wisdom work, or not. Is his or her heart healthy, or not?
- Sir, I’ll teach him or her so that it will become clear.

- Wait! Instead of this, compel your child to pray from the age of seven.¹¹⁹ When he or she prays, his or her heart and wisdom will become healthy. Then, he or she will become ready to accept the principles of belief.
- At the age of seven, a child is still unable to understand the principles of belief for him or her to be able to pray.
- He or she understands a little. That small amount is enough. For now, arrogance should go out from his or her heart. Our main problem is due to our being arrogant in front of God. We first have to destroy this arrogance. The benefit of being polite is that it removes arrogance from our hearts and makes us humble before God.

God wants you to become truly humble. Therefore, you should pray with this intention that your arrogance be crushed before God. This intention doesn't need a special mood! Actually, whenever it is praying time and you aren't in the mood of praying but you go and pray immediately, your arrogance will be crushed better.

Say, "God You wanted to hit me?! That's fine. Did You see how polite I was in praying? It is true that my thinking is someplace else. But, my heart's arrogance is being crushed under the millstone of prayer."

- Sir! What are you saying? We should try to pay attention to God when praying!
- It will take a while for us to reach to a level where we only pay attention to God while

praying. Let us become corrected a little first. When we pray politely, this means that gradually we are becoming corrected.

Pray politely for a while. Then, arrogance will go out of your heart without you going to religious meetings and listening to someone preaching. God will suddenly rise within your heart, and all at once you will start loving God to the extent that you will not be able to tell anyone how much you love God. You will love God so much, and you will not be able to tell anyone about the sorrow of your love.

2 GOD BECOMES GREAT AND THIS WORLD BECOMES SMALL IN A PERSON'S HEART.

After polite prayer has crushed your arrogance in front of God, God's Greatness and Grandeur enters into your heart and the beautiful shadow of divine greatness dominates your heart. When God's Greatness has entered, internal purity, love for God, and knowledge about God will come too. Everything in this world will change for a person. If you see that you have thousands of curtains in front of your eyes but with praying all the curtains are abolished, don't be surprised. If a person gains insight, this world will not have curtains for him anymore. These things are not surprising.

- I saw a person who was able to say what other people's problems were by just looking at them.

- He has probably prayed in a correct way! If a person is not arrogant and God's Grandeur enters his heart, nice things will happen for him.

Do you think God should have Greatness in one's eyes first, or others besides God should become small for him? It is true that these two are like the two sides of a scale. If one goes up, the other one will come down. But, which one should happen first?

Should this world be small in a person's eyes first? I mean should someone tell you, "May I be sacrificed for you, don't be jealous! Don't get upset! Don't regret! We live in this world for a short period. I swear to God that sinning is not enjoyable. Don't think that others are in a better situation than you." Should we be told these things for this world to become small in our eyes and for us not to be ruined by loving this world? Or, should God become Great in one's heart first?

We can find the answer to this question in the eloquent words of the Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), when he described pious people, "God becomes Great for them and others besides Him become small in their eyes."¹²⁰ This means that first God becomes Great for them, then this world and others than God become small in their eyes. Therefore, the first step is that you should try to internalize God's Greatness for yourself. But how? By praying politely.

After God's Greatness has entered into your heart, others besides Him will become small in your eyes. What's the next result? Imam `Alī (as) continued, "It is

as if they see Heaven and are drowned in its blessings." Again, the Imam (as) continued, "It is as if they see the fire (of Hell) and are being punished in it." Such a person sees the Heaven and Hell right now. And you're asking if he can see what is in my heart? What is behind the wall? Does he know when am I going to die?

- Don't care about this world and see how this world will become small in your eyes and its greatness will fall down.
- How can I not care about it?! How can I not like it anymore?!
- God should have Greatness in your heart.
- How?
- With a polite prayer.

All of our miseries are the result of becoming attached to this world.¹²¹ All these plights, all this exasperation, and all this depression, are the result of becoming attached to this world. In your opinion, should a Shi'a believer take pills to resolve his anxiety and depression?! Why should a believer have ulcers due to his exasperation?! What is the problem? Don't we have a calming God? Doesn't God say, "*Remembrance of God certainly brings comfort to all the hearts*"?¹²² These hearts have probably become hard like a rock; otherwise, remembering God is always effective.

There is only one solution, and that is, "God becomes Great for them." How can we find this? Bring God's Greatness for yourself when praying! For example, when you prostrate, don't jump up afterwards like a spring! It is as if some people have put a spring on the "turbah"

(dirt) that they are prostrating on! They haven't finished prostrating yet and they get up. Do you believe that this kind of praying is polite?!

We should pray politely. What is the effect of a polite prayer? The result is that it will internalize God's Greatness in one's heart. When a person has found God's Greatness in his or her heart, the world will become small for him or her. Therefore, a polite prayer can make this world small in a person's eyes.

3 IT BUILDS A PERSON'S CHARACTER.

Another effect of a polite prayer is that it adjusts your relationship with yourself. A polite prayer makes a person's determination stronger and makes one independent, a person who stands on his or her own feet and others can count on him or her. A person who has determination and is independent has a program for himself at times and works against his own desires. Such a person is firstly independent, secondly others can count on his kindness, and thirdly others can count on his wisdom too.

Now, it is a good place for me to describe a marriage proposal, which will likely happen twenty years from today! Young people who want to marry will try to marry sooner because getting married will be difficult in the future!

God willing, twenty years from now, all or most people will become religious and will have progressed greatly in understanding religion at that time. For example, a young man who didn't want to marry into a religious family,

has found a family that is not very religious to marry their daughter. He has thought, "I want to be comfortable. I want to marry someone whose family won't constantly bother me about religion." This means that since he wants to live comfortably, he has found a nonreligious family to marry their daughter. When he goes to their house, they will say,

- Young man! Young woman! Talk together to see if you like each other, or not!

The young woman will ask the young man,

- Do you pray on time?

The young man, who is shocked, will say,

- Why are you asking about if I pray on time, or not? Are you the Imam who leads the group prayer in the mosque?! Am I being selected for the Islamic seminary?! Do you yourself pray that you're asking me?
- No! I don't pray at all. I am asking you. Do you pray on time or not?
- I don't pray on time, but sometimes I pray. Obviously I don't pray on time.
- Do you believe that we should obey God's commands?
- Yes, I don't have any problems with that part of prayer. But, I'm not always in the mood of praying and especially praying on time!
- So my answer is no! Excuse me, you may go somewhere else!

The young man who is very surprised will ask,

- Why are you asking about my prayer? Ask for love, affection, wisdom, understanding,

discipline, politeness, cleanliness, money, and other such things. Why do you ask about such a thing among all these matters?

- I only want one thing from you and that is prayer. Of course, if there is love, loyalty and affection, that will be excellent! But, you're a person whom one can't count on! Because, a person who compels himself to pray, shows that he is not just following his own carnal desires.

This shows that at least as long as it takes to pray one prayer, he has subdued his own carnal desires. How can I trust you? Today you like me. Tomorrow you will like someone else. Today you have come to me of your own will. Tomorrow you will crush me because of your own will! I can't trust you until you pray!

The interesting point is that such a young woman confesses to the following,

- I myself don't know God or His Prophet, but I want a husband who is a real man. You who believe in your God, why don't you listen to what He says? Certainly, you don't listen to Him because you are only after your own carnal desires. I can't live with such a man. If you haven't crushed yourself and your self-interests with prayer, this shows that you cannot truly love someone either. I swear to God that you're lying when you say you love me. You love your own desires. Tomorrow you will hate poor me because of your own desires.

This was the imaginary conversation of two people, which will probably take place twenty years from now, where the man was asking for marriage. God willing by twenty years from now, the effects of a polite prayer on a person's life and his or her personality will become clarified, and the environment of our society will move in this direction.

Such a young woman is completely correct to have such a concern when she says, "God is this kind to you, but you are not even a little polite to Him. If I become your spouse in the future, how much will I be able to be kind to you so that you will be polite to me and consider my wishes? You who are indifferent to your own God, will you be loyal to me?!"

Today, you can see the clear example of this matter in the western world where they fight with each other like wolves. Be sure that if these words are said in the middle of London, Paris or other European countries, it will be several times more interesting for them there than it is here. This is due to the fact that people over there have tolerated many miseries due to the indecencies of each other. They are tired of each other's unkindness. They are sure that kindness does not exist. That which many people want to gradually happen in this society, (I mean travelling this path of sinning and not praying) western societies have already gone to the end of this path, have felt its misery completely, and are tired of it.

Some western people are willing to live with a dog, cat or mouse but they are not willing to live with a spouse in one house. That is because there is so much betrayal.

It has become difficult to be kind to each other. Where is kindness? Kindness will only be found in a heart that has stood up against itself. You can find love in a heart that has risen up against its own carnal desires. You can find loyalty and sincerity in a heart that has acted against its own carnal desires. The least action one can do against one's own will is to pray on time and politely without taking away from one's prayer.

A person may ask, "Can't we fight with our carnal desires in another place besides prayer in order to become a sincere and kind person? After all, there are many places in our lives where we fight with our own carnal desires. When we fight with our own carnal desires, our self-indulgence will lessen. We will love others and be able to be kind to others."

Such a person will complain that, "Is the only way to fight with one's carnal desires to pray on time and politely, that you say a woman will ask about praying on time from a man when considering marriage? When the man says that he doesn't pray on time, the woman will say, 'You are self-indulgent, unkind and selfish!' In brief, the man will hear all of these bad words! Is fighting with your own desires only possible in praying?"

And such a person will give an example too in order to complete his or her argument, "For example, there was a situation where I wanted to go through a red light, but I fought with my own carnal desires and stopped. At the same time, there was a police officer standing at the intersection too!"

I will answer, "My dear! You gave the answer to your own question! Would you still have stopped if there wasn't a police officer standing at the intersection?! That is why fighting with your own desires is not as valuable as it is when you are praying. Wherever you have fought with your own desires and done a good deed, come and I will prove to you that your deed has some impurities. There was probably a police officer standing at that intersection, or there was some joy involved in doing that action that you have fought with your own desires."

Another person will say,

- I am a very polite person. I want to stretch out my legs in front of guests, but I control myself. Even though I am tired, I tolerate the situation.
- Who is the guest?
- The manager of our office!
- May I be sacrificed for you! You wanted to stretch out your legs in front of the head of your office?!

Do you do anything without a desire for some benefit or fear of an immediate harm?! Do you do anything in opposition to your own will? You don't start to do anything that doesn't have a benefit for you. It is only prayer that doesn't give you anything right now. And, if you pray no one praises you for now. Praise the Lord, so many people pray nowadays that no matter how much you pray, they say, "You've prayed, so what? So now you're like everybody else!" Thus, the first step to gaining purity of intention is to

pray devotedly. In the Qur'an it has been said, "*Say, 'Indeed my prayer and my worship, my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'*"¹²³

When you can't fight with your own will for prayer, how can you fight with your will in other places? Are you trying to fool us or fool yourself?!

Do you know what will happen if this kind of talk becomes common in society? It won't be long before women will not accept suitors who do not pray correctly and on time. They will say, "His being a good person is questionable!" This is a lifetime decision. It's no joke. They want to live together for a lifetime. It is natural to be sensitive to this important issue.

A person asked Imam Ḥasan Mujtabā (as), "Which man should I give my daughter to in marriage?"

He answered, "A person who is pious."

The man asked, "What else?"

The Imam (as) replied, "That's it. He should be pious."

The man asked again, "Sir, is being pious enough?"

The Imam (as) replied, "Yes, because your daughter is either a good girl or a bad girl. If she is a bad girl, it is a pious man who will tolerate her. Others will not tolerate her. Why should they tolerate her?! And, if one's daughter is a good person, it is a pious man who will thank her and know her value."¹²⁴ Other men will become rude, not realize her value, and bother her. It is a pious believer who will control his will, because God has already disciplined his will enough.

I have heard some fathers say, "Praise the Lord, my son has become a soldier and come on the right path." I want

to examine this statement to see why does a person who becomes a soldier come on the right path? It is because they confront him with so many things to ruin his mood, that he learns to be able to ruin the mood of the enemy in that difficult situation. They are so hard on him and they ruin his mood so much that when he leaves boot camp, he is much calmer. He's not climbing the wall anymore. He can sit politely, be patient, and tolerate things.

Before being disciplined at boot camp, or any other similar place, let's become disciplined with prayer and before God. This is much more beautiful. A person becoming disciplined with a stick is not very nice. The Commander of the Faithful (as) has said, "A wise person takes advice from the guidance of others and from rituals, but four-legged animals are only disciplined with a stick."¹²⁵ How are people disciplined? With prayer.

I was with some people from the Department of Education. They asked me how they could give religious training to the children. I told them, "Please, before you give them any religious training, see how you can teach them to be 'independent.' They should be such a way that they won't be frightened as soon as someone ridicules them when they leave school. Or, they shouldn't start going after debauchery because of the smiles of a few friends. They should say, 'It's not right for a person to try to be like everyone else.' Teach your students to be independent. If they are independent, God will enter their hearts very easily."

According to the statistics, which were obtained in one university, most of the young women who had

changed their Islamic covering from a "chador"^{*} to a weaker Islamic covering had done this due to their fear of being ridiculed by others. Why are you worried about the ridicule of others? Be independent! Be strong! Stand on your own two feet!

Imam Muḥammad Bāqir (as) told one of his friends, "You are not one of our friends if the people of the city gather together and say that you are a bad person, and you become upset. Or, if they say that you are a good person, and you become happy."¹²⁶ If all the people of the city smile for you or clap for you, you shouldn't become happy. Or, if they say without any reason that you are a bad person, you shouldn't become upset. Why do you pay attention to what people say?! A person will be one of the special friends of the Household of the Prophet (as) if he or she is this much independent.

Where can we practice to be independent? For example, when all of the guests are sitting together, and suddenly it's time for prayer, you say, "I have something I have to do. I want to pray." Don't think of things such as, "It's not nice to pray here. It's inappropriate. It's humiliating..." You don't need to invite anyone else to come and pray either. Don't say, "Why should I pray, but he doesn't?" Maybe God doesn't want him to pray. Maybe he is one of God's weak servants. What does this have to do with you? Pray for him too in your prayer! Smile too when you return. Tell your guests, "Help yourselves to these fruits. Here are some magazines and newspapers. I have to go and do something for two minutes, then I'll come back."

* The chador is a long cloth, which covers a woman completely from her head to her feet except for her face.

They may ask, "Where are you going?"

Tell them, "I'm going to pray on time. I am God's 'servant.' I'm a slave. My Master has ordered me to go. Stay here for two minutes. I will go pray and return."

Don't be concerned with the rest of what will happen. What you do will have its effect on him or her. They will think, "Wow, what an independent person! How strong and firm he or she is!" It will have the necessary effect on them. Why do we look at each other to go and pray?! We should be independent and stand on our own two feet.

4 OUR WILL IS CORRECTED BY PRAYING ON TIME

In your opinion, wasn't it better if "praying time" was different for each one of us, and the time of the Call to Prayer was according to each person's individual spiritual needs? For instance, wasn't it better if God looked at each person's situation during the day to see when we need to pray and when we need to separate ourselves from the world, and right then would have been the time for the Call to Prayer for us? For example, God would see that I'm becoming angry, and He would suddenly order, "O caller to prayer, say the Call to Prayer! Because, this person needs to leave this mood and situation with the Call to Prayer and praying." Or, God would see that I've become infatuated with the world, and He would tell the caller to prayer, "Say the Call to Prayer for this person. He or she is becoming infatuated with the world. You need to wake him up right now." Or, for example, I am becoming depressed

or becoming drowned in imaginary thoughts about this world. Then, God would call out, "Caller to prayer there is still an hour left to the time for prayer, but say the Call to Prayer for this man or woman right now. Because, if he gets up and prays, he will leave this mood of depression and becoming drowned in sorrows for this world."

The truth is that the time for prayer and the Call to Prayer is this way for each one of us right now! Don't look at this that the Call to Prayer is announced at a single time for everyone. You think God is unable to determine a different time for the Call to Prayer and for prayer for each person, and that all of the times to pray for everyone are the same?! You think God can't do something so that this general Call to Prayer, which is said for everyone, be an individual, private Call to Prayer for each one of us too?!

Do you think when the Call to Prayer is said for everyone, God doesn't consider and observe each individual person's condition and situation at the time for the Call to Prayer? When the public Call to Prayer is said, do you think your personal condition and feelings at the time of the Call to Prayer have not been considered? Our God is this way that in the supplications it has been said, "O God, Who is not kept too busy when thousands of people talk with You that You cannot pay attention to Your other servants."¹²⁷

Think this way that the Call to Prayer is just specifically for you. Think of the Call to Prayer as a private message from God for you. Don't think that each time the caller to prayer says the Call to Prayer that this means God is

saying, "Collect all of these people to pray." No, this is not what the Call to Prayer means. The Call to Prayer is a private announcement.

A person may ask, "How can I progress in spiritual wayfaring and become a good person?"

Good people say, "Pray on time. Prayer will correct you."

They will ask, "How can prayer correct me?"

The answer is, "Whenever they say the Call to Prayer, stop doing whatever you were doing and go pray. Because, the time for prayer for each person is in a special situation or condition that God has designed for him before the Call to Prayer. When a person is in that situation, God calls the angels and tells them, "Say the Call to Prayer. If this servant of Mine gets up to go pray now, he will become a good person."

It is enough if you just leave what you are doing at the time of the Call to Prayer and get up for prayer. This will cause your evils to go away one by one. Don't say that the Call to Prayer is for everyone. Each person should think that the Call to Prayer is being said for him. The Call to Prayer is a private message, and it has a special meaning for each individual person. Don't say that God has invited everyone at one time. No, God is inviting each individual person separately. When the caller to prayer says, "God is the Greatest," he is addressing you. Don't think that he is addressing everyone in general.

If you get up and go pray on time whenever they say the Call to Prayer, an edge of one of your bad traits or vices will be reduced or go away. For example, in one

instance your "indolence" will become less. In another situation, your "love for a position," "jealousy," or "pride" will lessen. Because, each time a person is caught up with one of his or her vices. If they get up at that time and pray on time, this prayer will help them for that vice or evil to become weaker within themselves .

It is as if God is sitting and watching His servants! It is as if He is waiting to see when He should change His servant's mood from what it is. When should He tell them, "Attention!" to pull them away from that bad mood, which they have. He is always watching you. As soon as He sees you in a special mood, He orders, "Caller to prayer, say the Call to Prayer! If he gets up now, 'such and such' vice or bad characteristic will be removed."

Each Call to Prayer is a private call for taking you away from a bad situation. So, don't lose this golden moment and opportunity! Because, the One Who has created this opportunity for you is God. Like a caring trainer He is preparing the foundation for you to grow and build your spirit by praying on time.

Have you seen bodybuilding trainers? For example, you tell a bodybuilding trainer that you want to prepare yourself for participating in a sport like volleyball, soccer, or Taekwondo. Your trainer says, "So, I will plan an appropriate bodybuilding schedule for you." For instance, he wears a special glove for Taekwondo and says, "Kick my hand!" Whenever you kick his hand, he keeps moving the glove up higher. He is a bodybuilding trainer and knows what orders to give that when you carry them out, certain muscles in your body become much stronger.

Your trainer in ethics is God. He knows when to say the Call to Prayer for you to grow by praying on time. At that moment when you must turn away from the world, and at that moment when you must rid yourself of a vice, this will happen in a good way. God Himself designs the moments before prayer for you. For example, if you are a storekeeper, God sends a customer. He tells him, "Enter into a deal with him!" Then He calls out, "My angel, say the Call to Prayer in the middle of his dealing." If he gets up in the middle of trying to satisfy the customer to make the purchase, he will become very luminous. However, if this unfortunate servant doesn't leave trying to make the deal to go and pray when they say the Call to Prayer, his dark traits will remain.

The dear Messenger of Islam (s) stated, "As long as a believer prays his five daily prayers on time, Satan will fear him (and he can't tempt him). But, when he abuses his prayers (and doesn't pray on time), he (Satan) will become audacious and enter him into large sins."¹²⁸

5 GOOD CHARACTERISTICS ARE STRENGTHENED IN A PERSON'S SOUL.

It was stated that prayer brings mental independence for a person. When you have become independent and fought with your own will, you will become a person who is kind, loving, and devoted. Otherwise, a person who does not pray will pursue his own lusts! Self-indulgence is very different from kindness. Everyone flees from a person who is self-indulgent.

Do you know what things weaken a person's creativity, ability to think, and memory? Self-indulgence. So, if you want to strengthen your memory, pray on time in a nice way! That is to say that praying a good prayer, strengthens a person's thinking, creativity, and concentration. What should a weak student or a person whose mind and thinking don't work well do? Obviously, he or she must pray a good prayer. Abū `Alī Sīnā used to pray a two cycle prayer whenever he couldn't solve a scientific question, and then he would go and solve the problem.¹²⁹


A polite prayer, which is prayed on time, is full of fighting with one's own will. It increases a person's strength in dealing with difficulties. Some people begin to wail as soon as they are faced with a difficulty. On the other hand, if they are given a blessing, they become stingy and don't give anything to anyone else.

The Almighty God describes human beings in the following way in the Qur'an, "*Indeed, the human was created grudging and impatient. When evil comes upon him he is impatient; but when good comes upon him, he is grudging except those that pray...*"¹³⁰

Human beings are so greedy that it is as if they want to swallow the whole world. They are after everything. They are hungry for the entire universe. And, when they are inflicted by some difficulty or loss, they are impatient and complain. When something good is given to them, they become stingy and don't give to others. God describes some of people's bad traits in these verses and states that people are this bad. So, what should we do about these

bad traits, which are in people? How can we fix these? God continues on to say that it is only those who pray that are not this way. Why? Because, people who pray are always struggling with themselves over prayer, and these bad traits are removed from their being. Prayer is this effective.




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Chapter 5

The Second Stage, a Contemplative Prayer

Observing Inner Politeness in Prayer

An Introduction to the Third Stage, Prayer
with Feelings from the Heart

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OBSERVING INNER POLITENESS IN PRAYER

After praying a polite prayer, it's time to pray a contemplative prayer with understanding. A contemplative prayer is a prayer with understanding.¹³¹ We are gradually finding our way to the inner dimensions of prayer. In actuality, praying a polite prayer is observing the apparent rituals of the prayer. And, a contemplative prayer is a way of observing the inner politeness involved in prayer. After we have prayed a polite prayer for a while, we can go from a polite prayer to a contemplative prayer. After praying a contemplative prayer, we can pray a loving prayer with affection and feelings from the heart.

The first step is to think of nothing other than God.

A contemplative prayer in the beginning, is an action of negation. The negation in a contemplative prayer is thinking of nothing other than God. This means that in the beginning we should try to not think of anything besides God, so that we can gradually think about God. How can we only think about God? The way is to put aside thoughts of other than God.

Someone may say, "Sir, I have many problems. My thoughts about my problems in life bother me. What can I do?"

The answer is, "Pray on time, and forget your problems during prayer! Tell yourself, 'It's impolite to think about my problems before God.' Deal with your problems like shoes! Leave them by the door and don't bring them in."

You have certainly seen the places where they keep our shoes while we go into a shrine. What is the philosophy behind these places? Is it so that you won't lose your shoes?! It's not just this. If you lose your shoes, you won't go to the shrine anymore? Who is it that won't go to the shrine anymore if they lose their shoes?! Who won't go to the shrine if the people who take our shoes aren't respectable people? When you go to a shrine, you address the Household of the Prophet (as), "May I be sacrificed for you! May my father, mother, and all of my being be sacrificed for you!"¹³² If someone is willing to be sacrificed for someone else, aren't they willing to pass on their shoes?! So, the philosophy behind it is something else.

For example, if one of the rituals for visiting a shrine was "leave your shoes outside the door and enter," all of the pilgrims would certainly have left their shoes outside the doors of the shrine and zealously entered Imam Riḍā's (as) shrine. So, if there isn't anyone to hold on to your shoes while you go in you still love going in the shrine.

So, what are these places for keeping our shoes for?! It is because some of the pilgrims are weak, and their thinking may wander to their shoes. That is why they take your shoes and take care of them, so that you can visit the shrine comfortably and without any worries.

May I be sacrificed for the shoe keepers at the door of God's shrine! God's shrine is prayer. Whenever you wish to enter God's shrine, there is a shoe keeper standing there who calls out, "Take off your shoes, for you are in Tuwa, the sacred valley."¹³³ The meaning of this is, "Take off your shoes and give them to me, then go and talk with God!" Now, what is meant by shoes? What is meant is thoughts and imaginings about the problems and complications, which come up in the world, and worldly attachments.¹³⁴ Separate your worldly problems from you just like shoes, give them to the shoe keeper, and say "God is the Greatest" to start your prayer. Pray your prayer with a clear mind. Don't be afraid! He will keep your shoes. Actually, your shoes (attachments, problems, and preoccupations) are so worthless that no one will take them. Don't worry, you can come and get your shoes after you finish praying!

The dear, respectable shoe keepers who are in the shrines never wax your shoes. However, when you give

your shoes to the shoe keeper in God's shrine, if a corner of one of them is torn, or a corner of your life has a lack, he will sew and wax it too. When you return after praying, you will say, "Wow! My shoes have been cleaned."

Do you know who this shoe keeper for God's shrine is? Who can be the shoe keeper for God's shrine to whom we give our problems when we are praying other than the Almighty God Himself? God tells us, "My servant, if you have a problem or an entanglement, at least entrust your problem or entanglement to Me for these few minutes that you are praying. Be sure, I won't ruin them. Your situation won't get worse, don't be afraid!"

It is enough if you just forget your problem while praying. You don't have to even forget it. Just remove it from your thinking for now and throw it aside. If a matter or problem entered your thinking while you were praying, say, "No! It's not time for that now. I will think about that at another time. I, this unfortunate person, think about worldly problems 24 hours a day. For these two minutes I don't want to think about them." Say, "God is the Greatest!" This means God is greater than my problems. I am a servant now and have been assigned to say, "*In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*" I have been assigned to say, "*All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.*" I have been commanded to say, "*The Beneficent, the Merciful.*" I have been commanded to say now, "*Master of the Day of Judgment.*" I am nothing but a servant now who must say, "*Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help,*"¹³⁵ and...

If you behave in this way and forget your problems while praying, God willing, you will see that your problems have been solved after you finish praying. Either you will become so big after praying that you don't whine over your problems, or your problems will become so small that they aren't worth whining over. Why? It is just because you observed the inner politeness of prayer while you were praying and told your problems and entanglements, "No."

A Contemplative Prayer in Prison

A contemplative prayer can be prayed when involved in the utmost entanglements and dilemmas. I met with some of the respectable prisoners in one of the prisons of our country. When I wanted to start talking, I saw that all of the respectable prisoners were low-spirited and shattered in such a way that they didn't have the patience to listen to a speech at all. They were right. They were probably telling themselves, "Sir, you have eaten your breakfast with your wife and children, then you come here and want to talk for us? You don't know how many problems we have. One person is waiting to see what his sentence will be. One has a problem because of his checks. One person has sick family. We have thousands of problems. Now, what's the use of listening to your speech? A person who is full cannot understand a hungry person. A person who is riding cannot understand a person who is walking!"

When I saw that this was the situation, I said, "Excuse me. Could you forget what problems you have for five minutes? Totally forget that you are in prison and leave these thoughts." Perhaps it was a very large request. However, I persisted, "Don't think about being in prison for five minutes! I swear to God, this won't cause you to stay in prison longer. I swear to God, your problems won't increase. It won't make any difference on these. Please, just leave these thoughts for five minutes!"

I persisted in saying this so much that they gradually became convinced. Their eyes showed that they gradually became convinced. I thought, "What should I tell these people?" What good does it do to tell them not to think about their problems for five minutes? So that they can listen to what I have to say!? I felt this is an unseemly thing to say. So, I changed what I had wanted to talk about and said, "When you are praying for five minutes, forget that you are in prison. Forget that you are a father, in debt, your wife is ill, and your child is ill. Even forget that you are going to be executed! Don't be afraid, your problems won't increase by forgetting them."

Then, I said, "When you are standing up to pray, for those few minutes try to forget your problems and say, 'I am just God's servant and slave right now. I'm not a father, in debt, a prisoner, sick, in a dilemma, or any of these things. I am just God's slave.' Then say, 'God is the Greatest,' and start to pray. After you finish praying you can return to your same thoughts and imaginings!" I promised them that by praying like this many of their problems would be solved, because we have experienced and seen this.

Muḥammad bin Abī Naṣr related that he told Imam Riḍā (as), "There is something that I want, and I have been praying for it for years. However, my prayers have not been answered. Because my prayers have not been answered yet, I now feel a sadness in my heart." The Imam (as) answered, "If I tell you (that your prayers will be answered), will you trust what I say?" The man said, "May I be sacrificed for you. If I don't trust what you say, then who should I trust when you are the proof for all of creation?" The Imam (as) said, "Trust in God more (than me)! You are in a position where God has made a promise to you. Hasn't the Almighty God said, *'And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.'*"¹³⁶ He has promised to help the pious people with their problems. What piety is higher than praying a good prayer, which is God's first command.

In summary, we started talking with these friends who were in prison in this way. The Prison Chief was present too due to his respect for clergymen and was listening to the speech. I saw that color had returned to the prisoners' faces and that they were ready to say in the next prayer, "God, forget about whether we are inside or outside of prison. At any rate, we are Your slaves. 'God is the Greatest.'" I looked at the Prison Chief and said, "Prison Chief, is it possible for you too to forget that you are the Prison Chief?! For instance, don't think about how long they want to keep you in this position. When

do they want to remove you from here? When will you get paid? When will you go home...?" The Prison Chief quickly collected himself and said, "Yes sir."

The clergyman who usually led the Noon Prayer was present in this meeting. I turned to him and said, "Excuse me sir, I am just reviewing what I have been taught. For instance, is it possible for you too to forget what your wife has asked you to buy for home? Or, can you forget what you should do for 'such and such' financial problem? Overall, can you forget everything?" When I spoke to the clergyman and the Prison Chief in this way, the prisoners' cheeks flushed that someone has come who is telling us what he tells everyone.

I continued. I saw that Imam Khomeini's picture was there (on the wall). I addressed his picture saying, "Imam, can you forget that you are the Leader of the Revolution and the world's hopes are on you when you are praying? When you are praying can you say that I am just God's slave and nothing else?" Then I said, "Sirs! This is the way Imam Khomeini was." A picture of Ayatollah Khamenei was there too. I addressed him too saying, "Sir, can you forget the world and say, 'God, I am Your slave,' when you are praying?" And, I continued on to say that Ayatollah Khamenei is this way.

One of the scholars used to say, "When Ayatollah Khamenei was deported to one of the villages in Sistan and Baluchestan before the Revolution, I was deported with him to that same city (Iranshahr). A number of people and clergymen had come to see us from various cities. It was time to pray. We all prepared to pray a group

prayer. Ayatollah Khamenei as the prayer leader stood in front of the others and we began to pray. At that instant, a baby goat entered, began jumping around in front of everyone, and made us all laugh. The only person to finish his prayer with control and calm was Ayatollah Khamenei. After the prayer we asked him, 'How did you control yourself and not laugh?' He said, 'I didn't notice the baby goat at all.'"¹³⁷

Try to not allow your attention to wander to other things during the prayer. Forget your problems and entanglements, and don't think about them. Don't permit your thinking to go anywhere else at all. Someone may say, "Sir! How can I pay attention to God?"

The answer is, "Let's suppose you can't pay attention to God. The least you can do is whenever other thoughts enter your mind, say, 'It's bad. It's unseemly for a person to think about other things besides God when one is praying.' Put all of your problems in your shoes and give them to the shoe keeper. Then you will see what a nice frame of mind you will have."

After praying a polite prayer, it is time to pray a contemplative prayer. It is time to pick up a whip and lash your thoughts. Don't allow your thinking to wander into bad thoughts. As soon as your thinking wanted to go in a different direction, don't permit it. Before you start to pray, put all of your thoughts and dilemmas in your shoes and hand them over to the shoe keeper standing at the door to enter prayer. The shoe keeper standing at the door to enter prayer is God Himself. He says, "Give me your shoes! Entrust your problems to Me! Don't be afraid! I won't

increase your problems. Actually, I will solve a portion of your problems.”

This recommendation is not just for problems. The same applies to enjoyments too. This means that when you are happy and you stand up to pray, forget your enjoyments. For example, how good it is if the bride and groom put their enjoyments aside at sunset on their first night together and say, “God, I am nothing now. I am your slave.” And then, they stand up to pray. If they start their marital life this way, it will flourish so much that everyone will envy them.

In short, after I had requested that the prisoners not think about their problems or anything besides God, and I was able to get them to listen to me, I told them, “Carry out this program for 40 days. After 40 days, I will come and have a second class about prayer for you.”

Then I said, “For 40 days, give your thoughts to God whenever you pray. Tell Him, ‘I won’t think about the sweet and bitter events in my life. I am standing at Your door and talking with You, nothing else. Pray like this for 40 days. I will speak here again after 40 days.’”

After a few minutes in that same speech, I told them, “Let me tell you that speech that I wanted to tell you 40 days later, right now. Because, it won’t take more than 10 seconds! I will tell that 10 second speech to you now, but you shouldn’t listen to it now. Write it down, put it in your prayer mat, and don’t look at it; otherwise, it won’t be effective. Open the paper after 40 days and read it. This is what I wanted to say, ‘In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. How fortunate are those who are always in prayer. Good bye.’”

After 40 days of contemplative prayer, if you can, turn to the world and say, "I am a slave. I have a Master. At no time and in no place, I will not allow myself to be influenced by the world." Perhaps in this way you can be a little bit like Mālik Ashtar. Mālik Ashtar was an independent person. The Commander of the Faithful (as) had said that when Mālik dealt with a matter, if he didn't have access to the Imam and he analyzed the matter with his own thinking, any result that he came to was acceptable to the Imam.¹³⁸ In praising Mālik Ashtar's personality, the Commander of the Faithful (as) said, "I swear to God, if he had been a mountain, he would have been a mountain separate from other mountains. If he had been a rock, he would have been a hard rock. No mount was as tall as he was. No bird could fly to his peak."¹³⁹

Do you know why Mālik Ashtar was so firm and independent? Because, he was never neglectful of the fact that, "All of the world is in God's Hands." I mean he was one of those people who are always in prayer.

The Commander of the Faithful (as) has said a strange thing about Mālik Ashtar. He said, "May God have mercy on Mālik. He was for me the same way that I was for the Messenger of God (s)."¹⁴⁰ After the Commander of the Faithful (as) heard of the martyrdom of Mālik Ashtar, he cried and said, "Those who cry should cry for people like Mālik. Does a being like Mālik exist?!"¹⁴¹ The Imam's (as) words about Mālik Ashtar burn a person's heart.

God is always looking at His servants.

Have you seen how politely a suitor sits when he goes to the girl's home for the first time? He's embarrassed to lift up his head. In that first meeting, the suitor sits with his head down very decorously and modestly. When they offer him tea, even though he never drinks less than a full glass of tea and now they have just brought a small teacup, he says in a delicate voice, "No, thank you." I don't know where he got that delicate voice! Others are eating nuts, fruits, and sweets. His family teases the suitor and asks him, "How are you Mr. Groom?" The groom keeps telling them, "Shh, shh." He wants to say, "Don't make a fuss!"

All of the suitors in the past would agree that they were not being tormented or tortured when they went courting, even though they weren't comfortable to behave in just any way they wanted like everyone else. Although they weren't able to sit comfortably and had to control themselves, but they still enjoyed it.

"Mr. Groom, be comfortable! When you were outside, you were very rowdy. What has happened that when you are sitting here you are so disciplined? Why are you so hard on yourself?"

The suitor says, "Because I want them to accept me. You are married and at ease. Tonight is my turn and they have to accept me, not you. They are looking at me now."

May I be sacrificed for you! Can't you try to be like a suitor all your life?! I mean, whatever other people do, don't try to be like them. Tell yourself, "They should

accept me. They are not concerned with anyone else. God is sitting and keeps looking at me. The same God Who, *'...slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep...'*¹⁴²

This means that he does not doze off for even a moment. God continuously looks at His servants to see, "Will he be My good servant, or not? Will he be Mahdi's soldier, or not?"

May I be sacrificed for those boys and girls who get up once the Call to Prayer is recited and stand up in one corner to pray. They do not look to see if the rest of the members of the family have gotten up to pray, or not. Young people break customs. A young person does not like to be just like his own mother and father. He wants to get ahead of them too. If his mother and father neglect praying on time, he or she stands on his prayer mat and says, "God is the Greatest." It is good for a person to be independent and not look at everyone else. It is good to always be like that suitor in one's life.

Friends, who is the suitor now? Who is God watching at this moment? Everyone should answer, "He is watching me." God doesn't look at everyone. He is just looking at you. Everyone should think of it in this way that, "They are choosing me. I won't mix myself with the rest." If a person thinks of it in this way, as soon as they recite the Call to Prayer, he or she will easily jump up and pray. And, he or she won't look to see what others are doing.

For God's sake, don't look at others to see what you should do about praying. If you saw me praying poorly, don't go to others saying, "He is a clergyman and didn't pray very nicely. How can I pray better than him?!" No,

you should go and pray correctly. Separate what you do from others. It is us ourselves who ruin each other's praying, because we look at each other and say, "I'm like everybody else." This "looking at others" is a deadly poison for us!

If you take this seriously and separate what you do from others, when Friday morning comes, you will tell yourself, "Shame on me! Everyone is waiting for Imam Mahdi, but he is waiting for wretched me! I just need to correct myself! If I correct myself, the Imam will come..."

A Bedouin Arab asked the Commander of the Faithful (as), "O dear 'Alī, tell me about the levels of the people who have affection. How many levels do the people of affection have?" The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, "The lowest level of having affection for God is that the person should consider his worship acts to be little and his sins to be great. In addition, he should think that in these two worlds no one will be questioned except him."¹⁴³

This means that the people of the lowest level of affection have at least three characteristics. Firstly, they consider whatever worship act or good deed that they do to be little. Secondly, they consider their sins to be very great whether they have committed a sin or not in appearances. Committing a sin is very serious for them. Thirdly, it is as if only he or she is going to be evaluated and assessed. They consider themselves to be the suitor to the world of creation.

When the Imam (as) says, "...he should think that in these two worlds no one will be questioned except him,"

this means that he feels, "God doesn't want to assess anyone except myself. What is it to me what others do?!"

When the Bedouin Arab heard these words from the Imam (as) he became unconscious and fell to the ground due to the greatness of these words. He was dying. They threw some water on his face. He woke up and said, "O `Alī, is there a level higher than this too?" The Imam answered, "Yes, there are higher levels than this too. There are 70 levels higher than this. This is the lowest level of the people of affection."

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD STAGE, PRAYER WITH FEELINGS FROM THE HEART

After a polite and contemplative prayer, we come to a loving prayer. Another way of saying this is that after one has observed good manners in prayer in appearance and one's thinking, it is time for us to observe the etiquettes that involve one's heart. Thus, the third stage in praying a good prayer is to pray a prayer with feelings from the heart. This is a prayer with loving and presence of mind from the heart. However, we do not have the opportunity to speak about this stage of a good prayer in this book. We will just introduce this stage with the mention of some sentences from Imam Khomeini (r) on this topic. For more information, we refer you to the books of the religious scholars, which have been written on this subject.

In his book "Ādāb al-Ṣalāt," Imam Khomeini (r) has said, "There is one etiquette in prayer, which is one of the important etiquettes to be observed by the heart. It is perhaps the greatest part of the beginning etiquettes. A worship act without this is without soul and spirit. This in itself is the key to open the lock leading to perfection and the door to prosperity. It is hard to find something which has been emphasized this greatly in the traditions. That is 'presence of mind from the heart'... As was previously mentioned, worship acts, religious rituals, and reciting the glorifications of God and invocations have complete effect when they become ingrained in the heart. A person's internal essence becomes formed by these, and one's heart takes on the form of servitude and stops its rebellion and perverseness... Now, we say that one of the secrets behind worship acts and an important advantage of them, and all of these were an introduction to this, is for a person's total being both internally and externally to be under the will of God. And, a person's spiritual and physical forces should be a part of God's forces.

All of a person's forces should become God's soldiers and obey His will completely in the same way that His angels do. This is one of the beginning levels of the annihilation of one's strengths and will in God's will (in spiritual wayfaring). Gradually a big result is obtained. A natural, material person becomes a divine human being. This person's will becomes accomplished in worshipping God. Satan's forces are defeated altogether and are abolished (within this person). This person's heart and

his or her forces are submitted to God. And, a person's heart gains a certain degree of submission to God."¹⁴⁴

In conclusion, I have two friendly recommendations for you. My friends, if you wish to move one step forward in your prayer and you want your prayer to be better, sometimes pray the Midnight Prayer. This is because the recommended Midnight Prayer greatly helps the daily prayers and makes up for their lacks.¹⁴⁵ The Midnight Prayer gives a person great strength and erases his or her sins.¹⁴⁶ It is very beautiful and enjoyable for a person to wake up for the Midnight Prayer and go alone to the door of His Lord.

My second recommendation is for us to go to God's door and ask for forgiveness for the prayers that we have prayed. Let other people repent for their sins, but you say, "God, I was wrong for the incompetent prayers which I prayed." Say, "God, forgive me," until God turns to you and corrects your prayer.

O God! Bestow upon us the success to observe the etiquettes and rituals of prayer and stand in Your presence!





Notes

Chapter 1

1. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "God has created a person's heart pure and clear, and He has ordained for its food to be remembering Him, thinking about His Adjectives, and paying attention to God's Grandeur and Greatness." (*Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'ah*, p. 124)
 ﴿خَلَقَ اللهُ الْقَلْبَ ظَاهِراً صَافِياً وَجَعَلَ غِذَاءَهُ الذِّكْرَ وَالْفِكْرَ وَالْهَيْبَةَ وَالتَّعْظِيمَ.﴾
2. "People, it is you who are in need of Allah." (*Qur'an*, 35:15)
 ﴿وَيَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ.﴾
3. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam `Alī (as), said, "Assiduity in remembering God is the strength of souls." (*Ghurur al-Hikam*, p. 709)
 ﴿مُذَاوِمَةُ الذِّكْرِ قُوَّةُ الْأَرْوَاحِ.﴾
4. "...and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification..." (*Qur'an*, 17:44)
 ﴿وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ...﴾
5. "But whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his life shall be narrow..." (*Qur'an*, 20:124)
 ﴿وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكاً...﴾
6. *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 5, p. 85.
7. *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 5, p. 321.
8. It has been said in a tradition, "When something was hard for the Prophet of God (s), he took refuge in praying." (*Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 10, p. 207)
 ﴿أَنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) كَانَ إِذَا حَزَبَهُ أَمْرٌ فَرَّغَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ.﴾
9. *Tafsīr 'Ayāshī*, vol. 1, p. 43.
10. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "The first thing that is evaluated in a servant is his or her prayers. If they are accepted, the rest of his or her deeds will be accepted also. If they are not accepted, the rest of his or her other deeds won't be accepted." (*Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 208)
 ﴿أَوَّلُ مَا يُخَاسَبُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَإِذَا قَبِلَتْ قَبِلَ مِنْهُ سَائِرُ عَمَلِهِ وَإِذَا رُدَّتْ عَلَيْهِ رُدَّتْ عَلَيْهِ سَائِرُ عَمَلِهِ.﴾

11. The Holy Prophet (s) said, "The place of the ritual prayer in religion is like the place of the head to the body." (*Nahj al-Faṣāḥah*, p. 778)
﴿مَوْضِعُ الصَّلَاةِ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَوْضِعِ الرَّأْسِ مِنَ الْجَسَدِ﴾.
12. *Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 19.
13. *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 209. tradition no. 631.
﴿فَإِنَّ رَبَّنَا وَجِيمَ يَشْكُرُ الْفَلِيلَ إِنَّ الرُّجُلَ لِيُضَيِّبُ الرُّكْعَتَيْنِ يُرِيدُ بِهِمَا وَجْهَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَيُدْحَلُهُ اللَّهُ بِهِمَا الْجَنَّةَ﴾.
14. *Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 266.
﴿مَنْ قَبِلَ اللَّهُ مِلَّةَ صَلَاةٍ وَاحِدَةً لَمْ يُعَذِّبْهُ﴾.
15. *Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 287.
16. *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 3, p. 91.
17. *Kashf al-Khafā*, Al-`Ijlūnī, vol. 1, p. 455.
﴿سَلِّمُوا عَلَى الْيَهُودِ وَ النَّصَارَى وَ لَا تُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى... تَارِكِ الصَّلَاةِ﴾.
18. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "Invite people in other ways besides with your tongue, so that people may see your piety, struggles, prayers, and good deeds. This is a person who invites others." (*Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 78)
﴿كُونُوا دُعَاةً لِلنَّاسِ بِغَيْرِ السَّبْتِ لِيُرَوْا مِنْكُمْ الْوَرَعُ وَ الْإِحْتِقَادُ وَ الْخَيْرُ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ دَاعِيَةٌ﴾.
19. "... and you may be bearers of witness to the people; therefore, keep up prayer..." (*Qur'an*, 22:78)
﴿... وَ تَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ...﴾.
20. Imam Zayn al-`Abidīn (as) said, "Whoever doesn't have a wise person to guide him has perished." (*Kashf al-Ghumma*, vol. 2, p. 113)
﴿هَذَاكَ مِنْ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَكِيمٌ يُرْتَبِدُ﴾.
21. *Kīmīyāt Muḥabbat*, Muḥammadī Rayshahrī, p. 124.
22. *Kīmīyāt Muḥabbat*, Muḥammadī Rayshahrī, p. 121.
23. `Unwān Baṣrī said, "I used to associate with Mālik for many years. When Imam Ṣādiq came to Medina, I went to him. I liked to learn some things from him just like I used to learn some things from Mālik. One day the Imam (as) told me, 'I'm under supervision. In addition, I have special recitations I repeat in each hour of the day

and night. Don't stop me from my recitations and go to Mālik." (*Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 325)

«عن غلوان البصري قال: كنت أختلي إلى مالك بن أنس بسين، فلما حضر جعفر الصادق (ع) المدينة اختلعت إليه وأخبرت أن أخذ عنه كما أخذت من مالك. فقال لي يوماً: إني رجل مظلوم و مع ذلك لي أوزاد في كل ساعة من آتاء الليل و النهار فلا تشغلني عن وزدي فخذ عن مالك.»

24. This is a reference to the story of Shu'ayb, the friend of Imam Ṣādiq (as), whom Imam Ṣādiq (as) informed that his death was close. Imām Ṣādiq (as) told him, "How good it is for a person to die while he loves us and the Friends of God." Shu'ayb bin Maytham returned to his hometown and died less than a month later. (*Dalā'il al-Imāmah*, p. 256)

«ما أحسن بالرجل يموت و هو لنا ولي. و يوالي ولينا، و يُعادي عدونا... فَرَجَّعْ شَغِينِ بِنِ مَيْثِمِ، فَمَا لَيْتَ إِلَّا شَهْرًا حَتَّى مَاتَ.»

25. This tradition is from Imam `Alī (as). (*Ghurur al-Hikam*, p. 268)

«إِنَّكُمْ إِلَى الْعَقْلِ بِمَا عَلِمْتُمْ أَخُوخَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَى تَعَلُّمِ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ.»

26. *Varaḡhāyi Āsimānī, Pursishhāy Shumā Va Pāsukhhāy Ayatollah Bahjat*, p. 82.

27. *Bih Sūya Mahbūb*, p. 73.

28. *Bargī Az Daftar Āftāb*, p. 139.

29. The Holy Prophet of Islam (s) said, "Praying is the pillar of your religion." (*Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 19)

إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) قَالَ: «الصَّلَاةُ عَمُودُ دِينِكُمْ.»

30. When Abū `Alī Sīnā had a difficult question, he would get up, make the minor ablution, go to the main Mosque in the city, pray, and invoke God to make that question easy for him and uncover that hidden issue for him. (*Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 133)

«و كان اذا اشكلت عليه مسألة توتماً و فصد المسجد الجامع و صلى و دعا الله عز و جل أن يسئلهما عليه و يفتح مغلقتها.»

31. Ḥadrat Zahrā (as) asked the Messenger of God (s), "What is the punishment for men and women who are not caring about their prayer?" He answered, "If a person is not caring about his prayer, whether he be a male or a female, God will entangle him or her with 15 tribulations. Six of them are in this world... The tragedies,

which will beset them in this world include: 1 – God will remove the blessings and goodness from his or her life. 2 - God will remove the blessings and goodness from his or her sustenance. 3 – God will remove signs of the righteous from his countenance. 4 – They will not be rewarded for the things that they do. 5 – His or her supplications and requests will not ascend in the heavens and will not be granted..." (*Falaḥ al-Sā'il*, p. 22)

وَأَمَّا نَسَأْتُ أَيَّهَا مُخَفِّدًا (ص) فَتَأَلَّتْ يَا أَبْنَاهُ مَا لِمَنْ تَهَيَّؤُونَ بِصَلَاتِهِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ
قَالَ يَا فَاطِمَةُ مَنْ تَهَيَّؤُونَ بِصَلَاتِهِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ انْقِلَابَهُ اللَّهُ بِخَمْسِينَ عَشْرَةَ خُضْلَةً بَسِئًا
مِنْهَا فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا... فَأَمَّا اللُّوَاتِي تُصِيبُهُ فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا فَالْوَلِيُّ يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الْبَرَكَةَ مِنْ عَمْرِهِ وَيَرْفَعُ
أَنَّهُ الْبَرَكَةَ مِنْ رِزْقِهِ وَيَمْخُو اللَّهُ عَزْرًا وَجَلَّ سَيْمَاءُ الصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ وَكُلَّ عَمَلٍ يَغْمَلُهُ
لَا يُجْزَى عَلَيْهِ وَلَا يَرْتَفَعُ دَعَاؤُهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَالسَّمَاءُ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَظٌّ فِي دَعَاءِ الضَّالِّحِينَ...

32. Imam Šādiq (as) said, "The ritual prayer is God's deterrent. As long as a person is someone who prays, his or her prayer will prevent him or her from sinning. God has stated, 'surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil...' " (*Tūḥīd Shaykh Šadūq*, p. 166)

«الصَّلَاةُ حُجْرَةٌ لِلَّهِ وَذَلِكَ أَنَّهَا تَحْجُرُ الْمُضَلِّبِي عَنِ الْمُعْصِيَةِ مَا دَامَ فِي صَلَاتِهِ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزْرًا
وَجَلَّ - إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تُنْهَى عَنِ الْفُحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ»

33. The Messenger of God (s) said, "Prayer and the deeds of a human being are like a person who goes to a place where animals are kept. He becomes dirty there. Then he goes to a pond with clean water and washes himself in order to remove the dirt and filth from himself. In the same way, the five times daily prayers wash a person if he prays to God from his heart." (*Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 3, p. 92)

«مَثَلُ الصَّلَاةِ وَأَعْمَالِ نَبِيِّ آدَمَ كَرَجُلٍ أَتَى مَرْعَةً فَأَتَارَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا حَتَّى امْتَلَأَ تَرَابًا وَتَسَأَ
ثُمَّ غَمَسَ إِلَى عَيْدِيرٍ مَاءٍ طَيِّبٍ فَانْتَمَسَلَ بِهِ فَيَذْهَبُ عَلَيْهِ التُّرَابُ وَالدُّنْسُ كَذَلِكَ الصَّلَاةُ
الْخَمْسُ تَغْسِلُ عَنِ الْعَبْدِ الدُّنُوبَ إِذَا صَلَّى تَتَى مِنْ قَلْبِهِ»

34. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī (as), said, "There is no servant who prays in the morning and evening other than that God guarantees his comfort and calmness." (*Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol 3, p. 91)

«مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يَأْتِي الصَّلَاةَ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ إِلَّا ضَمِنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ الرُّوحَ وَالرَّاحَةَ»

35. The Messenger of God (s) was asked about the ritual prayers.

He said, "The ritual prayer is one of the religious traditions, God's pleasure is in it, and it is the way of the prophets. For a person who prays, there is: endearment to the angels, guidance, faith, the light of understanding, blessings in his or her sustenance, comfort of the body, separation between him or her and Satan, a weapon against the unbelievers, the acceptance of prayers and deeds, it is the provision of the believer from this world for the Hereafter, prayer is an intercessor between him or her and the angel of death, it is something familiar in the grave, and it is a resting place for him or her." (*Khiṣālī*, vol. 2, p. 522)

« سَبَّلَ النَّبِيُّ (ص) عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَقَالَ (ص) الصَّلَاةُ مِنْ شَرَائِعِ الدِّينِ وَ فِيهَا مَرَصَأَةُ الرَّبِّ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ هِيَ مِنْهَاجُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَ لِلْمُضَيِّ حُبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَ هُدًى وَ إِيْمَانٌ وَ نُورٌ الْمَغْرَقَةِ وَ بَرَكَةٌ فِي الرِّزْقِ وَ زَاوَةٌ لِلْبَدَنِ وَ كَرَاهَةٌ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَ سِلَاحٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِ وَ إِجَابَةٌ لِلدُّعَاءِ وَ قَبُولٌ لِلْأَعْمَالِ وَ إِذْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَ شَفِيعٌ بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ مَلِكِ الْمَوْتِ وَ أُنْسٌ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَ فِرَاشٌ تُخَذُّ عَلَيْهِ. »

36. *Afash*, p. 301.

37. *Faryādgar Tūhīd*, p. 119.

38. The Almighty God has mentioned the prayer of the hypocrites with the attribute of "lazily." The Holy Qur'an says, "*The hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but Allah is deceiving them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up lazily, showing off to the people.*" (*Qur'an*, 4:142)

« إِنَّ الْمُسَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَ هُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كَسَالَى يُرَاؤُونَ النَّاسَ... »
« وَ لَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَ هُمْ كَسَالَى »

It also says, "*They do not come to the prayer except lazily.*" (*Qur'an*, 9:54)

39. This tradition is from Imam `Alī (as). (*Amāli*, *Shaykh Mufīd*, p. 267)

« وَ اعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ مِنْ عَمَلِكَ تَبِعَ لِبَصَلَاتِكَ فَمَنْ صَنَعَ الصَّلَاةَ فَإِنَّهُ يَغْيِرُهَا أَصْنَعُ. »

Chapter 2

40. This tradition about the prayer of the Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), is from Imam Ṣādiq (as). (*Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 4, p. 110)

« وَ إِنْ كَانَ لِيَقُومَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَإِذَا قَالَ « وَ جِهَتْ وَ جِهِي » تَغْيِرُ لَوْنَهُ حَتَّى يُعْرِفَ ذَلِكَ فِي لَوْنِهِ. »

41. About the prayer of Imam Sajjād (as), Imam Muḥammad Baqir (as) said, "When he started to pray he would turn pale, shake and was fearful. When someone didn't know about his state, he would ask about it and the Imam would reply, 'I want to stand in front of a Great King.'" (*Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. 4, p. 150)

إِنَّهُ كَانَ إِذَا قَامَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ تَغَيَّرَ لَوْنُهُ وَ أَصَابَتْهُ رَعْدَةٌ وَ خَالَ أَمْرُهُ فَرُبَّمَا سَأَلَهُ عَنْ خَالِهِ مَنْ لَا يَغْرِفُ أَمْرَهُ فِي ذَلِكَ فَيَقُولُ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ الْوُقُوفَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مَلِكٍ عَظِيمٍ ۝

42. *Qur'an*, 79:40.

43. The Prophet of God (s) said, "The light of my eye has been placed in praying." He would say, "O Bilal, give us comfort." (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 79, p. 193)

۝ جَعَلْتُ قُرَّةَ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ وَ كَانَ يَقُولُ أَرخَنَا يَا بِلَالُ ۝

44. Ayatollah Mishkātī was one of the teachers in the Islamic seminary in Qom. He led the Friday group prayer there and taught ethics. He was the head of the Council of Experts from the beginning when this assembly was established until the end of his blessed life.

45. Tebyan site, content no. 113688.

46. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, wisdom no. 312.

47. *Qur'an*, 29:45.

48. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "Whoever wishes to know if his prayer has been accepted or not should see if his prayer has prevented him from indecency and evil. So, his prayer has been accepted as much as it prevents him from evil." (*Al-Burhān*, vol. 4, p. 322)

۝ مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَعْلَمَ أَوْ قَبِلَتْ صَلَاتُهُ أَمْ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ مَنَعَتْهُ صَلَاتُهُ عَنِ الْفُحْشَاءِ وَ التَّمَكُّرِ فَيَقْدِرُ مَا مَنَعَتْهُ قَبِلَتْ مِنْهُ ۝

49. This tradition is from the Prophet (s). (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 79, p. 198)

۝ رُوِيَ أَنَّ فَتًى مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ كَانَ يُصَلِّي الصَّلَاةَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) وَ تَزَيَّنَتْ الْفَوَاجِشُ فَوُصِفَ ذَلِكَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) فَقَالَ إِنَّ صَلَاتَهُ تَنْهَاهُ يَوْمًا مَا فَلَمْ يَلْبِثْ أَنْ نَابَ ۝

50. This question was due to the words of the Prophet (s). The Messenger of God (s) had said, "Whoever stops praying on purpose has become an unbeliever." (*'Awālī al-La'ālī*, vol. 2, p. 224)

۝ وَمَنْ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ ۝

51. This tradition is from Imam Ṣādiq (as). (*Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 386)
 «قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) وَ سَمِعْتُ مَا تَأَلَّى الرَّزَائِي لَا تُسَبِّحِيهِ كَافِرًا وَ تَارِكِ الصَّلَاةِ قَدْ سَمِعْتَهُ كَافِرًا وَ مَا الْحُجَّةُ فِي ذَلِكَ؟ فَقَالَ لِأَنَّ الرَّزَائِي وَ مَا أَشْبَهَهُ إِثْمًا يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ لِمَكَانِ الشَّهْوَةِ لِأَنَّهَا تَغْلِبُهُ وَ تَارِكِ الصَّلَاةِ لَا يَتْرُكُهَا إِلَّا اسْتِخْفَافًا بِهَا وَ ذَلِكَ لِأَنَّكَ لَا تَجِدُ الرَّزَائِي يَأْتِي الْمَرْأَةَ إِلَّا وَهُوَ مُسْتَبِدِّدٌ لِإِنِّيَابِهِ إِنَاهَا قَاصِدٌ إِلَيْهَا وَ كُلُّ مَنْ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ قَاصِدًا إِلَيْهَا فَلَيْسَ يَكُونُ قَاصِدًا لِتَرْكِهَا لِلدَّهَةِ فَإِذَا نُفِيتِ الدَّهَةُ وَقَعَ الاسْتِخْفَافُ وَ إِذَا وَقَعَ الاسْتِخْفَافُ وَقَعَ الْكُفْرُ»
52. *Miṣbāḥ al- Mutihajjid*, p. 696; *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, the Jūshan Kabīr Supplication, part 20.
53. *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, the supplication for the month of Ramadan.
54. *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutihajjid*, p. 696; *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, the Jūshan Kabīr Supplication.
55. The following is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s). (*Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt*, Muḥammad Mahdī al-Narāqī, vol. 2, p. 209)
 «إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) يَطْلُبُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ أَلَّا يَحَاسِبَ أُمَّتَهُ بِحَضْرَةِ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّسُلِ وَسَائِرِ الْأُمَّمِ، لِئَلَّا تَطْهَرَ عِيُونُهُمْ عَنْهُمْ، بَلْ يَحَاسِبُهُمْ بِحَيْثُ لَا يَطَّلِعُ عَلَى مَعَاصِيهِمْ غَيْرَهُ سُبْحَانَهُ، وَسِوَاهُ، فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ: يَا حَبِيبِي، أَنَا أُرَافُ بِعِبَادِي مِنْكَ، فَإِذَا كَرِهْتَ كَشْفَ عِيُونِهِمْ عِنْدَ غَيْرِكَ، فَأَنَا أَكْرِهَ كَشْفَهَا عِنْدَكَ أَيْضًا، فَأَحَاسِبُهُمْ وَحْدِي بِحَيْثُ لَا يَطَّلِعُ عَلَى عَثْرَاتِهِمْ غَيْرِي»
56. *Qur'an*, 40:60.
57. *Qur'an*, 79:40.
58. The Prophet of God (s) said, "Whoever prays an obligatory prayer may make a request, which will be accepted by God." (*'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 2, p. 28)
 «مَنْ أَدَّى قَرِيبَةً فَلَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ دَعْوَةٌ مُسْتَجَابَةٌ»
59. This is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s). (*Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 5, p. 29)
 «إِذَا هَرَعُ الْغَيْدُ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ وَ لَمْ يَسْأَلِ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى حَاجَتَهُ يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لِمَلَأْنِكَ أَنْظُرُوا إِلَى عَيْدِي فَهَذَا أَدْنَى فَرِيضَتِي وَ لَمْ يَسْأَلِ حَاجَتَهُ مَنِ كَانَتْ قَدْ اسْتَعْنَى عَلَيَّ حُدُوا صَلَاتَهُ فَاضْرِبُوا بِهَا وَجْهَهُ»
60. This is a tradition from Imam Ṣādiq (as). (*Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 71)
 «الْمُؤْمِنُ... لَا يُضَلِّحُهُ إِلَّا الْخَوْفُ»
61. The Holy Prophet of God (s) said, "The Almighty God has said, 'I swear to My Dignity, Glory, Greatness and Grandeur that I refrain

from giving something to My friend in this world, which will cause him to neglect remembering Me. Because, I want him to call Me so that I can hear his voice. I grant the wish of the unbeliever, because I dislike him. I don't want him to call Me, and I don't want to hear his voice." (*Al-Tamhīṣ*, p. 33)

«قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص): يَقُولُ اللَّهُ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ وَ عَزَّي وَ جَلَالِي وَ عَظَمَتِي وَ بَقَائِي إِيَّي لِأَحْمِي وَلِيَّي أَنْ أُغْطِيَهُ فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا شَيْئًا يَشْفَعُهُ عِنْدِي عَنْ ذِكْرِي حَتَّى يَنْدَعُوْنِي فَأَسْمَعُ صَوْتَهُ وَإِي لِأَعْضِي الْكَافِرَ مِثْلِيَتَهُ حَتَّى لَا يَنْدَعُوْنِي فَأَسْمَعُ صَوْتَهُ بَغْضًا لَهُ.»

62. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "It has been written in the Torah, 'O son of Adam! Spend time for worshiping Me so that I may make your heart needless (of others) and not leave you with your request. It is for Me to close the door on your needs for you and fill your heart with My fear. If you don't commit yourself to worshiping Me, I will fill your heart with the world's entanglements. Then, I won't close the door on your needs and I will leave you with your request.'" (*Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 83)

امام صادق(ع): «فِي التَّوْرَةِ مَكْتُوبٌ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمَلًا فَلْيَبْغِ عَمِّي وَلَا أَكْثِرْ إِلَى ظَلْمِكَ وَ عَلَيَّ أَنْ أَسُدَّ فَاقْتِكَ وَأَمَلًا فَلْيَبْغِ خَوْفًا مِنِّي وَإِنْ لَا تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمَلًا فَلْيَبْغِ سَعْلًا بِاللُّدُنْيَا ثُمَّ لَا أَسُدَّ فَاقْتِكَ وَأَكْثِرْ إِلَى ظَلْمِكَ.»

63. There are some phrases such as "Yadullāh (God's Hand)" and "Aynullāh (God's Eye)" in the Qur'an and traditions; for example, "The hand of God is above their hands." (*Qur'an*, 48:10)

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ.»

There is also a tradition narrated from Imam Bāqir (as), "We are God's eyes among His servants and God's open hands for mercy." (*Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 143)

«عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (ع): نَحْنُ عَيْنُ اللَّهِ فِي خَلْقِهِ وَ يَدُهُ الْمَبْسُوطَةُ بِالرَّحْمَةِ.»

64. Shaykh Murtiḍā Zahid's grandson said, "The late Shaykh had said himself that, 'At nights they call me for the worshiping at midnight. Some nights they say, "Murtiḍā, wake up!" And, some nights they say, "Shaykh Murtiḍā." Other nights they say, "Mr. Shaykh Murtiḍā." When I deliberate on it, I see that this depends on my day. Any day that I am more precise about my behaviour and deeds, and am more careful, I am more respected when being woken up." (Ayatollah Javedan's website, the grandson of Shaykh Murtiḍā

Javedan (Zahid)), <http://new.javedan.ir/memoirs/1388/06/04/index.html?id=471>

65. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon no. 193.

66. *Qur'an*, 99:7-8.

67. Ḥaḍrat Zahrā (as) in her famous sermon said, "God has made the ritual prayers obligatory so that a person may be purified from arrogance." (*Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 568, a part of the Fadak Sermon)

«فرض الله الصلاة لتزجها عن الكبر»

68. This was written by Imam Riḍā (as). (*ʿIlal al-Sharāya*, vol. 2, p. 317) وأنها إفراز بالزُّهوية لله عز وجل وخلق الأنداد وقيام نين يدي الجبار حل جلاله بالدل و المشككة و الحُصوع و الإغتراف و القلمت للإقالة من سائب الذنوب و وضع الوجه على الأرض كل يوم خمس مرات إغظماً لله عز وجل و أن يكون ذاكراً غير ناسي و لا تطير و يكون خائباً مُتدليلاً زاعباً طالباً للتريادة في الدين و الدنيا مع ما فيه من الإلترجار و المندأومة على ذكر الله عز وجل بالليل و النهار لئلا يلتسى العبد سيده و مذبزه و خالفه فينظر و يظن و يكون في ذكره ليزه و قيامه بين يديه زاجراً له عن المعاصي و مانعاً من أنواع الفساد».

69. Imam Šādiq (as) said, "The closest state of a servant to the Almighty and Glorious God is the state when he is prostrating." (*Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, p. 209)

«أقرب ما يكون العبد إلى الله عز وجل و هو ساجد».

70. Imam Šādiq (as) said, "If a servant lengthens his prostration without anyone seeing him, (by seeing this scene) Satan will tell himself, 'Woe to me! They obeyed, and I disobeyed. They prostrated, and I defied.'" (*Thawāb al-ʿAmāl*, p. 34)

«إن العبد إذا أطال السجود حيث لا يراه أحد قال الشيطان وا ويا له أظاعوا و غضيت و سجدوا و أنبت».

71. *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 474.

72. *Daʿwāt al-Rāwandī*, p. 39.

73. This tradition is from the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī (as) (*Ghurar al-Hikam*, p. 568)

«عن أمير المؤمنين (ع): «لو تعلم المصلي ما يحشاه من الرخصة لما رفع رأسه من السجود»

74. "Mūsā bin Jaʿfar was called a righteous servant due to his worshipping and struggles. Our companions have narrated that he entered the

Mosque of the Prophet of God (s) and went into prostration in the beginning of the night. He could be heard saying in his prostration, 'I have a big sin. So, how beautiful is a big forgiveness from You, O the Lord of Righteousness and the Lord of Forgiveness.' He would continuously say this sentence until morning." (*Mizān al-Hikmah*, tradition no. 1234, narrated from *Tārīkh al-Baghdād*, vol. 13, p. 27)

كَانَ مَوْسَى بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ يُدْعَى الْعَبْدَ الصَّالِحَ مِنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَاجْتِهَادِهِ. رَوَى أَصْحَابُنَا أَنَّهُ دَخَلَ مَسْجِدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فَتَسَجَّدَ سَجْدَةً فِي أَوَّلِ اللَّيْلِ، وَشَوَّعَ وَهُوَ يَقُولُ فِي سُجُودِهِ: عَظِيمُ الذَّنْبِ عِنْدِي، فَتُبْحَسُنِ الْعَفْوَ عِنْدَكَ. يَا أَهْلَ الثَّقُوفِ وَيَا أَهْلَ الْمَغْفِرَةِ. فَجَعَلَ يُرَدِّدُهَا حَتَّى أَصْبَحَ. †

75. Imam Kāzim's (as) guard in the prison of the cursed Hārūn al-Rashīd stated the following about the situation of Imam Kāzim (as) in prison, "I watch over him day and night. Whenever I look at him he is always in prostration. His schedule is this way that after the Morning Prayer he reads the recommended supplications for after the prayer for one hour until the sun rises. Then, he prostrates and stays in that position until my agent informs him that it is noontime. Then he gets up and starts praying the Noon Prayer without making the minor ablution again. So we understand that during the whole time that he was prostrating he hasn't slept. Then, he continues praying until he finishes the Afternoon Prayer. After finishing the Afternoon Prayer, he puts his blessed head on the ground and prostrates continuously. He prostrates until the sun sets. Then, he raises his head and without making the minor ablution again, he prays the Sunset Prayer. Again he continues praying until he has prayed the Evening Prayer. After praying the Evening Prayer, he breaks his fast with the little food that they bring for him. Then, he makes the minor ablution again and starts prostrating until he gets up and sleeps a little. After sleeping, he gets up, makes the minor ablution again and starts praying the Midnight Prayer until it is time for the Morning Prayer. From the time that they have entrusted him to me, this is what he has done." (*Amālī, al-Ṣadūq*, p. 147)
76. The Holy Prophet of God (s) said, "God boasts before the angels due to the existence of three groups of people... The second is a person who wakes up alone in the night to pray. He prostrates and

while he is prostrating, he falls asleep. At this time, God tells His angels, 'Look at My servant. His soul is with Me, and his body is prostrating in front of Me.'" (*Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 5, p. 296)

وَأَنَّ رَبَّنَا يَنْهَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِثَلَاثَةِ نَفَرٍ... وَرَجُلٌ قَامَ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ وَخَذَهُ فَمَسَخَدَ وَنَامَ وَهُوَ سَاجِدٌ فَيَقُولُ انظُرُوا إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي رُوْحَهُ عِنْدِي وَجَسَدُهُ سَاجِدٌ لِي. ﴿

Chapter 3

77. This tradition is from Imam Sajjād (as). (*Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 619)

وَوَحَى الصَّلَاةَ أَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا وَفَادَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَأَنَّكَ فِيهَا قَائِمٌ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ فَصَمِّمُ مَقَامَ الْعَبْدِ الدَّلِيلِ الْخَيْرِ الرَّاعِبِ الرَّاجِي الْخَائِفِ الْمُسْتَخِيرِ الْمُتَضَرِّعِ الْمُعْجِزِ لِمَنْ كَانَ تَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِالْمُسْكُونِ وَالْوَفَّارِ... ﴿

78. *Irshād al-Qulūb*, vol. 1, p. 160.

79. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 193. This sermon is known as 'Hammām' or 'Muttaqīn' (those who guard themselves against evil).

80. "One of the things, which nullifies prayer, is to laugh loudly on purpose. If a person unintentionally laughs loudly or if he smiles, his prayer won't be nullified." (*Islamic Laws and Regulations from Imam Khomeini*, p. 252)

81. "Rule no. 941: Moving the Body while Saying the Sentences of the Prayer: 1. The body of the person who is praying should be still without any movement when saying the obligatory sentences of the prayer. 2. It is an obligatory precaution that the body of the person who is praying be still without any movement when saying the recommended sentences of the prayer. 3. A person should say, "Bi Ḥülillāhi wa Qūwwatihi Aqūmu wa Aq'ud (I stand up and sit down with God's help and power)," while getting up. (*Islamic Laws and Regulations from Imam Khomeini*, p. 253)

82. Imam Riḍā (as) said, "When you are praying... don't scratch yourself." (*Fiqh al-Riḍā*, p. 101)

﴿فَإِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَقُومَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ... وَلَا تُخَكِّ بِدَنِكَ. ﴿

83. "Rule no. 1111: The following items are discouraged while praying: turning one's face slightly to the right or left when praying, looking with one's eyes to the right or left, playing with one's beard or with one's hands and intertwining one's fingers in each other, doing any deed that is contradictory to humbleness in a person who is praying, praying while one is sleepy, and praying when one needs to urinate or have a movement." (*Islamic Laws and Regulations from Imam Khomeini*)
84. One of the famous mystics, who passed away in the year 1340 AHS in the city of Shahr Ray, Tehran, was a tailor until the end of his life. They have related that because he refrained from a sin when he was young, he had much spiritual success. He truly adhered to the laws of religion. Ayatollah RayShahrī has gathered his biography, stories about him and sayings from him in a book entitled, "*Kīmīāya Muḥabbat*."
85. *Kīmīāya Muḥabbat*, p. 219.
86. Imam Riḍā (as) said, "Don't look to this side and that side while praying." (*Fiqh al-Riḍā*, p. 101)
- « وَلَا تَلْتَفِتْ يَمِينًا وَشِمَالًا »
87. Imam Riḍā (as) said, "When you are reciting the prayer, you should look at the place you prostrate and when you are bowing you should look between your feet." (*Fiqh al-Riḍā*, p. 106)
- « وَ يَكُونُ نَظْرُكَ فِي وَقْتِ الْقِرَاءَةِ إِلَى مَوْضِعِ سُجُودِكَ وَ فِي وَقْتِ الرَّكْعَةِ بَيْنَ رِجْلَيْكَ »
88. Imam Riḍā (as) said, "You should look at your nose while prostrating and look at your skirt (knees) between prostrations." (*Fiqh al-Riḍā*, p. 106)
- « وَ يَكُونُ نَظْرُكَ فِي وَقْتِ السُّجُودِ إِلَى أَنْفِكَ وَ بَيْنَ السُّجُودَتَيْنِ فِي خَدْرِكَ »
89. "The knees should be placed in such a way that people say this person is prostrating while on his knees..." (*Tahrīr al-Wasīlah*, Imam Khomeini, Farsi Translation, vol. 1, p. 194) It is an obligatory precaution that a person should rest on the seven required places of his body. Therefore, only touching these places to the ground is not enough. (*Ibid*, p.195) It is an obligatory precaution that a person should put the ends of his two big toes on the ground when

prostrating. If he puts other toes or the top of his foot on the ground, or if due to his nail being long the end of his toe doesn't reach the ground, his prayer is nullified. (*Ibid*, rule no. 1062)

90. *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 21.

91. This tradition is from Imam Riḍā (as). (*Fiqh al-Riḍā*, p. 101)

«فَإِذَا رُذْتُ أَنْ تَقُومَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَلَا تَقُومُ إِلَيْهَا مُتَكَاسِلًا وَلَا مُتَنَاعِسًا وَلَا مُسْتَعْجِلًا وَلَا مُتَلَاهِيًا
وَلَكِنْ ثَانِيهَا (عَلَى السُّكُونِ) وَالْوَقَارَ وَالرَّوَدَةَ وَعَلَيْكَ الْخُشُوعَ وَالْخُضُوعَ مُتَوَاضِعًا لِلَّهِ جَلَّ وَ
عَزَّ مُتَخَابِعًا عَلَيْكَ خُشْيَةً وَسِيْمَاءَ الْخَوْفِ زَاجِيًا حَائِفًا بِالظَّمَانِيَّةِ عَلَى الْوَحْلِ وَالْحَذَرِ قَفِيفٍ
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ كَالْغَبْدِ الْأَبْقِيِّ الْمُذْنِبِ تَبِينِ يَدَيْ مَوْلَاةٍ فَصَفَّ قَدَمَيْكَ وَانصَبْ نَفْسَكَ وَلَا تُثَلِّثْ
يَمِينًا وَبِشِمَالًا وَتَخَسَّبْ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ وَلَا تَغْبِثْ بِخَبْرِكَ وَلَا بِشَيْءٍ
مِنْ حَوَارِكَ وَلَا تَفْرُقْ أَمْرًا بِعَلَمِكَ وَلَا تَحْكَمْ بِدَعْوِكَ وَلَا تَوْلِجْ بِأَنْفِكَ وَلَا يَثُوبِكَ وَلَا تُصَلِّ وَأَنْتَ
مُتَلَبِّمٌ وَلَا يَحُورُ لِلنِّسَاءِ الصَّلَاةُ وَهِيَ مُتَنَبِّهَاتٌ وَتَكُونُ بَصْرَكَ فِي مَوْضِعِ شُجُودِكَ مَا دُمْتَ
قَائِمًا وَتَهْزَأُ عَلَيْكَ الْجُرْعُ وَالْهَلْعُ وَالْخَوْفُ وَارْعَبْ مَعَ ذَلِكَ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.»

92. *Uṣūl Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 299.

93. *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 5, p. 29.

94. *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 2, p. 28.

95. Imam Ṣādiq (as) said, "When a servant hurries and gets up quickly after the prayer in order to take care of his needs, the Almighty God says, 'Doesn't My servant know that I am the God Who grants his needs?'" (*Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 474)

«إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا عَجَلَ فَمَامَ لِحَاجَتِهِ يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَمَا يَعْلَمُ عَبْدِي أَنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَقْبَسِي
الْحَوَاجَةَ.»

96. Ayatollah Muqtadāyī, the director of the Islamic seminaries said, "A while back, a meeting of the Community of Teachers of the Community was held in the presence of Ayatollah Khamenei. When it was Ayatollah Khamenei's turn to talk after the initial talks, the Call to Prayer could be heard. He said, 'If we continue our meeting now, it is a disrespect to prayer.'" (*Hawzah News*, The Official Hawzah News Agency. News code: 280204; Date: 4/3/91 AHS)

97. This tradition is from Imam `Alī (as). (*Khiṣāṣ*, Shaykh Ṣadūq, vol. 2, p. 621)

«فَلَا يَسْغَلَنَّكُمْ عَنْ أَوْقَاتِهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ أُمُورِ الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ دَمَّ أَقْوَامًا فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ
عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ يَغْنِي أَنَّهُمْ عَاقِبُونَ اشْتِهَانُوا بِأَوْقَاتِهَا.»

98. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, wisdom no. 333.

99. *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 150.

100. The Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), said, "Controlling our desires when faced with our likings and fears is the best politeness." (*Ghurur al-Hikam*, p. 427)

﴿صَبَطَ النَّفْسَ عِنْدَ الرَّغْبِ وَالرَّهْبِ مِنَ أَفْضَلِ الْأَدَبِ﴾

Half of our spiritual problems are due to our likings (al-raghab), and half of them are due to pointless fears (al-rahab). One can stand up to both of these with politeness.

101. Imam Mūsā bin Ja`far (as) said, "A man asked the Prophet of God (s), 'What is the right of a father on his son.' The Prophet (s) replied, 'He (the son) shouldn't call him by his name, walk in front of him, sit down before he does, or do something that causes people to curse his father.'" (*Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 159)

﴿سَأَلَ رَجُلٌ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص): مَا حَقُّ الْوَالِدِ عَلَى وَلَدِهِ؟ قَالَ: لَا يُسَمِّيهِ بِاسْمِهِ وَلَا يَمْشِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا يَجْلِسُ قَبْلَهُ وَلَا يَسْنِيئُ لَهُ.﴾

102. This tradition is from Imam Muḥammad Bāqir (as). (*Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 518)

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَانَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ (ع) يَأْتِي أَنْ يُؤَاكِلَ أُمَّةً. فَمَقِيلٌ لَهُ: يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أَنْتَ أَبْرُؤُ النَّاسِ وَأَوْصَلُهُمْ لِلرَّحِمِ فَكَيْفَ لَا تُؤَاكِلُ أُمَّكَ؟ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ تُنْسَبَ بِي إِلَى مَا سَنَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ﴾

103. *Jāmi` al-Akhbār*, p. 124.

104. This prayer is from Imam Sajjād (as). (*Ṣaḥīfah Sajjādiyyah*, prayer no. 24, The Prayer for Parents)

﴿اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي أَهَابًا فِيمَا خَلِقَةُ الشُّرَطَانِ الْعَسُوفِ. وَأَبْرَجًا بِرَأْسِ الْأُمِّ الرَّزْءُوفِ﴾

105. The Commander of the Faithful, `Alī (as), said, "The happiness of a believer is on his face, and his sadness is in his heart." (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, wisdom no. 333)

﴿الْمُؤْمِنُ يَشْرُدُ فِي وَجْهِهِ وَخُرْتُهُ فِي قَلْبِهِ.﴾

106. In history it is related that, "A man was carrying his old, disabled mother on his shoulders and was circumambulating (the Ka'ba). At this time, he came upon the Prophet (s) and asked him, 'Have I repaid my mother's right with this deed?' The Prophet (s) replied,

'No, you haven't compensated for even one of her breaths.'" (*Tafsīr Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, vol. 4, p. 2222; *Tafsīr Nimūnah*, vol. 21, p. 333)
 «أَنْ رَجُلًا كَانَ فِي الطَّوَافِ حَامِلًا أُمَّةً يَطْوُفُ بِهَا فَسَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ (ص) هَلْ أَذِيْتُ حَقَّهَا؟ قَالَ: لَا. وَلَا يَرْفَرَةٌ وَاجِدَةٌ.»

107. Imam Javād (as) said, "If there are two people, the one who is politer is better before God." People asked him, "We understand him being better in the eyes of the people, but why is he superior before God?" The Imam (as) replied, "It is due to his reciting the Qur'an correctly in the way that it has been revealed, narrating our traditions in the way that we have said them, and invoking God." (*Irshād al-Qulūb*, vol. 1, p. 160)

«مَا اجْتَمَعَ رَجُلَانِ إِلَّا كَانَ أَحْفَظُهُمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ آدَبُهُمَا فَقَبِيلُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذُنُوبُنَا فَصَلُّهُ عِنْدَ النَّاسِ فَمَا فَصَلُّهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ بِقِرَاءَةِ الْقُرْآنِ كَمَا أَنْزَلَ وَيَزْوِي خَدِيثِنَا كَمَا قُلْنَا وَيَدْعُو اللَّهَ مُغْرَمًا بِدُعَائِهِ.»

108. This is referring to the famous sentence, "There is enjoyment in any new thing."

109. The following has been narrated from Shaykh Shahīd in the book *Biḥār al-Anwār* about the rituals for pilgrimage, "The 13th ritual in making a pilgrimage is that when a person has finished visiting the grave, he must leave the shrine quickly so that his or her reverence for the Imam will remain and his enthusiasm for going to the shrine will increase." (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 97, p. 135)

«وَالثَّالِثُ عَشْرًا تَعْجِيلُ الْخُرُوجِ عِنْدَ قِصَاةِ الْوَطْرِ مِنَ الزِّيَارَةِ لِتَعْظِيمِ الْحُرْمَةِ وَنِسْنَدُ السُّؤْفَى.»

110. *Al-Ihtijāj*, vol. 2, p. 498.

111. *Ma'ālī al-Sibṭayn, Al-Māzandarānī*, vol. 1, pp. 340-342.

C h a p t e r 4

112. This important use and effect has been explained in the second section.

113. *Man Lā Yaḥduruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 3, p. 568.

114. One example is this tradition from the Holy Prophet of Islam (s). (*Thawāb al-'Amāl*, p. 222)

«أكثر أهل جهنم المتكبرون.»

115. Imam Šādiq (as) said, "There is a valley in Hell, which is for arrogant people. This location complains to God because of the severity of the heat there. It asks God to let it breathe once. When this permission is given to it, Hell catches on fire because of its breathing." (*Uṣūl al-Kāfir*, vol. 2, p. 310)

«إن في جهنم نودياً للمتكبرين يقال له نسقر شكاً إلى الله عز و جل شدة حره وسأله أن ياذن له أن يتنفس فتنفس فأحرق جهنم.»

116. The Holy Qur'an states, "Enter the gates of Hell to live therein forever. How terrible is the dwelling of the arrogant ones." (*Qur'an*, 40:76)

«ادخلوا أبواب جهنم خالدين فيها فبئس مثوى المتكبرين.»

117. The Holy Prophet of Islam (s) said, "If a person dies and has even a small amount of arrogance in his heart, he will not be able to smell Heaven, unless he has repented beforehand." (*Amāli, Shaykh Tūsī*, p. 537)

«من مات و في قلبه مثقال ذرة من كبر، لم يجد رائحة الجنة إلا أن يتوب قبل ذلك.»

118. Imam Šādiq (as) said, "A person who has even a small amount of arrogance in his heart will not enter Heaven. And a person who has even a small amount of faith will not go to Hell." The narrator asked, "May I be sacrificed for you! Sometimes it happens that when a person wears (new) clothes and climbs on a mount, he feels a kind of self-aggrandizement and eminence. Is the source of this feeling arrogance?" The Imam (as) replied, "No! These feelings are not arrogance. What is meant by arrogance is denying the truth. In the same way, faith is admitting the truth." (*Thawāb al-'Amāl*, p. 222)

«لا يدخل الجنة عبد في قلبه مثقال ذرة من خردل من كبر ولا يدخل النار عبد في قلبه مثقال حبة من خردل من إيمان قلت جعلت فداك إن الرجز ليلبس النوب و يركب الذئبة فيكاذ يعرف من نفسه الكبر قال ليس ذلك بكبر إنما الكبر إكثار الحق والإيمان إقرار بالحق.»

119. The Holy Prophet of God (s) told the parents of children, "Order your children to pray when they are seven." (*'Awāli al-La'āl*, vol. 1, p. 328)

«مخاطباً لإولياء الأطفال أمرؤ أولادكم بالصلاة وهم أبناء سبع.»

120. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon no. 193.
121. The Holy Prophet of God (s) said, "Loving this world is the worst of all mistakes." (*Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'ah*, p. 138)
 ﴿حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ﴾
122. *Qur'an*, 13:28.
123. *Qur'an*, 6:162.
124. This tradition is from Imam Ḥasan (as). (*Makārim al-Akhḫlāq*, p. 204)
 ﴿جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّحْسِيِّ (ع) يَسْتَشِيرُهُ فِي نَزْوِجِ ابْنَتِهِ فَقَالَ زَوْجُهَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ ثَقِيٍّ فَإِنَّهُ إِنْ أَحْتَمَا أَكْرَمَهَا وَإِنْ أَبْغَضَهَا لَمْ يَظْلَمَهَا﴾
125. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, p. 402.
126. *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*, p. 284.
127. A part of the Jūshan Kabīr Supplication. (*Miṣbāḥ Kaf'amī*, p. 260)
128. This is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s). (*Wasā'il al-Sharī'ah*, vol. 4, p. 28)
 ﴿لَا يَزَالُ الشَّيْطَانُ دَعِرًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ مَا خَافَ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ الْخَمْسِ لِوَفَيْتِهِنَّ فَإِذَا صَيَّقَهُنَّ تَجَرَّأَ عَلَيْهِ فَأَذْخَلَهُ فِي الْعِظَائِمِ﴾
129. "Whenever a difficult question arose for Abū `Alī Sīnā, he would get up, make the minor ablution, go to the central Mosque in the city, pray, and ask God to make this difficulty easy for him and uncover the answer to this question." (*Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 133)
 ﴿وَكَانَ إِذَا أَشْكَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ مَسْأَلَةٌ تَوَضَّأَ وَقَصَدَ الْمَسْجِدَ الْجَامِعَ، وَصَلَّى وَدَعَا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْ يَسْئَلَهَا عَلَيْهِ وَيَفْتَحَ مَعْلَمَهَا لَهُ﴾
130. *Qur'an*, 70:19-22.

Chapter 5

131. The Prophet of God (s) stated, "A two cycle prayer, which is short but with contemplation, is better than a night spent in worshipping." (*Thawāb al-'Amāl*, p. 44)
 ﴿رَكَعَتَانِ خَفِيفَتَانِ فِي التَّفَكُّرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ قِيَامٍ لَيْلَةٍ﴾
132. *Man Lā Yahḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 614, Zīrāt Jāmi'ah KabTrah.

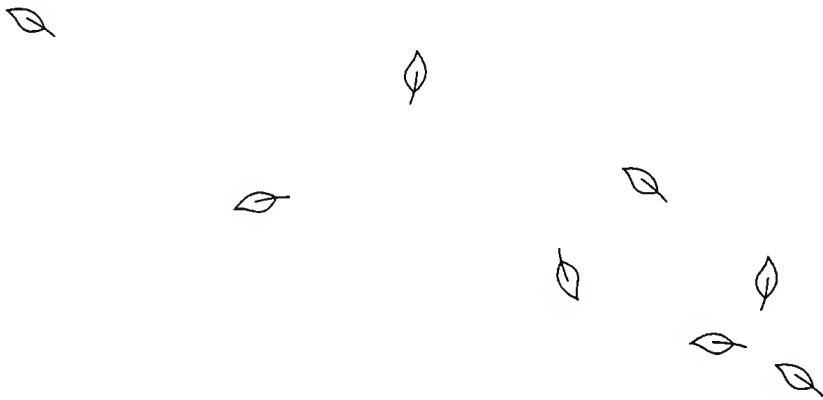
133. *Qur'an*, 20:12.
134. Imam Ṣādiq (as) stated, "The meaning of 'Take off your shoes...' is 'O Moses, rid your heart of two fears. One is the fear of destruction, which had encompassed your family at the time when birthing pains had come upon her. The other is the fear of Pharaoh.'" (*ʿIlal al-Sharāya*, vol. 1, p. 66)
135. *Qur'an*, 1:1-5.
136. *Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 488. (*Qur'an*, 2:186)
137. *Sulālah Nūr*, p. 54, as related by Hujjatul Islam Rāshid Yazdī.
138. After the martyrdom of Muḥammad bin Abī Bakr, the Commander of the Faithful (as) summoned Mālīk. He told him the following about ruling Egypt, "No one besides you is suitable for there. So, go there. If I do not give you recommendations about what you should do, it is because your opinion is enough." (*Āmālī*, *Mufīd*, p. 80; *Al-Ghārāt*, vol. 1, p. 165)
- «لَيْسَ لَهَا غَيْرُكَ فَاطْرُجُ الْبَيْتِ زَجَمَكَ اللَّهُ فَبِئْسَ إِنْ لَمْ أَوْصِكَ أَكْتَفَيْتَ بِرَأْيِكَ.»
139. This is a tradition from Imam `Alī (as). (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, wisdom no. 443)
- «مَالِكٌ وَ مَا مَالِكٌ، وَ اللهُ لَوْ كَانَ جَبَلًا لَكَانَ قُلْدًا وَ لَوْ كَانَ حَجْرًا لَكَانَ صَلْدًا لَا يَزْتَمِيهِ الْخَاجِزُ وَ لَا يُؤْفِي عَلَيْهِ الظَّالِمُ.»
140. This is a tradition from Imam `Alī (as). (*Sharḥ Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, vol. 15, p. 98)
- «زَجَمَ اللهُ مَالِكًا فَلَمَّذَ كَانَ لِي كَمَا كُنْتُ لِرَسُولِ اللهِ (ص)»
141. This is a tradition from Imam `Alī (as). (*Al-Ghārāt*, vol. 1, p. 170)
- «عَلَى مِثْلِ مَالِكٍ فَلَمَّذَكَ الْبِدَاكِي وَ هَلْ مَوْجُودٌ كَمَا لَكَ؟»
142. *Qur'an*, 2:255.
143. *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 133.
144. *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt*, pp. 31-32.
145. Imam Sajjād (as) said, "A prayer is not accepted from a person except for that which is done with presence of mind from the heart." I said, "May I be sacrificed for you. According to this we will be destroyed!" He said, "No, God makes up for the lacks with the recommended

prayers that you do." (*Da`ā'im al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 158)

وَأَنَّهُ لَا يَقْبَلُ مِنْ صَلَاةِ الْعَبْدِ إِلَّا مَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ. فَقَالَ لَهُ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) قَدْ هَلَكْنَا إِذَا
قَالَ. كَلَّا، إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتِمُّ ذَلِكَ بِالتَّوَابِ.۞

146. Imam Şādiq (as) spoke about God saying, "Surely, good deeds remove bad deeds." The Imam (as) said, "The Midnight Prayer of a believer erases the sins that he or she has committed during the day." (*Thawāb al-'Amāl*, p. 43)

«يَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُدْهِبُنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ» قَالَ صَلَاةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ بِالنَّيْلِ تُدْهِبُ
بِمَا عَمِلَ مِنْ ذُنُوبٍ بِالنَّهَارِ.۞





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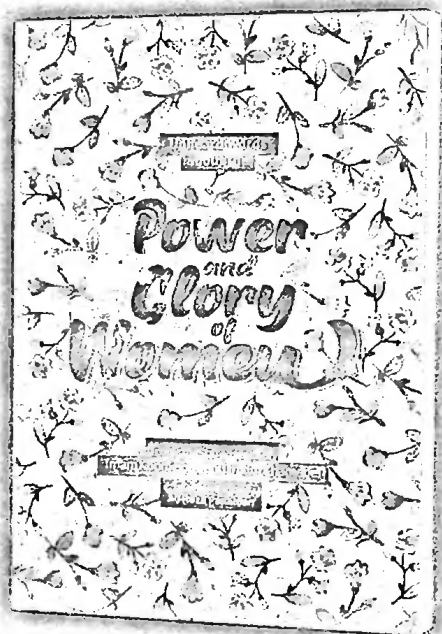


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Unheard Words about the

Power and Glory of Women

from the Statements of
Imam Khomeini (r) and Imam Khamenei

With an Introduction by
Ali Reza Panahian



If the people who pray, pray well, those who don't pray will fall in love with praying. We consider the sins of all those who don't pray to be the fault of those who pray. Why? Because, if those who pray, pray well, enjoy their prayers enough and gain ample benefit from them, naturally most of those who don't pray will gravitate toward praying. This is the way to promote religion. If we wish to struggle to encourage those who don't pray to pray, the best way is to first pay more attention to our own prayers and to improve them.

