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Prayer

In the Holy Qur'an, prayer (*salat*) is considered the most important devotional act in Islam. It is described as the pillar of religion and if it is accepted, everything else will be accepted correspondingly; however, if it is rejected, everything else will be rejected.¹ Prayer also restrains one from indecency and evil.

According to some traditions, those who neglect performing the ritual prayers on purpose are ascribed to disbelief (*kufr*).

Hundreds of traditions have been reported concerning the merits of performing prayers, the necessity of establishing them regularly, their outcome, the logic for legislating the prayers, and the method of performing them, as well as many other issues generally related to prayers. Therefore, to discuss all these issues would require an independent, voluminous book.

In our previous discussion of the daily ritual prayers, we cited some traditions. Now, let us cite some more traditions on this topic:

About the merit of prayer, Mu'awiyah ibn Wahab is validly reported to have asked Imam al-Sadiq ('a) about the best deed through which the servants of Allah can seek nearness to Him and which represents the best ever deed in His sight.

The Imam ('a) answered:

مَا أَعْلَمُ شَيْئاً بَعْدَ الْمَعْرِفَةِ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الصَّلَاةِ. أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّ الْعَبْدَ الصَّالِحَ عِيسَى بْنَ مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: ((وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا

*After recognition of Almighty Allah, I do not know of any thing better than prayer. Have you not noticed that the righteous servant, Jesus the son of Mary, ('a) says, "He has enjoined on me prayer and the poor-rate as long as I live. (19:31)"*²

Making recommendations to his companions, Imam 'Ali ('a) is reported to have said the following about prayer:

تَعَاهَدُوا أَمْرَ الصَّلَاةِ، وَحَافِظُوا عَلَيْهَا، وَاسْتَكْتَرُوا مِنْهَا، وَتَقَرَّبُوا بِهَا، فَإِنَّهَا " كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا " أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى جَوَابِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ حِينَ سُئِلُوا: " مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ . قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ " وَإِنَّهَا لَتَحْتُ الذُّنُوبَ حَتَّى الْوَرَقِ، وَتُطْلِقُهَا إِطْلَاقَ الرِّيقِ، وَشِبْهَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ بِالْحَمَّةِ تَكُونُ عَلَى بَابِ الرَّجُلِ، فَهُوَ يَغْتَسِلُ مِنْهَا فِي الْيَوْمِ وَاللَّيْلَةِ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ، فَمَا عَسَى أَنْ يَبْقَى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الدَّرَنِ؟ وَقَدْ عَرَفَ حَقَّهَا رِجَالٌ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ لَا تَشْغَلُهُمْ عَنْهَا زِينَةٌ مَتَاعٍ، وَلَا قُرَّةُ عَيْنٍ مِنْ وَكْدٍ وَلَا مَالٍ، يَقُولُ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ: " رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ... " . وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ نَصِيبًا بِالصَّلَاةِ بَعْدَ التَّبَشِيرِ لَهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ، لِقَوْلِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ: " وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا " ، فَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ بِهَا أَهْلَهُ وَيَصْبِرُ عَلَيْهَا نَفْسَهُ

Pledge yourself to prayer and remain steady in its performance. Offer prayer as much as possible and seek nearness of Allah through it, because it is, "imposed upon the believers as a timed ordinance!" Have you not heard the reply of the people of Hell when they were asked, "What has brought you into hell?" They shall say, 'We were not of those who offered the regular prayers!'" Certainly, prayer sheds sins like the dropping of leaves from trees and removes them as ropes removed from the necks of cattle. The Messenger of Allah—May peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants—has said, "Prayer is like a hot spring situated at the door of a person's home. If he takes a bath in it five times a day, will any dirt then remain on him?"

Those believers recognize its value that neither the adornment of property nor the coolness of the eyes produced by children, can turn away from. Allah, the Glorified, says, "(Those) men (are believers) whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverts from the remembrance of Allah, and constancy in prayer, and paying the poor—rate..." Even after receiving assurance of Paradise, the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants—used to exert himself in prayer. After he was given the glad tidings of being allowed into Paradise by Allah's command, "And enjoin prayer on your followers and adhere steadily to it," the Holy Prophet (S) used to enjoin his followers to prayer and exert himself to offer it. [3](#)

There are certain conditions and etiquettes with regard to the performer of prayers, his or her dress, the place of performing the prayer, and the place of prostration. However, the most important of these conditions are the following:

The body, dress, and place of prostration of a performer of prayer must be ceremonially pure (i.e. *tahir*).

A prayer must be preceded by ceremonial purity that is attained through ritual ablution (i.e. *wudhu*) or ritual bathing (i.e. *ghusl*).

The place of performing the prayer must be legal (i.e. it must not be usurped or confiscated).

The dress of a performer of prayer must not be made of silk, gold, or the skin of an animal whose flesh

is forbidden to eat or the skin of a corpse.

In addition, there are many rulings appertaining to prayer and mentioned in detail in the books on the practical laws of Islam written by jurisprudents and known as *Risalah*.

The Untimed Recommended Prayers

Let us first refer to the obligatory prayers in the following list:

1. Daily obligatory prayers: the dawn (*fajr* or *subh*) prayer, the midday (*zuhr*) prayer, the afternoon (*‘asr*) prayer, the sunset (*maghrib*) prayer, and the early night (*‘isha’*) prayer.
2. The congregational Friday Prayer substitutes the obligatory afternoon prayer on Fridays.
3. The ‘«d Prayers, which are performed on the two feast days of Islam (namely, ‘«d al-Fitr and ‘«d al-Adhha).
4. The Prayer of Signs (*salat al-ayat*) is performed when a natural phenomenon is feared.[4](#)
5. The prayers obligatory due to a vow, an oath, or on behalf of others.
6. The Circumambulation Prayer, which has been discussed in the previous chapter of this book.

The optional, recommended prayers are too many, some offered at certain times and on certain occasions. The most important of these untimed optional prayers are:

1. Voluntary prayers (*Salat al-Tatawwu’*)
2. The prayers of the Holy Infallibles (‘a)
3. Ja’far al-Tayyar’s Prayer
4. Prayer for Needs (*Salat al-Hajah*)
5. Prayer for Seeking the Best (*Salat al-Istikharah*)
6. Prayer of Dedication (*Salat al-Hadiyyah*)

Voluntary Prayers

A voluntary prayer is the prayer offered to seek nearness to Almighty Allah. Of course, such prayers are not restricted to certain formulas, places, or times; rather, they are offered pursuant to the Holy Prophet’s saying:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ خَيْرُ مَوْضُوعٍ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اسْتَقَلَّ وَمَنْ شَاءَ اسْتَكْتَرِ.

Prayer is the best subject. Therefore, whosoever wills, let him offer a few, and whosoever wills, let him offer many.[5](#)

Likewise, it is reported that someone visited the Holy Prophet (S) and asked him to pray to Almighty Allah to allow him into Paradise.

The Holy Prophet (S) answered:

أَعْنِي بِكَثْرَةِ السُّجُودِ.

I will, if you help me by prostrating yourself before Him frequently.[6](#)

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is validly reported to have said:

الصَّلَاةُ قُرْبَانٌ كُلِّ تَقِيٍّ.

Prayer is the offering of every pious person.[7](#)

One of such voluntary prayers is the prayer that is offered upon entering a mosque as a form of greeting the place. Of course, greeting a mosque includes offering a voluntary, obligatory, or any other prayer therein. Such voluntary, recommended, or even supererogatory prayers usually consist of two units ended with the statements of *tashahhud*[8](#) and *taslim* unless the formula of the prayer has been otherwise defined in a valid religious text.

It is advisable to offer supererogatory prayers and any number of other voluntary prayers whenever there is a desire to do so. In this respect, the Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لِلْقُلُوبِ إِقْبَالَاً وَإِدْبَاراً فَإِذَا أَقْبَلَتْ فَتَنَفَّلُوا وَإِذَا أَدْبَرَتْ فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالْفَرِيضَةِ.

Hearts usually encounter different states ranging between enthusiasm and apathy. If your hearts are enthusiastic, then offer the supererogatory prayers; otherwise, you may perform only the obligatory ones.[9](#)

Nonetheless, man is required to keep his heart and self sound and open under all conditions such that he is always ready to jump at the opportunity of offering prayers because the supererogatory and voluntary prayers complete the shortcomings of the obligatory ones and make up the inadvertence, inattentiveness, and absentmindedness to which a performer of an obligatory prayer may be exposed. In

fact, what is accepted of one's prayer is only the amount for which a performer has presence of mind. Supporting this fact, many traditions have been validly reported in this regard, such as one reported from Muhammad ibn Muslim from Imam al-Baqir ('a) who says:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيُرْفَعُ لَهُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ نِصْفُهَا أَوْ ثُلُثُهَا أَوْ رُبُعُهَا أَوْ خُمُسُهَا، فَمَا يَرْفَعُ لَهُ إِلَّا مَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا بِقَلْبِهِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَمْرُنَا
بِالنَّافِلَةِ لِيَتِمَّ لَهُمْ بِهَا مَا نُقْصُوا مِنَ الْفَرِيضَةِ.

Only half, one third, one quarter, or even one fifth of a servant's prayer might be accepted. What is accepted is only the amount of the prayer in which a servant has presence of mind. Therefore, we have been ordered to offer the supererogatory prayers to make up for the shortcomings of the obligatory ones. [10](#)

Prayers of the Holy Infallibles ('a)

In many traditions that are narrated from the Holy Infallibles ('a), certain formulas of recommended prayers are reported to have been offered by these holy persons. These prayers must therefore be of great significance since they were offered by such holy persons. In his book of *Tafsil Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, al-Hurr al-'Amili has cited three formulas of prayers that are ascribed to the Holy Prophet, Imam 'Ali, and Lady Fatimah al-Zahra', peace be upon them all.

The Holy Prophet's Prayer (S)

Shaykh al-Tusi, in *Misbah al-Mutahajjid*, has mentioned that the Holy Prophet's (recommended) prayer consists of two units, in each unit *Surah al-Fatihah* (No. 1) is recited once and *Surah al-Qadr* (No. 97) repeated fifteen times. The same *Surah* is repeated fifteen times in the ritual genuflection, fifteen times when one raises the body after the genuflection, fifteen times when one performs the ritual prostration, fifteen times when one raises the head after the first prostration, fifteen times when one performs the second prostration, and fifteen times when one raises the head from the second prostration. Upon accomplishment, one may say any post-prayer litany one wishes. Then, one will have all one's sins forgiven by Almighty Allah. [11](#)

This prayer has also been reported by Sayyid Ibn Tawus through a valid chain of authority from Imam al-Ridha ('a), mentioning a special formula of supplication to be said upon accomplishment. [12](#)

Imam 'Ali's Prayer

Shaykh al-Kulayni, in *al-Kafi*, and Shaykh al-Tusi, in *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, have reported Imam al-Sadiq ('a) as saying:

Whoever offers four units of prayer and repeats Surah al-Tawhid fifteen times in each unit, [13](#) will be as

free of sins like a newborn immediately when he accomplishes the prayer. [14](#)

Shaykh al-Tusi, in *Misbah al-Mutahajjid*, has cited a special formula of litany to be said immediately after this prayer. [15](#)

Lady Fatimah al-Zahra's Prayer

In *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, two formulas of prayer are ascribed to Lady Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a) one of which is identical to the previously mentioned prayer of Imam 'Ali ('a), while the other is mentioned by Shaykh al-Tusi in *Misbah al-Mutahajjid*. It consists of two units, in the first unit of which *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and *Surah al-Qadr* repeated one hundred times, while in the second unit, *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and *Surah al-Tawhid* repeated one hundred times. [16](#)

However, Shaykh al-Qummi has mentioned other formulas with a supplication to be said upon completion. [17](#)

In addition to these prayers, al-Hurr al-'Amili, quoting Sayyid Ibn Tawus in his book *Jamal al-Ussu'*, has mentioned other special formulas of prayers that are ascribed to the eleven Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). However, he has omitted to mention the traditions which relate these prayers to any one of the Holy Infallibles ('a). [18](#)

As for Shaykh al-Qummi, he has mentioned these prayers with special formulas of supplication to be said after each prayer. Seemingly, Shaykh al-Qummi has imitated Sayyid Ibn Tawus in this respect. [19](#) These prayers are not reported to be ascribed to any of the Holy Imams ('a), therefore, we will not cite them.

Ja'far al-Tayyar's Prayer

Ascribed to Ja'far the son of Abu-Talib ('a), the Holy Prophet's cousin, this prayer is the most famous and most favorable of all voluntary prayers. It may be offered anytime, especially on Fridays, the eve of mid-Sha'ban, and on other holy occasions. Before the genuflection of the second and fourth unit of this prayer, it is highly recommended to supplicate to Almighty Allah in the form of *Qunut* (the ritual supplication of prayers). It can also be regarded as one of the daily supererogatory prayers.

Although many traditions have detailed the merits and method of offering this prayer, we will mention a few traditions that are sufficient to convey to the dear reader its significance:

Through a valid chain of authority, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is reported to have said that the Holy Prophet (S) once said to Ja'far: [20](#)

May I grant you something? May I give you something? May I endue you with something?

Ja'far answered, "Of course you may Allah's Messenger!"

The attendants thought that Ja'far would be given gold or silver; therefore, they advanced to see what this gift would be. Yet, the Holy Prophet (S) said to Ja'far:

I am going to give you something that if you do everyday, it will be better for you than the whole world and whatever is therein. If you do it once every two days, Almighty Allah will forgive you all your sins that you may have done during those two days, and if you do it once a week, once a month, or once a year, all your sins that you may have done in this period will be forgiven:

For this prayer, you offer four units of prayer beginning them with recitation (of chapters of the Holy Qur'an). When you finish reciting (these chapters), you may repeat the following litany fifteen times:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ.

All glory be to Allah, all praise be to Allah, there is no god save Allah, and Allah is the Greatest.

When you genuflect, you repeat the same litany ten times. When you raise your head after the genuflection, repeat it ten times. When you prostrate, repeat it ten times. When you raise your head from the first prostration, repeat it ten times. When you perform the second prostration, repeat it ten times. When you sit after the second prostration, you repeat it ten times. This means that you will have repeated this litany seventy-five times a unit and three hundred times in the four units. Thus, you will have glorified, praised, and professed Allah's Godhead and Greatness one thousand and two hundred times. If you like, you may offer this prayer in daylight and, if you like, you may offer it at night. [21](#)

Although more than one validly reported tradition states that *Surah al-Tawhid* and *Surah al-Kafirun* may be recited in Ja'far al-Tayyar's prayer, another validly reported tradition has deemed recommended reciting, after *Surah al-Fatihah*, *Surah al-Zalzalah* (No. 99) in the first unit of this prayer, *Surah al-Adiyat* (No. 100) in the second, *Surah al-Nasr* (No. 110) in the third, and *Surah al-Tawhid* in the fourth. According to another tradition, the following *Surahs* may be recited in the following sequence: *al-Zalzalah*, *al-Nasr*, *al-Qadr*, and *al-Tawhid*.

About the reward of offering this prayer, a tradition holds that Almighty Allah will forgive all the sins of both the suppliant and those for whom he supplicates even if they are as many as the sands of 'Alij (a sandy area in the desert). [22](#)

Shaykh al-Kulayni has narrated that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) said to Abu-Sa'id al-Mada'ini, "May I teach you something that you should recite in Ja'far al-Tayyar's Prayer?" As the man answered in the affirmative, the Imam ('a) said:

After you say the *Tasbihat* in the second prostration of the fourth unit, say the following litany:

سُبْحَانَ مَنْ لَيْسَ الْعِزُّ وَالْوَقَارُ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ تَعَطَّفَ بِالْمَجْدِ وَتَكَرَّمَ بِهِ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ لَا يَنْبَغِي التَّسْبِيحُ إِلَّا لَهُ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ أَحْصَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمُهُ سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْأَمْنِ وَالنِّعَمِ سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْقُدْرَةِ وَالْكَرَمِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِمَعَاذِ الْعِزِّ مِنْ عَرْشِكَ... وَمُنْتَهَى الرَّحْمَةِ مِنْ كِتَابِكَ وَأَسْمِكَ الْأَعْظَمِ وَكَلِمَاتِكَ التَّامَّةِ الَّتِي تَمَّتْ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا صَلَّى عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ

Glory be to Him Who has dressed Himself in majesty and dignity! Glory be to He Who bestows favors abundantly, therefore surpasses in glory. Glory be to Him save Whom none is worthy of being glorified! Glory be to He Whose wisdom surrounds everything! Glory be to the Lord of bounty and boon! Glory be to the Lord of omnipotence and nobility! O Allah, I beseech You in the name of that which is the cause of the majesty in Your Throne, in the name of the utmost of mercy in Your Book, and in the name of Your Greatest Name and Your Accomplished Words, which have been accomplished truly and justly, (please) send blessings upon Muhammad and his Household...

Then, you may mention your needs in the form of a supplication. [23](#)

Prayers for Granting of Needs

Many traditions have presented various formulas for obtaining one's needs from Almighty Allah. Prayers form the greatest part of these formulas. Other formulas have come in the form of a prayer followed by a supplication which completes it.

However, the most important and famous formula in this regard may be the prayer for rain (known as *Salat al-Istisqa'*) which is, just like the '«d prayer, offered congregationally in cases of drought and lack of rain. The method of offering this prayer is that the Imam ('a), or religious authority, leads the people to a clean area and, with tranquility, gravity, and submission, they all praise, glorify, and thank Almighty Allah, and then supplicate before Him earnestly, and repeat statements of glorification (i.e. *tasbih*, *tahlil*, and *takbir*). The religious authority then leads the people in a two-unit prayer along with earnest entreaties. Upon completion, he turns over his garment by putting the right side of it on the left side and vice versa as did the Holy Prophet (S).[24](#) Other traditions have mentioned further details.

Due to the significance of this prayer, jurists have dedicated independent chapters to explaining it, just like the '«d prayers.

Another formula of a prayer for granting of needs has been validly reported from Imam al-Sadiq ('a) and Imam al-Kazim ('a) by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Shaykh al-Saduq, and Shaykh al-Tusi. The method of this prayer is to give as alms one *sa'* (approximately three kilograms) of dates, wheat, or barley to sixty poor persons each. On the last third of the night, after performing a ceremonial bath and putting on the least valued garment one's dependents may have such that this garment includes an apron, one should offer a two-unit prayer. In the first prostration of the second unit of this prayer, one should profess Almighty Allah as the One and Only God, exalt Him, sanctify Him, glorify Him, and then recollect one's sins and

confess those one can remember before Him. One should then raise the head from the first prostration. In the second prostration, one should repeat the following supplication of seeking sanctuary in Almighty Allah:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَجِيرُكَ

O Allah, I do seek sanctuary in You.

After that, one may pray for anything one may desire, following it with the following supplication:

يَا كَائِنًا قَبْلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَيَا مَكُونًا كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَيَا كَائِنًا بَعْدَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

O He, Who existed before all things! O, Author of all things! O He, Who shall exist after all things!

One may then ask Almighty Allah to grant his or her need.

In every prostration, one may try to make the knees touch the ground and raise the apron to the backside by putting it between the buttocks and the inner side of the legs.

In addition, there are other formulas of prayers for granting needs mentioned by al-Hurr al-'Amili, in *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, and Shaykh al-Qummi, in *Mafatih al-Jinan*.[25](#)

Other Prayers for Granting Specific Needs

Special formulas of prayers have been reported for having special needs granted, such as prayers for forgiveness of sins, prayers for relief from certain troubles, prayers for granting victory over tyrants, prayers for strengthening of the rational faculties, prayers for activating the memory, prayers for reprieve from feared matters, prayers for gaining sustenance, prayers for settling debts, prayers for repelling evil at times of travel, prayers of mothers for the healing of their sick, prayers for anticipated misfortunes, prayers of thanks for bounties, prayers for release from imprisonment, prayers to repel the evil of enemies, prayers for victory, and prayers for pregnancy.[26](#)

Moreover, there are three formulas which have relevance with this subject though they are not prayers for granting of needs. These are fasting and praying for warding off the consequences of a misfortune, a two-unit prayer for thanking Almighty Allah, and the prayer at the consummation of marriage. However, these three validly reported prayers express Islamic etiquettes.[27](#)

Istikharah and Its Prayer

A sort of devotional act, *Istikharah* (praying that Almighty Allah lead one to the best of many choices)

may be explained as follows:

When man intends to do something, such as begin a business, or go on a journey or pilgrimage, but has more than one option and is too perplexed to choose from among them, he is advised to pray to Almighty Allah to lead him to the best choice that benefits him more with regard to his spiritual or worldly affairs.

In this respect, Imam al-Sadiq ('a), through a validly reported tradition, has said:

You may offer a two-unit prayer and then pray to Almighty Allah to guide you to the best choice. By Him I take this oath: whenever a Muslim individual leaves the choice to Almighty Allah, He shall most certainly guide him to the best of choices. [28](#)

Another tradition reads:

Whoever prays to Almighty Allah to choose for him with full contentment, Almighty Allah shall most certainly guide him towards the best. [29](#)

In this connection, many traditions have been reported some of which carry the following method of *Istikharah*:

You may come to the mosque at a time other than the prayer time and offer two units of prayer. Afterwards, you may pray to Almighty Allah to guide you to the best choice, repeating it one hundred times. Then, you may do whatever your heart leads you to do.

According to other traditions, you may repeat the prayer for guidance to the best choice a hundred and one times. [30](#)

Mentioning the post-prayer supplication of *Istikharah*, another tradition states:

You may then praise and thank Almighty Allah, invoke His blessings upon the Prophet and his Household, and say the following:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ فَأَصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي.

O Allah, if it is something other than that, then (please) repel it from me.

After reciting Surah al-Fatihah, one may recite any other Surah, preferably al-Tawhid and al-Kafirun. [31](#)

According to another validly reported tradition, another more detailed and more painstaking formula of *Istikharah* is presented.

Zurarah has reported that he asked Imam al-Baqir ('a), "What should I say when I intend to seek the

guidance of Almighty Allah with regard to opting for a choice I should make?”

The Imam (‘a) instructed:

When you intend to do so, you may observe fasting on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On Friday, you may offer two units of prayer in a clean place. Upon accomplishment, you may raise your sight towards the sky and repeat the following supplication one hundred times:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِأَنَّكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ أَنْتَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ خَيْرًا فِي مَا أَحَاطَ بِهِ
عِلْمُكَ فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَبَارِكْ لِي فِيهِ وَأَفْتَحْ لِي فِيهِ وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ لِي شَرًّا فِي مَا أَحَاطَ بِهِ عِلْمُكَ فَأَصْرِفْ عَنِّي بِمَا تَعْلَمُ فَإِنَّكَ
تَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَتَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ وَتَقْضِي وَلَا أَقْضِي وَأَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

O Allah, I beseech You as the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful, if this affair is good for me according to what Your knowledge has encompassed, then (please) make it easy for me to do, make it blessed for me, and make it attainable for me. However, if it is evil for me according to what Your knowledge has encompassed, then (please) ward it off from me by a means that You know, for You best know while I do not, You have the power to destine while I do not, and You can preordain while I cannot. You are the knower of the unseen. [32](#)

Other traditions [33](#) hold other formulas of *Istikharah*, which entail that this act can be classified as prayer, supplication, and imploration for seeking guidance from Almighty Allah. Of course, the more appropriate the acts of supplication and attainment of response such as almsgiving, fasting, choosing the best times to implore, the closer the response of Almighty Allah.

Supporting this fact, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is reported to have instructed those who intend to purchase a riding animal or something lesser in consideration to seek the guidance of Almighty Allah seven times, and those who intend to undertake greater matters should seek guidance one hundred times. [34](#)

Other formulas have entailed offering a prayer and preparing a certain number of sheets of paper in some of which the word ‘*if’al*’ (do it) is written while in the others the word ‘*la taf’al*’ (do not do it) is written. Then, a process of pulling these sheets is done. If the sheets on which the word ‘*if’al*’ come more than the others, then one may do the thing he has intended to do; otherwise, one may not. [35](#)

Inferred from many such traditions, it seems advisable for everyone to pray to Almighty Allah for guidance in every act he intends to do, especially at the time of the daily obligatory prayers and immediately before engagement in a particular act.

Dedicated Prayers

Dedicated prayers are prayers whose rewards are dedicated to the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) or one’s parents, brothers-in-faith, sons, and relatives.

Moreover, the rewards of any righteous deed or devotional act that is done in this worldly life may be dedicated to dead dedicatees who, consequently, will receive rewards by the permission of Almighty Allah. Such dedicated acts include prayers, fasting, performing *Hajj*, almsgiving, reciting the Holy Qur'an, litanies, and any other devotional acts. In this regard, many traditions have been reported some of which hold that the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have made such dedications.

Shaykh al-Qummi has recorded an authentic tradition entailing that Imam al-Sadiq ('a) used to offer two-unit prayers everyday and dedicate their reward to his parents. In the first unit of these prayers, he used to recite *Surah al-Fatihah* and *Surah al-Qadr* and in the second *Surah al-Fatihah* and *Surah al-Kawthar* (No. 108).

It is also reported that Imam al-Sadiq ('a) would offer a two-unit prayer every night and dedicate its reward to his son, Isma'il.

Just as the alive delight at receiving a gift, the dead delight at receiving the rewards of supplications and implorations for forgiveness that are said for them. Generally, in their graves, the dead receive the rewards of the prayers, fasting, *Hajj*, alms, righteous deeds, and supplications that are dedicated to them. Moreover, these rewards are recorded for both the dedicators and the dedicatees.[36](#)

In the previous chapter on weekly devotional acts, we referred to a formula of a prayer dedicated to the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).[37](#)

The Burial Night Prayer

One type of dedicated prayer, the prayer done on a person's burial night, is familiarly known and practiced by the individuals of the virtuous community. This prayer, which is offered on the first night a dead person spends in the grave, is composed of two units and its reward is dedicated to the deceased by his brothers-in-faith and relatives. Two formulas of the burial night prayer have been mentioned:

The first formula is to offer two units of prayer in the first unit of which *Surah al-Fatihah* and *Ayat al-Kursi* are recited while in the second *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and *Surah al-Qadr* repeated ten times. Upon completion, the reward of this prayer is dedicated to the dead in the following formula of supplication:

...اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَبْعَثْ ثَوَابَهَا إِلَى قَبْرِ

O Allah, (please) send blessings upon Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad and send the reward of this prayer to the grave of so-and-so. [38](#)

The second formula is to offer a two-unit prayer in the first unit of which *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and *Surah al-Tawhid* repeated twice while in the second unit *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and

Surah al-Takathur (No. 102) repeated ten times. Then, the aforementioned supplication dedicating the reward of the prayer to the dead is recited.³⁹

In his book entitled *Jamal al-Ushbu'*, Sayyid Ibn Tawus has mentioned a great reward for those who dedicate the rewards of their prayers to the Holy Prophet (S) and the other Holy Infallibles ('a). However, these prayers are offered with a special formula including certain litanies to be said while genuflecting and prostrating.⁴⁰

Prayers for the Parents

Regarded as another sort of prayers of dedication, the prayer for parents is to be offered by persons who dedicate the reward to their parents. According to Shaykh al-Qummi, this prayer consists of two units, in the first unit of which *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and the following holy verse is repeated ten times:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

O our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning shall come to pass. (14:41)

In the second unit, *Surah al-Fatihah* is recited once and the following holy verse is repeated ten times:

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِي مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا

O My Lord, forgive me and my parents and him who enters my house believing, and the believing men and the believing women; and do not increase the unjust in aught but destruction. (71:28)

Upon accomplishment, the following holy verse is repeated ten times:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

O my Lord, have compassion on them, as they brought me up when I was little. (17:24)⁴¹

1. – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah 3:20, S.8, H. 6, 10, and 13.

2. – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah 3:25, S.8, H. 1.

3. – Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 197.

4. – A two-unit prayer with a special method that is performed at the times of natural phenomena, such as lunar and solar eclipses, earthquakes, and violent winds, Salat al-ayat is obligatory in the presence of one of the Infallible Imams ('a); otherwise, it is recommended.

Likewise, during the Age of Occultation, according to one of the familiar opinions adopted by the jurists of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) jurisprudential school, it is optional to perform the Friday congregational Prayer.

5. – `Allamah al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar 79:308, H. 9.

- [6.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 3:75, H. 1.
- [7.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 3:30, H. 1.
- [8.](#) – Tashahhud is a statement said after accomplishing two units of a prayer, no matter how many units a prayer may consist of. The Arabic word 'tashahhud' means to utter the two creeds of Islam (i.e. I bear witness that there is no god save Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.) This statement is followed by an invocation of Almighty Allah's blessings upon the Holy Prophet and his Household. These three statements thus form the obligatory formula of the ritual tashahhud. However, some statements may be added optionally. [Translator]
- [9.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 3:50, H. 8.
- [10.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 3:52, H. 3.
- [11.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:223, H. 1.
- [12.](#) – Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, pp. 38.
- [13.](#) – Of course, after reciting Surah al-Fatihah.
- [14.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:245, S. 13, H. 1.
- [15.](#) – Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, pp. 39.
- [16.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:244, S. 10, H. 6.
- [17.](#) – Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, pp. 40–42.
- [18.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:397, S. Offering the Prayers of the Imams Voluntarily.
- [19.](#) – Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, pp. 42–45.
- [20.](#) – According to some reports that are similar to the one mentioned, the Holy Prophet (S) addressed these words to Ja'far al-Tayyar upon his return from years of refuge in Abyssinia, which concurred with the conquest of Khaybar at the hands of Imam `Ali (a). Once his eyes fell on Ja'far, the Holy Prophet (S) walked twelve steps forward to receive him. He then embraced him, kissed him between the eyes, wept, and said, "Indeed, I do not know for which matter I am happier, for your return, Ja'far, or for the conquest of Khaybar that Almighty Allah has given at the hands of your brother?" Thus, the Holy Prophet (S) wept for joy when he saw Ja'far.
- It is however ironic to find this very prayer mentioned in reference books of Sunni scholars under the title of Salat al-Tasabih, claiming that it was the Holy Prophet's gift to his uncle al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib.
- As to me, I do not believe in this claim, because there is nothing to make the Holy Prophet (S) endue his uncle al-`Abbas with such a precious thing. In addition, the Ahl al-Bayt (a) (who knew more than any other regarding what their grandfather had said, done, and endowed) have not confirmed such a claim, so it seems to be one of the fabrications against the Holy Prophet (S) by the fans of the `Abbasid rulers.
- [21.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:194, H. 1.
- [22.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:197–198, H. 1, 2 & 3.
- [23.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:198, H. 1.
- [24.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:162, H. 1. This tradition has been reported through a valid chain of authority.
- [25.](#) – See Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:255–261 and Mafatih al-Jinan 226, 233, 234, 238, 239, and 241 as well as other parts in the appendix entitled al-Baqiyat al-Salihah.
- [26.](#) – In the fifth volume of Wasa'il al-Shi`ah, the author has mentioned the formulas of these prayers respectively on the following pages: 244, 245, 246, 248, 250, 252, 253, 254, 255, 262, 263, 265, 266, and 268.
- [27.](#) – In the fifth volume of Wasa'il al-Shi`ah, the author has mentioned the formulas of these prayers respectively on the following pages: 261, 266, and 267.
- [28.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:204, H. 1.
- [29.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:204, H. 2.
- [30.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:205, H. 5.
- [31.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:206, H. 7.
- [32.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:207, H. 11.
- [33.](#) – Such traditions can be referred to in the sections of Istikharah in al-Hurr al-`Amili's Wasa'il al-Shi`ah.
- [34.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:213, H. 1.
- [35.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:208, H. 1.

- [36.](#) – Shaykh al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan; Appendix: al-Baqiyat al-Salihah, pp. 214–215.
- [37.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:284.
- [38.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:285, H. 2.
- [39.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:285, H. 3.
- [40.](#) – Al-Hurr al-`Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi`ah 5:285, H. 4.
- [41.](#) – Shaykh `Abbas al-Qummi, Mafatih al-Jinan, pp. 216.

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