

Lesson 34: The Manifestation of Worship and the Role of Mosques in Islam

After discussion and review of sections regarding recommendations of the Noble Prophet (S) to Abu Dharr, we now embark on evaluation of another portion of advice about the mosque, the etiquettes of being in a mosque and the importance of prayer.

The Concept and Scope of Worship

We will initially embark upon explaining the concept of worship and its scope. As has already been mentioned, man's true perfection is found in proximity to Allah, the Exalted, and the means of attaining this proximity, the means of man's real perfection, is spiritual service and worship. Divine acts of devotion and veneration of Allah have rich and profound contents and so much attraction that they take every weary person in the sea of bewilderment to the shores of peace and tranquility and finally towards annihilation in Allah.

Indeed, neither pen nor explanation can describe the loftiness and profoundness of the spiritual attraction of worship and in fact this high divine notion cannot be expressed in the form of words and explanations and it is only that true Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a), gallant and in love with worship, who states:

“O my Allah! The esteem of being your servant is sufficient for me and this glory is adequate for me that you are my Lord.”¹

This saying arises from the spirit of being overflowing with love of worship and devotional service to Allah.

Indeed, worship and spiritual service to Allah has a stable and firm order without which the soul of man would not be satiated, and material attraction and evolution cannot affect or fill the empty space resulting from its loss because no matter how much man makes industrial and technological progress in material

fields, not only does he not become free of want of the Absolute Self-sufficient, but his need and want increases.

a) Divisions of Worship

From a general point of view, worship can be classified into two divisions:

1. Worship in specific and particular terms consisting of acts of devotion such as the prayers, fasting, the *hajj*, etc.
2. Worship in general terms consisting of every good deed which is done with the intention of obeying Allah, the Exalted. Under this definition even eating, associating with people, talking and other deeds which Allah, the Exalted, has counted as good and are done with the intention of obeying Him are worship.

Therefore, in order for man's life to be spent on the right course and not in vain, losing this vital asset, a person has to spend most of the moments of his life in devotional service to Allah, whether in its specific or general terms. He should try to perform that which has been legislated as worship according to divine law and/or perform related duties and acts with the intention of pleasing Allah in order to gain proximity to Him.

If a small or great deed is performed by man and he does not fit it into this framework of specific or general worship, it will be null and void and become a cause of regret on the Day of Resurrection. If, God forbid, an act were a sin and a cause of worldly and heavenly suffering and torment and eternal divine retribution, or if it were not a sin but neither good nor bad [*mubah*] or disapproved but not forbidden [*makruh*], it wastes man's capital on something which has no benefit for him.

In divine law there is a great deal of recommendation to perform deeds which are essentially neither good nor bad, but if these deeds are done with the intention to obey this recommendation, they will be acts of worship.

Bearing in mind the Islamic and Qur'anic point of view regarding human life, the goal of life, the path of prosperity, one's deeds and conduct, it is natural that the Islamic call ought to be such that one should worship more and better: with regard to quantity, all the deeds that man discharges can become acts of worship and in reality worship acquires such an expansive and wide scope that it encompasses all of man's existence.

However, regarding quality (quality of worship is dependent on intention and knowledge [*ma'rifah*])—the more a person's awareness and his love for Allah increase, the more his intention in performing acts of worship become purer and the more he has presence of heart when worshiping, the greater the quality of his acts of devotion.

Sometimes two cycles [*rak'ats*] of prayer have more divine reward than thousands of prayers. This is something we all know and Islam has made us pay heed to the fact that we must try harder to make our deeds more divine and our lives entirely devoted to Allah because our perfection is found in spiritual service to Allah. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

“The most worthy of people is he who adores worship, embraces devotional service to Allah and loves it with all his heart. His whole body and soul is immersed in it and all his efforts are focused upon it and therefore he pays no importance to ease or hardships of the world.”²

With regard to what has been said, it is natural that the One that has considered such a goal for humanity, has provided all the circumstances that are necessary for man to be able to make all his deeds divine and has made available all the means that can help people to worship better and more because the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is greater than that of any other and He wants all His servants to become nearer to Him more than anyone else. Just as His Being and knowledge is infinite, His will to do good too is endless; the love which He has for His servants too has no bounds or limits.

One who has such endless mercy and desires so much good for His servants legislates injunctions which will draw His servants closer to Him. It is for this reason that legislating divine laws, obligatory and recommended acts of worship and also determining the quality and etiquettes are all divine graces. Allah, the Exalted, desires that we attain the perfection and prosperity which is befitting of us and even more. It is for this reason that He has provided the necessary means existentially and legislatively.

b) Prayer, Zenith of Devotional Service and Proximity [Qurb] to Allah

Existentially, the more mercy Allah has for his servants, the more grace He grants for them to discharge duties and acts of worship; of course, what Allah does is not extravagant and is according to special as well as particular divine laws. Legally, He encourages people by legislating injunctions the discharging of which make His servants nearer to Him. One of the things He has enjoined is prayer, which is the best means to gain proximity [*qurb*] to Him. The Infallibles state:

“Prayer is a means of proximity for every pious believer.”³

Of course, we ought to bear in mind that it is not the form and outward appearance of prayer that brings about this proximity and nearness to Allah, but the reality and essence of prayer that causes man to acquire proximity and from the point of view of the Qur'an and the *hadiths* the reality of prayer is the original and main goal, not the outward form. Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ...

“And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”⁴

Elsewhere, Allah, the Exalted, states:

... وَأَقِمْ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

“And maintain the prayer. Indeed the prayer keeps away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest.”⁵

‘Allamah Tabataba’i states, “The context of this verse bears witness to the fact that the purport of the prayer keeping away from indecency denotes that the very nature of prayer inhibits corruption and prohibited acts. You might ask how prayer prevents us from committing indecency.

In response, we say that if Allah’s servant performs the five daily prayers each day continuously all his life, especially if he does them with all his fasts in a righteous society and the individuals of that society also fast diligently as he does, naturally such prayer is not compatible with commission of mortal sins. Indeed, paying attention to Allah through servitude in such an environment and with such people should inhibit man from every kind of sin including murder, aggression, seizure of the property of orphans, adultery or fornication and other acts which religion considers iniquitous.

Not only does it prevent the perpetration of sin but also even the thought of it because prayer is the remembrance of Allah and this remembrance imbues in the worshipers faith in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, the prophetic mission and divine retribution on the Day of Resurrection and inspires the worshippers to address their Lord with purity as well as sincerity of intention, seek assistance from Him and request that He guide them on the straight path; in addition, they seek refuge in Him from misguidance and His wrath. Also, prayer impels man to become attentive to the threshold of the greatness and magnificence of Allah and to remember their Lord with praise, adoration, gratitude and exaltation.”⁶

However, from the perspective of the *hadiths*, it has been narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) that the Divine Essence of Allah does not pay attention to the prayer of a person whose heart is not harmonious with his body and his soul is not attentive to his prayer.

It is very clear that this *hadith* alludes to the true spirit of prayer, which is invocation and remembrance of Allah because remembrance of Allah is the goal of prayer. It brings purity and serenity to the heart and refines and perfects it, preparing it for divine manifestations. In regard to the fact that remembrance of Allah is the heart of prayer, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“Certainly, Allah the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance luminosity for the hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness.”⁷

In continuation, he states:

"In all periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons with whom Allah, precious are His bounties, whispered through their thoughts and spoke through their wisdom."

Also, it was with due consideration of the reality of prayer and its importance that Imam 'Ali ('a), in the middle of the *jihad* and fighting against the enemy during the battle of Siffin, looks at the sky to see if the time for the noon prayers has arrived so that he can perform his prayers. Ibn 'Abbas asks him, "What are you doing?" The Imam responds, "I am looking at the sky to see if it is time for prayer in order to pray."

Ibn Abbas says, "Is this the right time to perform prayers? At the present, war and fighting do not afford us the opportunity to perform our prayers." In response, the Imam states, "Why are we fighting them? We are at war with them for the sake of prayer!"⁸

Indeed, prayer in the view of Imam 'Ali ('a) possesses such greatness that nothing becomes a cause for him to turn his back on it. In addition, prayer in his point of view is pleasure—gratification which is not comparable to any other satisfaction. In his view, prayer is overflowing with brightness and has no darkness, bleakness or grief and spiritual service is serenity and purity in its entirety.

In his perspective, fortunate is a person who sets foot on this boundless field [i.e. prayer] and soothes his soul with its life giving rays because the world becomes small and inferior in the eyes of a person who has set foot on this infinite domain and he will not be ready to quit prayer even at the time of fighting with the enemy because he desires everything else only for the sake of prayer and he sets his heart on prayer because it is a whispered word with his Lord—a conversation with Allah. In a letter to 'Uthman bin Hanif Ansari, Imam 'Ali ('a) writes:

"Blessed is he who discharges his obligations towards Allah and endures his hardship, allows himself no sleep in the night but when sleep overpowers him he lies down on the ground using his hand as a pillow, keeps wakeful along with those who fear the Day of Judgment, and are ever away from the beds, whose lips whisper in remembrance of Allah and whose sins have been erased through their prolonged beseeching for forgiveness. **'They are the party of Allah; be it known, verily the party of Allah alone shall be the successful ones.'**" (58: 22)⁹

c) The Philosophy of Divine Legislation for the Preliminaries of the Prayer and Factors for Attention in Prayer

With regard to the importance of prayer and its role in the well-being of the individual and the society, Allah, the Exalted, has set preliminaries [*muqaddamat*] in order for it to be performed better and he has fixed etiquettes in order for his servants to remember Him more and conceive the importance of prayer. In order for man to perform a good deed, he first has to know that that deed is good and then after that think about that deed. We are aware of the goodness of many deeds, but we forget about performing them on time.

Therefore, in order for us not to forget prayer, Allah, the Exalted, has prepared preliminaries, for instance, he has legislated the call to prayer [*adhan*]. He has made prayer incumbent and has emphasized that it certainly has to be performed and not abstained from. In addition to this, He has set another form of worship by the name of *adhan* as a preliminary and reminder for the prayer and has ordered that it must be recited with a loud voice in order that the people be reminded about the scheduled time of prayer and also to incite motivation for the performance of prayer.

Although Qur'anic verses and *hadiths* which have been recorded in this regard all help man to perceive the importance of prayer, still when the time for prayer arrives and the people hear the sound of the *adhan*, attention is drawn to prayer and therefore this preliminary is a very effective factor for attracting attention to the importance of prayer.

A lot of people for whom performing prayer on time has become a habit, often become heedless of prayer when they are busy with work and even forget that prayer time is due but, when they hear the loud sound of the *adhan*, willingly or unwillingly, they become attentive to the prayers. Therefore, the wisdom behind legislating the *adhan* and the emphasis on reciting it loudly is to remind people and make them attentive to prayer and consequently this is itself a means of inviting others to perform acts of worship on time.

In regard to the virtues of performing prayer on time, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Whenever you want to perform an obligatory prayer, be like a person whose time to bid farewell with the world has arrived and he fears that he may not have the opportunity to say his prayers again. Perform your prayers at their earliest possible time." [10](#)

Likewise, it has been narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that:

"I asked the Prophet of Allah, 'What deed is more beloved to Allah?' He stated, 'The most beloved deed to Allah is performing prayer on time'." [11](#)

In addition, in order to encourage people more to perform acts of worship and to incite the spirit of devotion and servitude in people, Allah, the Exalted, has determined specific times and places to encourage and remind the people more about prayer.

For example, he has determined Thursday nights and Fridays for worship so that the essence of attention to Fridays and the fact that such a day is especially reserved for worship reminds man to perform acts of spiritual service and refrain from vain activities. Likewise, the virtues of the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah and the first ten days of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah are themselves a reminder of spiritual service to Allah because in these forty days Prophet Moses ('a), upon Allah's invitation, was busy with devotional service to Allah on the mountain of Tur. In this regard Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَأَعْدَنَا مُوسَى تَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَنْمَنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فَتَمْ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَى لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي

وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“And we made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten [more]; thus the tryst of his Lord was completed in forty nights. And Moses said to Aaron, his brother, ‘Be my successor among my people, and set things right and do not follow the way of the agents of corruption.’”[12](#)

The forty days which Moses ('a) spent in worship on the mountain of Tur is popularly known as 'the forty days of the Jews' [*arba'in-i kalimiyyah*] and the spiritual wayfarers accord a lot of importance to it and have enumerated particular etiquettes and orders for it and during those days they mainly engage in worship; what is more, in our *hadiths* particular features have been mentioned for those forty days. For instance, it has been narrated in a *hadith* that:

“Allah, the Exalted, makes springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the tongue of a person who is sincere to Him for forty days.”[13](#)

(Rewarding effects for one who worships Allah for forty days or memorizes forty *hadiths* and various things of this nature have been mentioned in numerous narrations.)

In addition, blessed days, festivals, nights of keeping vigil and the month of Ramadan have benefits so that making use of them and realizing their circumstances and timeliness may lead people to remember and worship Allah more so that man may remember his prosperity lies in devotional service and worship of Allah and it is not befitting to turn back from Allah and set one's attention on other than Him.

The Mosque, Place of Ascension for Lovers of the Beatific Vision [Liqa' Allah]

Besides the particular times, Allah has also determined special places for worship such that when people are directed towards those places and enter them, they automatically remember Allah and their devotional duties. It is for this reason that the existence of those places brings about more motivation and attention to Allah and spiritual service to Him and, in general, mosques play this role.

Though it is permissible for people to perform their prayers in all places except usurped places or places which for one reason or another are not permissible, Islam has put a lot of emphasis on performing obligatory prayers in the mosque and being committed to going to the mosque, especially for people that are neighbors of a mosque. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

“The prayer of the neighbor of a mosque is not acceptable unless performed in the mosque.”[14](#)

In regard to the emphasis which has been recorded in the *hadiths*, the religious jurisprudents have considered praying in the mosque for those people living in the neighborhood of a mosque as an

emphatic recommendation [*mustahabb mu'akkad*] and abstaining from it as an undesirable act [*makruh*]. The late Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Yazdi states:

"It is abhorred [*makruh*] for the neighbors of the mosque to perform their prayers in other than the mosque without an excuse." [15](#)

Therefore, it is befitting for man to always be present in the mosque and perform his prayers in the mosque and to reflect on the status of the mosque and observing its etiquettes and honoring it and to think about the undesirability of not being present there. Also, one should realize that besides the rewards which have been mentioned for being present in the mosque and performing one's prayers there, Allah, the Exalted, has made man beholden to Him in regard to designating the mosque as His house and granting permission to His servants to be present there.

It is natural that all of the earth is the same in the viewpoint of Allah and no place is nearer than the other to Him, therefore the purport of this assertion that the Ka'bah and the mosque are Allah's houses is that Allah, the Exalted, deals with every one of these places in the same way that every one of us deals with their own houses. That is to say, He has made these places for meeting, visiting and having familiarity with Him and for admitting his servants and visitors so as to converse with them.

Besides that, he accepts as a mosque or place of meeting and visiting Him every place which we want to set up as a mosque or place of meeting Him and this means that He has given us permission to determine the place of meeting and visiting Him and this is the greatest mark of honor He has permitted for us.

For this reason, the greatest role of the mosque is directing man's attention to Allah and promoting the feeling of worship and servitude in them, even if various mosques are not equal from the perspective of position and rank and some mosques are more important and loftier than others.

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, says, "In the divine law [shar'] of Islam, it has been recommended that it is better to perform prayers in the mosque and the best of all mosques is the Masjid al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque) and after that the Masjid al-Nabi (the Prophet's Mosque) and after that the Mosque of Kufah and after that the Masjid Bayt al-Maqdas (Mosque of Jerusalem), and after the Mosque of Jerusalem comes the Friday Mosque [masjid jami'] of every city and after that comes the local mosque and after the local mosque comes the mosque of the bazaar." [16](#)

Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Four mosques are heaven's palaces on earth; the Sacred Mosque, the Prophet's Mosque, the Mosque of Jerusalem and the Mosque of Kufah." [17](#)

These four mosques are so great and holy that it has even been recommended in some of the *hadiths* that people, from near and far, have to travel to visit them and spiritual retreat [*i'tikaf*] in them has a lot of

divine reward. In regard to the virtues of the Mosque of Kufah, Imam al-Baqir ('a) states:

"If the people knew the Mosque of Kufah, they would prepare provisions and mount horses in order to reach it. One obligatory [wajib] prayer in this mosque has the divine reward equivalent to one hajj and one recommended [mustahabb] prayer in it has the divine reward of one 'umrah." [18](#)

The Sacred Mosque is so great that the Ka'bah, the direction of prayer for the Muslims, is paced there and the Muslims are obliged to perform their prayers while facing the direction of this mosque and the Holy House. In addition, pilgrimage [hajj] to it for people who have become capable to discharge religious obligations is incumbent [wajib] and performing prayer in it has the divine reward of one million cycles [rak'ats] of prayer performed in other mosques. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

"One cycle [rak'at] of prayer in my Mosque is equivalent to one thousand cycles of prayer in any other mosque and one rak'at of prayer in the Sacred Mosque is equivalent to one thousand rak'ats in my Mosque." [19](#)

In addition, in regard to the virtues of this holy Mosque, Imam al-Baqir ('a) states:

"[If] a person recites his incumbent prayers in the Sacred Mosque, Allah accepts all the incumbent prayers which he has recited since the beginning of his puberty (age at which discharging religious duties becomes incumbent) up to the end of his life." [20](#)

Besides these mosques, other mosques too have virtues, such that it has been narrated in a divinely inspired *hadith*:

"Allah, the Exalted, states, 'Verily my houses on the earth are the mosques which shine for the dwellers of the sky in the same way that the stars shine for the inhabitants of the earth. Blessed are those who have made the mosques become their houses. Happy is the servant who performs the ritual ablution in his house and then visits Me in My house. Beware! It is incumbent on the one visited to honor his visitor and to do good to him. Give glad tidings to the people who go to the mosques in the darkness of the night that they will have a bright light on the Day of Resurrection.'" [21](#)

The Wisdom of Drawing People's Attention to Mosques

There is much wisdom in drawing people's attention to mosques which can generally be divided in two sections:

1. Social Wisdom

When mosques become centers of social activities and several times a day or on Fridays people gather in them with grandeur, the society derives social, economic and political benefits. The Muslims enjoy these benefits and virtues and have derived them since the beginning of Islam.

During the course of Islamic history, the mosque has been the base and bedrock for alleviating intellectual, religious, political and economic problems, a central point for the spread and propagation of the rich culture of Islam, a place of learning the necessary social sciences and the central point for gathering military forces and soldiers for resistance and altercation with the enemy. In general, we can mention at least four roles:

- a) A base for worship and remembrance of Allah
- b) A base for the intellectual *jihad*: teaching and learning Islamic sciences
- c) A base for Islamic unity and displaying the spirit of oneness and unity against hypocrites and known and unknown enemies
- d) A base for gathering soldiers and other forces to be dispatched to the battlefield to fight against enemies

2. Personal Wisdom

In addition to what has been mentioned, the mosque also has virtues for individuals. When an individual's route passes through the mosque and he finds himself present in it, he becomes more spiritually ready for worship. For this reason, the mosque is a reminder for man to invoke and worship Allah.

Even if a person were not thinking about Allah at all, once he passes by a mosque or dome or the minaret of the mosque, he becomes attentive that this is a house of Allah and immediately remembers his Lord. For people who desire to be loyal servants of Allah, strong awakening and alerting factors as well as more preparedness for spiritual service arise within and, for this reason, such factors are the best means of their perfection and therefore among the factors which result in a person remembering and worshiping Allah more is the existence of particular places for the purpose of worship and spiritual service.

It is for this reason that it has been recommended that even in one's own house one place should be allocated as a place of worship and devotional service and one should be careful not to allow it to become unclean so that it constitutes a better atmosphere for remembrance of Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq states:

"Imam 'Ali ('a) had set aside one room of medium size as a place of prayer. He used to go with a young baby who would not sleep at night to that room to pray."[22](#)

In addition to a prayer room in one's home, local mosques are also reminders that make man attentive to Allah and are among the means which Allah has provided for movement towards perfection and prosperity. It is for this reason that when a mosque is built in a local place, the people have to be

encouraged to go there and the divine rewards which one earns for going to the mosque and even for every step which is taken to go the mosque have to be made known so that more eagerness for going the mosque arises. People have to be made aware that the mere fact of being present in a mosque results in an increase of blessings and the removal of sins. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"The Noble Prophet (S) states, 'For a person who walks to the mosque with the intention of participating in the congregational prayers, Allah, the Exalted, grants him seventy blessings as a reward for every step which he takes and his rank too will raise higher to this same level'." [23](#)

Necessity of Understanding the Importance of Mosques and Their Etiquettes

A section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice in this discussion is related to encouraging the believers to be present in mosques to derive spiritual benefits from them. Another part is related to the rules of conduct of being in a mosque, how one can derive worthwhile benefit from the mosque and what instructions and rules of behavior one must observe so that, Allah forbid, he is not deprived of blessings because sometimes a person is so afflicted by heedlessness and satanic temptations that he converts means of goodness and prosperity to means of misfortunate and wretchedness:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفُورًا...

"Have you not seen those who pay back Allah's favor with disbelief..." [24](#)

Regrettably, man is always faced with the danger of transforming Allah's blessings into retribution and converting the means of providence into factors of misfortune; therefore, after the people have been encouraged to go to the mosques and the rewards of every step which man takes towards the mosque have been enumerated, the believers are still warned to endeavor to make the most worthwhile benefit from mosques and to be mindful of why they have come to the mosque so that, Allah forbid, they do not get preoccupied with conversation about the world, buying and selling, the expensiveness and cheapness of things, the price of the dollar and land and other things of this nature and entirely forget about where they are and for what they have come!

It is for this reason that special etiquettes have been determined for the mosque the observance of which help prevent a person from being afflicted by heedlessness so that he is not deprived of the spiritual blessings of the mosque.

Before examining the sayings of the Noble Prophet (S), we find it necessary to point out that when man makes the intention to go to the mosque, it is worthwhile to make the utmost effort to know the rules of behavior of being in the mosque to the best of one's ability because the more one's knowledge increases, the more valuable one's deeds become and observing etiquettes results in the proximity

[*qurb*] of man to Allah.

We have to know that when we are present in a mosque it means that we have entered the threshold of Allah, the Exalted, and we are in His presence and it is proper to set as criteria rules of conduct just as when we are in the presence of noble, elderly and respectable people and be overcome by humility, modesty and meekness. We must also be mindful that the greatness of elderly people is not comparable to the greatness of the Divine Essence of Allah and also the rules of conduct when we are in the presence of Allah are not comparable to the etiquettes of being in the presence of noble people.

With regard to what has been mentioned, we understand that there is no one that has the ability to truly observe correct rules of conduct in the presence of Allah. For this reason, we cannot perfectly observe rules of behavior in His presence; therefore, at least we have to pay close attention to our conduct at that time and perceive our weaknesses and shortcomings; this very bit of observation is enough to guide us to the door of Allah's benevolence. In a detailed *hadith*, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) thus explains the rules of conduct of being in a mosque:[25](#)

"Whenever you enter a mosque, know that you have called upon the great King and Lord on whose sacred threshold none but the purified set foot and permission for meeting Him has not been granted save to the truthful and righteous. When you set foot on His divine threshold, know that if just a bit of inattention overcomes you, you are as if on a precipice on the brink of disaster and He is able to deal with you either with His justice or His grace."

Therefore, if He is kind to you and deals with you according to His blessings and mercy and accepts your meager acts of spiritual service, in return He will grant you great reward and benefit, but if He deals with you according to His justice, He will grant you what you rightly deserve and will reject your acts of worship no matter how many they may be and He will deal with you as He wishes.

For this reason at His threshold, acknowledge your incapacity, guilt and need because you have the intention of worship and intimacy with Him. Tell your secrets to Him and know that He knows the apparent and hidden things of all creatures and there is not a thing hidden from Him and in His presence resemble the most needy of creatures, remove from your heart whatever prevents you from being attentive to Him and tear away the curtain that is between you and Him because He does not accept save the purest and sincerest of hearts and ponder well in which book your name will finally be recorded.

Then, if you taste the sweetness of invocation and conversation with Him, feel pleasure and drink from the cup of his mercy and benevolence, this is a sign that He has received you favorably and accepted you as His guest and you have to know that you are worthy of serving Him.

Therefore, enter the Mosque because permission and security has been granted to you. If it were other than this, you would be like one who has been left desolate because all doors have been closed to him and he is incapable of doing anything. Know that whenever He conceives that one has truly sought

refuge in Him, He will look upon that person with eyes of mercy, clemency and compassion and will make that person succeed at that which is pleasing to Him because He is the Most Generous and He loves to be magnanimous towards those servants who stand abject and forlorn in His presence seeking His favor and satisfaction. He Himself has stated:

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْنَطَرُ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ...

'Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress...'"²⁶

In order to encourage us to be present in the mosques, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! A good and pure word as well as every step you take to the mosque is charity."

The word charity [*sadaqah*] is a term that is employed much in Islamic culture and its desirability is clear: when it is said that a deed is charity, it is meant that it has extraordinary value and divine reward. Therefore, to make known the loftiness of a deed, it is said that the deed is *sadaqah* (charity). One thing that has been called charity is good and commendable words that we tell to others.

This is to make us not construe such an act as of little value and to bear in mind that when we say words that are helpful and make others more attentive to Allah and bring about abstention from ugly deeds, or even say words that cause an unhappy believer to become happy and bring about hope and release one from hopelessness and sorrow, those words are desirable to Allah and they are tantamount to worship if they are said with the intention of obedience and worship of Allah.

Initially, the Noble Prophet (S) states that every good word is charity and follows this by saying that every step taken towards the mosque is also charity and afterwards the central point of his discussion is the mosque. It is natural that once man becomes apprised about the purport and meaning of this saying of the Noble Prophet (S) and he believes that every step he takes to the mosque is charity and has divine reward and benefit, he will make haste to go to the mosque no matter how far it is from his house.

Going to the mosque will not be hard for him and he will not find any pretexts for not going to the mosque no matter how far it may be because he knows that the further the mosque is, the more divine reward he accrues!

Afterwards, in regard to the rules of conduct about being present in the mosque, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Every person who accepts the invitation of the caller towards Allah and makes goodly endeavor to go to the mosque, Allah will reward him with paradise."

Apparently, the meaning of 'the caller towards Allah' is the person who makes the call to prayer

[*mu'adhdhin*] because he invites the people to prayer on behalf of Allah and his duty is to call the *adhan* with a loud voice and announce that it is time for prayer so that the people gather in the mosque to perform acts of worship. If a person accepts his invitation, that is to say, he moves towards the mosque after hearing the *adhan*, he causes the mosque to thrive and prosper, and his reward is paradise.

Abu Dharr asks, “O Prophet of Allah! May my father and mother be your ransom, how can I develop the mosque and make it thrive?”

The Noble Prophet (S) states:

“(Development of the mosque means that) There should be no voices raised in it, falsehood and frivolity should be refrained from, buying and selling should not take place, and all vanity must be abstained from; otherwise, do not blame anyone except yourself on the Day of Resurrection.”

In these sentences, the Noble Prophet makes Abu Dharr aware of four rules of conduct:

1) Abstinence from shouting and talking loudly in the mosque

Because the mosque is a place of worship and all too often speaking loudly diverts the attention of other people such that they do not manage to mentally concentrate on prayer and other acts of spiritual service. In addition to that, speaking loudly in a gathering is construed as lack of manners and it is befitting that man behave properly and with dignity in the mosque and refrain from deeds which are not befitting of proper human conduct.

Therefore, one of the instances of establishment of a mosque is that man has to behave with grace and dignity in it and try to observe silence and if he wants to talk, he has to speak softly in order not to disturb other people who are busy either performing the prayers or other acts of devotion. In regard to refraining from talking loudly in the mosque, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

“When fifteen habits become prevalent in my community, disaster afflicts them. One of those habits is talking loudly in the mosque...”²⁷

2. Refraining from false and frivolous conversation

The mosque is the house of Allah and a place of worship and it is blameworthy to embark upon false and vain talk in the mosque because this is a kind of disrespect to the mosque and failure to observe its status. It is like a person who goes to visit someone and embarks upon praising the enemies of his host or brings up topics which hurt the host, or he undertakes other acts that do not please his host.

Without the least doubt, this is opposed to the proper rules of behavior and humanity. A visitor has to observe and respect the rights of the host and behave in a manner which pleases him. Allah is not pleased by his servants discussing topics and matters which are harmful and endanger their prosperity. In addition, doing deeds which are vain and discussing vain things in the mosque results in the prestige,

honor and philosophy of the existence of mosques being forgotten because when people sit in the mosque for the purpose of uttering futile words, they forget they are in the mosque and the important reason they are there.

3. Abstaining from buying and selling in the mosque

Buying and selling in the mosque and also deeds which are construed as professions and careers such as blacksmithing, carpentry and cosmetology as well as other jobs are forbidden in the mosque. It has been narrated in a *hadith* that Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated:

“Do not allow your mosques to become places of buying and selling...”[28](#)

The bazaar is a place for business—buying and selling and engaging in professions and careers—which the society needs, but the mosque is especially reserved for worship. Worldly activities like buying and selling must not take place in them. It is natural that if a mosque also becomes a place of buying and selling as well as other transactions, it loses its feature of being a reminder and prompter [about Allah] and not only would it not remind man about Allah, but it would make him more attentive to the world and the acquisition of income.

The mosque is a place of invocation and remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, and Islam emphasizes the point that this holy place must not be used for any activity that diverts the attention to anything other than Allah so that the ground for invocation and spiritual service is completely prepared. Therefore, it is forbidden to do activities which have professional or career aspects such as computing and carpentry in a mosque. It has been narrated in a *hadith* that:

“The Prophet of Allah found a man sharpening his spears in the mosque and stopped him from doing so. He stated, ‘The mosque was not built for such deeds.’”[29](#)

Also, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

“Amir al-Mu’minin ('a) drove a barber who was busy with hairdressing out the mosque with a whip.”[30](#)

4. Abstaining from frivolous deeds in the mosque

The Noble Prophet (S) states that one must not utter vain and inappropriate words nor perform frivolous deeds while in the mosque. One must behave well in order to please Allah, the Exalted, and earn divine reward and perfection. One must refrain from all deeds which have no benefit in the mosque, and in addition refrain from futile words and deeds in all places because among the attributes of a believer is that he abstains from frivolous deeds:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ * وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ الْأَغْوِيَةِ مُعْرِضُونَ

“Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers and avoid what is vain.”³¹

The believer should avoid frivolous deeds altogether and not let his life pass in vain, but because the majority of people do such deeds to a greater or lesser extent, or at least do neutral deeds [*mubah*] which have no benefit for them, a person should at least try to abstain from doing such deeds in the mosque and set the mosque particularly for worship so that the honor of the mosque is preserved and a person derives more spiritual benefit from it and also so that the role of the mosque as a reminder and guide towards Allah is preserved.

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states that people will blame only themselves on the Day of Resurrection if they do not observe the correct rules of conduct in the mosque. That day man will realize with regret what great benefit he could have derived from the mosque. Every person could have made the most of those very moments when he was seated in the mosque to cultivate his hereafter, but alas not only did he not derive benefit, on the contrary, he may have performed deeds which ruined his hereafter. At that time, man will be overcome with indescribable regret.

Virtues of Being Present in the Mosque for Worship

“O Abu Dharr! Every breath that you take earns a higher level in paradise for as long as you are in a mosque.”

After we have left our homes, gone to the mosque, observed correct rules of conduct and performed our prayers, we are still encouraged to stay in the mosque and not immediately leave after our prayers. We should try to stay longer because for as long as we are in the mosque, Allah grants a higher level for every breath that we take. If we recite the Qur'an, supplicate Allah, and worship or prostrate to Allah, we attain the divine reward for these deeds and in addition to that, mere breathing in the mosque results in Allah granting us higher levels in paradise for the reason that this breathing was done with the intention of obeying Allah and was done because we remained in the mosque with the intention of pleasing Allah and every deed which is done with the intention of pleasing Allah and glorifying him is considered to be worship and every kind of worship results in earning a higher level in the garden of eternal bliss. However, we have to bear in mind that the divine reward is granted to us as we breathe at the time of worshiping, not when we breathe as we discuss worldly affairs in the mosque.

It has been said that staying in the mosque and breathing there is recommended [*mustahabb*] and has divine reward, but this does not mean that we have to forsake all affairs and duties and take recluse in the mosque. It is possible that there arises a situation where two recommended deeds occur simultaneously and get in the way of one another; in this case, we should select that deed which is recommended more than the other.

Sometimes, it is likely that an obligatory deed coincides with a recommended deed; in this case, we must select and discharge the obligatory deed and give up the recommended deed. For this reason,

although it has been advised to discharge recommended deeds as much as possible, it does not mean if it occurs synchronously with an obligatory deed that we should forgo the obligatory deed and perform the recommended one.

When we mean to encourage a deed and mention its goodness, that goodness is for that deed in itself; that is to say, without any coincidence and concurrence with another deed. Therefore, it is likely for a statement or explanation about a particular type of worship to have an apparent generalized meaning, but based upon its coincidence with another kind of worship or an obligatory deed in a specific case, a recommended deed loses its desirability and ought not to be performed.

Therefore, if it has been recommended that we should try to stay in mosque, it does not mean that we have to forsake our studies as well as academic discussion and other more necessary duties and spend our days in the mosque to invoke Allah. We cannot forsake obligatory lessons and academic discussion for the sake of staying in the mosque or reciting recommended invocations and performing recommended acts of worship because these cannot take the place of lessons and academic discussion and a recommended deed can never take the place of an obligatory deed. Compulsory duties have much more significance and we cannot give them up on the pretext of sitting in the mosque and reciting invocations.

“And the angels send blessings upon you and record ten good deeds for every breath that you take and wipe out ten sins from you.”

That which has been mentioned is the benefit of sitting in the mosque because the mosque is a place of spiritual service where man is attentive to Allah. It is for this reason that in the *hadiths* the mosque has been introduced as the marketplace of the hereafter and it has been emphasized that man has to try to enter the mosque before everyone else and leave it after everyone else has left.

“The Noble Prophet (S) asked Gabriel, ‘Which place is more beloved in the eyes of Allah?’ Gabriel responded, ‘The mosque, and the most beloved person is the one who enters the mosque before everyone else and leaves it after everyone else’.”³²

“O Abu Dharr! Do you know for what instance the following verse was revealed? ***‘O you who have faith! Be patient, stand firm and close your ranks, and be wary of Allah so that you may be felicitous.’***³³ I said, ‘No, may my father and mother be thy ransom.’ The Noble Prophet (S) stated, ‘It was revealed in regard to waiting for prayer after prayer’.”

The Most Beloved Servants of Allah

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

“O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted, states, ‘My most beloved servants are those who love and cherish one another; those whose hearts are attached to the mosque and engage in seeking forgiveness at dawn.

Those are people on account of whom I desist from afflicting the dwellers of the earth with divine retribution'."

Allah, the Exalted, removes affliction and divine retribution from the society on account of His most beloved servants whose hearts are attached to the mosque and are always waiting to go to the mosque to engage in invocation of Allah in the midst of the night. On the Day of Resurrection, these beloved servants will attain high ranks and uncountable divine rewards in paradise, but one of the effects of their presence in the society is that they repel divine affliction.

The benefit and reward that is earned by man due to affection with going to the mosque is not confined only to divine reward that will be granted to him in the other world. In this very world, too, the believer earns a great deal of ethical, scientific, instructional, social, political and material benefits and rewards. In regard to some of the invaluable and constructive benefits of going to the mosque, Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) states:

"(At least) one of the following eight benefits is earned by a person who frequently goes to the mosque: 1) a believing brother seeking the course of Allah derives benefit from him; 2) he learns new things; 3) he understands verses of the Qur'an; 4) he listens to speeches which guide him to the truth; 5) he gains the mercy which he awaits from Allah; 6) he listens to sermons which protect him from being misled towards perdition; 7) he refrains from sin due to a pious and fearful spirit which permeates his heart as a result of frequently going to the mosque; 8) he abstains from sin due to modesty felt before his believing brothers whom he has become acquainted with in the mosque." [34](#)

At the end of this section, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Sitting in the mosque is not beneficial except in three states: performing the prayers while reciting the Gracious Qur'an, remembering Allah while reciting invocations and when engaged in learning."

All emphasis and recommendation on going to the mosque frequently and enumerating the spiritual effects and material benefits of being present in the mosque and also enumerating the divine rewards of the soul which man earns as a result of being in the mosque is meant to encourage man to set the mosque as the center of his relationship with Allah and a place for the acquisition of spirituality and use of the mosque for his spiritual perfection and prosperity; however, if a deed is not related to the hereafter, man must refrain from performing it in a mosque. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) divides positive deeds which are befitting of the mosque into three areas and considers performance of other actions in the mosque to be null and void:

- a) Man has to be busy performing prayers during which or after which he should recite the Qur'an.
- b) Invoking Allah, the Exalted, with his tongue and/or in the heart and he should set his attention on Allah.

c) In the mosque one should be occupied with learning sciences and culture and the mosque should be the centre of propagating knowledge and spreading awareness in which case spiritual levels raise and become a cause of eternal bliss.

With regard to this section and what the Noble Prophet (S) has said in connection with the significance of the mosque as well as the need to frequently go to them and the virtues of worship as well as spending time in the mosque and the need to make the best use of our time while in a mosque, and the need to grant more significance to the mosque, this House of Allah, and try to make the mosques thrive and develop and fear lest the mosques complain on the Day of Resurrection on account of our inattention to them, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) has said:

“The mosques complained about those neighbors of yours who do not go to the mosque. Allah sent down inspiration, ‘I swear upon My honor and glory, I will not accept even one cycle [rak‘at] of prayer from them and I will not establish justice among them. My mercy will not encompass them and in heaven they will not be near Me nor be My neighbors.”[35](#)

- [1.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 402.
- [2.](#) Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 131.
- [3.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 10, p. 99.
- [4.](#) Surat Ta Ha 20:14.
- [5.](#) Surat al-‘Ankabut 29:45.
- [6.](#) Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 16, p. 133, Isma‘iliyan Publications.
- [7.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 703, sermon [khutbah] 213, trans. Fayd al-Islam.
- [8.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 80, p. 23.
- [9.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 974, chapter [kitab] 45, no. 15, trans. Fayd al-Islam.
- [10.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 80, p. 10.
- [11.](#) Ibid., p. 13.
- [12.](#) Surat al-A‘raf 7:142.
- [13.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 7, p. 249.
- [14.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 3, p. 478.
- [15.](#) ‘Urwat al-Wuthqa, p. 211.
- [16.](#) Risalah Tawdih al-Masa’il, question [mas’alah] 893.
- [17.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 3, p. 545.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 525.
- [19.](#) Ibid., p. 545.
- [20.](#) Ibid., p. 536.
- [21.](#) Ibid., vol. 1, p. 268.
- [22.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 3, p. 555.
- [23.](#) Ibid., vol. 5, p. 372.
- [24.](#) Surat Ibrahim 14:28.
- [25.](#) Misbah al-Shari‘ah, p. 10, section [bab] 12, Markaz Nashr Kitab, pocket book.
- [26.](#) Surat al-Naml 27:62.
- [27.](#) Tuhaft al-‘Uql, p. 52, section [bab] on the Maxims of the Noble Prophet (S) [mawa‘iz al-nabi wa hikmah].
- [28.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 3, p. 507.
- [29.](#) Ibid., p. 496.
- [30.](#) Ibid., p. 515.

- [31.](#) Surat al-Mu'minun 23:1–3.
 - [32.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 12, p. 345.
 - [33.](#) Surat Al 'Imran 3:200.
 - [34.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 83, p. 351.
 - [35.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 3, p. 479.
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