

Importance of Salat in its Prime Time (Awwal al-Waqt)

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Arifa Hudda

Al-Islam.org

Article

Authors(s):

[Arifa Hudda](#) [1]

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Compiled by Arifa Hudda (www.al-mubin.org) [2]

The Salat is the time when the meeting with Allah and the ascension (Mi'raj) of the believer takes place. We all know the importance of this obligatory act, and thus, we do not wish to delve into that area. Rather, we want to look at the greatness and rewards of performing the Salat in its 'appointed time' – meaning right when the prime time for it sets in.

There are numerous verses of the Qur'an and countless ahadith relating the merits of a punctual Salat, however, we will just take a look at some of them. We should note that we have omitted most of the 'Arabic text and references for brevity. The selection of ahadith presented have been translated from the book entitled, "Reward of Actions : The reward for Performing the Salat when it's Time Sets in", compiled by the well-known Iranian scholar, 'Abbas 'Azizi.

Importance of Salat at its Appointed Time

- 1) The Prophet of Islam Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, "No time of Salat sets in but an Angel calls out (from amongst the people) to the people by saying: 'O' people! Get up and perform your Salat on its prime time so as to extinguish the fire which you have prepared by your own sins!"
- 2) The 8th Imam, 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (peace be upon him) said: "O' so and so! Whenever the time for Salat sets in, recite it, for you do not know what will happen (after that time)."
- 3) Muhammad ibn Muslim says that he heard Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) say "As soon as the time for an obligatory(wajib) Salat sets in the door of the heavens are opened so that the accepted deeds of the servants can ascend upwards, and I do not like that anyone's deeds go up before mine or that anyone's Salat is written in the books of Allah before my Salat."
- 4) The Holy Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) said the best of the deeds in the eyes of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) are the Salawat (five daily Salat) in their prime times and after that, doing goodness to one's father and mother and after that, the best act is Jihad (struggle) in the way of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He)."
- 5) It has been narrated that Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said, "The

Angel of Death, 'Izra'il states: 'There is no house in the east or west of the earth made of skin or hair (animal hide) except that five times every day I look to the inhabitants of that house.' "The Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family), after hearing this stated, 'These times are none other than the times of the five daily prayers. If the people of that house are of those who protect the times of their prayers, then at the time of death, the Angel will recite the Shahadatain to them and Shaitan (who at this point in time wants to steal the faith away from the believer), will be pushed far away.' "

Reward of Performing the Salat in its Prescribed Time

1) Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said, "When the time for Salat sets in, the doors of the heavens are opened for the ascension of the (good) deeds."

2) Ishaq ibn 'Ammar said, "I asked Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon him), 'O' Aba 'Abdillah! Inform me what is the time for Salat al-Fajr that has the most merit in it?' The Imam replied, 'Right at the true dawn, since Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) says in the Qur'an: [1](#):

إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

Meaning that the performance of Salat al-Fajr is witnessed by both the Angels of the day and the Angels of the night; therefore, whichever servants recites his/her Salat starts), it will be written twice for them – the Angels of the day will write in his books and so will Angles of the night”.

3) It is narrated from Imam Hasan al-Askari (peace be upon him) that prophet Musa (peace be upon him) in his whispered prayer to Allah (Glorified and Exhaulted is He) used to say, "O' Allah! What is the reward for one who performs his Salat in its proper time?" Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) replied, "Whatever he asks from Me, I will give it to him and I will make heaven permissible for him."

Effects of Performing the Salat in its Prescribed Time

A Divine Light on the Day of Judgement

1) The Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) has said, "One who recites his five daily Salat with complete purity and in their prime time, on the Day of Judgement, this Salat will be a divine light and proof for him; and one who disregards the Salat (does not give the Salat any importance), will be raised up alongside with Fir'awn and Haman."

Talqin at the Time of Death

2) The Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, "The reason why the Angel of Death looks at all the people during the time for Salat is because he wants to see who is considering

the Salat important enough to recite it in its proper time; and at the time of death, the Angel of Death will recite the Shahadatain to the person and will keep Iblis away from him."

Condition for Acceptance of all our Actions

3) Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, "The first thing that a servant will be taken to account for on the Day of Judgement is the Salat. If his Salat is accepted in the eyes of Allah, than all of his other deeds too will be rejected."

Protecting the Salat at its Prescribed Time

4) The 6th Imam, Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said, "Recite the Salat at its prime time and be careful of it (safeguard it)."

Salat in its Prescribed Time from the Ma'sumin

5) Anas ibn Malik said, "Normally, whenever the Prophet travelled, if the time for Salat would set in, he would stop right there and recite his Salat."

6) Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him) said: "When my father 'Ali (peace be upon him) was struck with the sword, he turned towards me and said, 'O' my son! I advise you about the Salat in its appointed time!"

7) Umm al-Hamidah, the wife of the 6th Imam (peace be upon him) narrated to Abu Basir – who was blind – when he came to pay condolences to her on the death of the Holy Imam and said, "Abu Basir you were not here and did not witness the last moments of the Imam's life, but it was a startling time."

Abu Basir questioned, 'Why?' She said, 'The Imam was in such a state that he was pretty much unconscious. Then he opened his eyes and said, "Go and tell all the family to come and gather around me." I obeyed the Imam's command and asked everyone to come. When everyone had gathered, the Imam who was semi-unconscious, and was in the last few moments of his life opened his eyes, turned to the family members and said only one thing:

لَنْ تَنْلُ شَفَاعَتُنَا مَنْ اسْتَخَفَّ بِالصَّلَاةِ

Our intercession will never reach that person who takes his Salat lightly.

After saying this, the Imam (peace be upon him) left this world for his heavenly abode.

8) At the time of Salat, Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) would stop any work he was doing and would not consider anything to be more important than the

Salat. Abu Hashim Ja'far said, "I had the honour to go and see Imam al-'Askari (peace be upon him) and (when I went to see him) he was busy writing something; but as soon as the time for the Salat came, he put his writings aside and stood up for the Salat."

Giving Preference to Salat in its Prescribed Time to all Other Work

9) Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said, "Recite the Salat in its designated times; and do not recite it before its time just because you are free (don't have anything else to do) and do not delay it because you feel you are too busy; for you should know that all of your actions are connected to your Salat."

10) Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said, "There is no action that is better in the eyes of Allah than the Salat, therefore, one must not let any worldly thing stop one from performing the Salat at its prime time. Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) condemns the one who is negligent of his Salat, and know that Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) does not accept anything except that which is performed with sincerity."

11) The late Marja', Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Baha ad-Dini gave a lot of importance to the performance of Salat at its prescribed time and he used to encourage those who would perform the Salat on time by telling them, "If you want to attain great blessings, then you should not leave out the Salat at its prime time."

Awaiting the Time of Salat

12) The Holy Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, "If someone prepares himself for his obligatory (wajib) Salat to the extent that he is awaiting the time of the Salat and he prays his Salat in its prime time and performs the Ruku' and Sujud properly, with attention and humility, and then he is busy in the praise of Allah (Ta'qibat) until the time for the next Salat sets in and during this time period, does not indulge in vain or useless actions, then Allah will write for him the reward of performing Hajj and 'Umrah and will classify him as one of the 'Illyin (the most high)."

Delaying the Time of Salat

13) Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) has said, "Cursed is the one, cursed is the one, who delays his Salat al-Fajr until the time when the stars disappear." He then said, "Cursed is the one, cursed is the one who delays his Maghrib Salat until the time that the stars come out."²

14) Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said, "There is no action more beloved in the eyes of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) than the Salat; therefore, do not let any affair of the world stop you from performing the Salat right when its prescribed time sets in, since Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) reproaches you in Surah Ma'un and has commanded the people that,

‘Woe to the people who perform the Salat, but have accustomed themselves to negligence in regards to the Salat.’

Meaning that woe upon the person who performs his prayer, however he is negligent of the timings of the Salat and is careless in performing the Salat in its prime time."

15) The Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) told Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) that, "With complete and proper Wudhu', stand up for the Salat at its prime time, and do not delay it from its appointed time because delaying the Salat without a (valid) reason brings about the wrath of Allah."

To close this discussion, we narrate an incident about the late Imam Khomeini (may Allah raise his rank). It has been narrated from Aqa Mahmudi Burujerdi that he said, "Imam Khomeini used to give a lot of importance to the Salat in its appointed time. He used to often quote the narration from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) that "if anyone takes their Salat lightly, then they will be deprived of our intercession."

Once I asked him, 'to take the Salat lightly maybe means that a person sometimes performs the Salat and sometimes he does not.' The late Imam replied, ' No! This goes against the explanation of the hadith. What the Imam meant by this was that the time for Zuhr sets in and the person does not perform his Salat in its prime time, then in reality, he has given preference to something else (over his Salat and thus has taken it lightly).

"DO NOT TELL YOUR SALAT THAT YOU HAVE WORK TO DO, RAHTER, TELL YOUR WORK THAT YOU HAVE SALAT TO DO!"

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

"Surely the Salat at fixed hours (of the day and night) has been enjoined upon the believers."
(Surah an-Nisa, 4: 103)

1. ...for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony. (17:78)

2. Please note that 'cursed is the one' which has been used by the 12th Imam means that he is praying that may the mercy of Allah be removed from that individual.

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