

Right n. 10: The Right of the Prayer

حق الصلاة

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّلَاةِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا وَفَادَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَنْتَ قَائِمٌ بِهَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ اللَّهِ، فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ خَلِيقًا أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهَا مَقَامَ الدَّلِيلِ الرَّاعِبِ الرَّاهِبِ الْخَائِفِ الرَّاجِي الْمُسْكِنِ الْمُتَضَرِّعِ الْمُعْظَمِ مَنْ قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِالسُّكُونِ وَالْإِطْرَاقِ وَخُشُوعِ الْأَطْرَافِ وَلِينِ الْأَجْنَحِ وَحُسْنِ الْمُنَاجَاةِ لَهُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَالطَّلْبِ إِلَيْهِ فِي فَكَاكِ رَقَبَتِكَ الَّتِي أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُكَ وَاسْتَهْلَكَتْهَا ذُنُوبُكَ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

Then the right of your ritual prayer is that you should know that it is an arrival at the threshold of God and that through it you are standing before God. And when you realize that, then you will stand in the station of him who is lowly, vile, beseeching, trembling, hopeful, fearful, and abased.

And you will magnify Him Who is before you through stillness, and bowing of the head,¹ and humbleness of the limbs, and yielding of the wing,² and by saying the best supplications to Him in yourself and beseeching Him to release (from punishment) your neck that is encompassed by your offenses and destroyed by your sins. And there is no power but in God.

Imam Sajjad first stresses the importance of prayer since it is the means by which we can appear at the threshold of God. It is the means with which we can migrate from the material world, put all that entertains us behind, attend to the divine grandeur, leave the darkness of this world and enter the world of brightness. This migration should be according to the requirements stated by the Imam .

Praying is the Greatest Form of Worship

Islam has established the prayer as the most important form of worship, and has made especial recommendations to Muslims regarding it. Islam has made it incumbent upon boys and girls to pray five times each day from the time they reach adolescence. They are supposed to make up any prayers that

they may skip for any excuse. Especial times are also specified for saying the prayers.

Times of the Prayer

There are verses in the Holy Qur'an that specify the times of the prayer. Consider the following verse in this regard:

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذَكَرَى لِلذَّاكِرِينَ

“And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord).” [The Holy Qur'an, Hud 11:114]

This verse refers to the morning, evening and night prayers. Also, consider the following verse:

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

“Establish regular prayers – at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.” [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:78]

This verse refers to all the five daily prayers. Also, consider the following verse:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

“Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:238]

This verse refers to the noon and afternoon prayers.

The Most Hopeful Verse in the Qur'an

There is a tradition in Majma Ul-Bayan which says: “One day Imam Ali looked at the people and asked: Do you know which verse of the Holy Qur'an is the most hopeful one? Some people said it was the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

“God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with God is to devise a sin most heinous indeed.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:48]

The Imam said no. Others said it was the following verse:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks God’s forgiveness, he will find God Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:110]

Again, Imam Ali said: No, that is not what I mean. Others said it was the following verse:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Say: “O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Zumar 39:53]

Again, Imam Ali said no. Then the people asked him which verse it was. Imam Ali said: I heard God’s Prophet say that the most hopeful verse is:[3](#)

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ

“And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord).” [The Holy Qur’an, Hud 11:114]

Moses was Appointed to Establish Prayers

Now consider the following verse which shows that Moses was appointed to establish regular prayers.

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

“I have chosen thee: listen, then, to the inspiration (sent to thee). Verily, I am God: There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.” [The Holy Qur’an, Ta-Ha 20:13–14]

The first point mentioned in this verse is the principle of the Unity of God that is the most important part of the call of the Prophets. The next point mentioned is God's worshipping. Then the instruction to establish regular prayers that is the most important link between the creatures and their Creator is stressed. Praying is the most effective way not to forget God. There is no doubt that there are many factors in man's life that distract him from God.

This verse clarifies that the appointment of Moses started with a mission to establish regular prayers. Praying several times a day is an effective means to fight this negligence. When man wakes up from his sleep that makes him forget everything in this world, and wants to start his daily activities, God has made it incumbent upon him to start his day with praying. This is done so that he can cleanse his heart and soul with God's remembrance.

Once man is delved into his daily activities and works all morning long, he hears the call to the prayer at noon that invites him to hurry up to the prayer. He stands at the threshold of the Lord. By saying prayers and supplications, he eliminates any filth that may have covered up his soul in the morning. He does the same thing again in the evening and at night, and remembers God in his soul. God has stressed that the purpose for the prayer is to remember Him. In another verse, He has stated that His remembrance is the only means of the purification of our hearts:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God: for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ra'd 13:28]

Remember God in All Circumstances

The importance of remembering God in all circumstances is expressed in the following verse:

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَىٰ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوفًا

“When ye pass (congregational) prayers, celebrate God's praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides; but when ye are free from danger, set up regular prayers: for such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4: 103]

The statement “celebrate God's praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides” may refer to the various positions in a battle. This is an important Islamic instruction not to neglect God under any circumstances. The above verse has been interpreted in many traditions to refer to the conditions of praying for the ill.” [4](#)

The Sayings of Imam Muhammad Ghazali

The main spirit of the prayer is humbleness and the presence of our heart during the prayer since the main goal of the prayer is to be sincere with God, and to remember the Almighty God with ultimate submission. God the Almighty said: “Establish the prayer in order to remember Me.” God’s Prophet said: “Pray as if you are saying farewell.”

This implies that one must say farewell to his own selfish desires, and everything other than God through praying. One must dedicate his full attention to his prayer.⁵ Thus, we realize the importance placed on praying by the Qur’an and the philosophy behind it.

True Prayer

The late Fayz wrote in Al-Haqa’iq: “The true spirit of prayer is due to the following:

- 1) Sincere presence of the mind.
- 2) True understanding.
- 3) Humbleness.
- 4) Fear of the Majesty of God.
- 5) Hope in the Forgiveness of God.
- 6) Being shy of God.”

Sincere Presence of Mind

Determination is a very important factor in prayer. It can result in sincere presence of the mind during the prayer. When we are more determined to do something, our mind will be better directed at that affair. We must believe that the life of the Hereafter is preferable to that of this world since it is eternal and free from trouble as we read in the following verse:

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“What is the life of this world but amusement and play? But verily the Home in the Hereafter, - that is life indeed, if they but knew.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ankabut 29:64]

We read in another place in the Holy Qur’an:

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

“But the Hereafter is better and more enduring.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’la 87: 17]

We cannot attain the life of the Hereafter except through praying. Praying is the means of approaching God. When this is combined with the belief that this world is really nothing, then we can find a sincere presence of the mind.

True Understanding

The next important factor after sincere presence of the mind is true understanding of what is being said. If one pays attention to the meaning of what he says, then he will ignore the affairs of this world, and all bothering thoughts during the prayer will leave him alone.

We can compare the situation of one who is praying and is bombarded with bothering thoughts with someone who is trying to rest and think under the shade of a tree, but is disturbed by the sounds of various birds. He picks up a stick and tries to drive them away, but the birds come back again.

Humbleness

Humbleness is a spiritual state that leads to recognition of the Grandeur and Majesty of God. This recognition is the foundation of faith. It also leads to the recognition of one's smallness and his being subject to divine plans. The recognition of the above leads to a state of humbleness in which bowing to God, our Creator, is more meaningful.

Fear of the Majesty of God

Fear of the Majesty of God is a state of mind for man that is derived from the recognition of God's endless power and His Will's influence on everything in the universe. The more we recognize God's power and influence, the more we fear His Majesty. The late scholar Naraghi has also included sincerity and said: "Sincerity, intention to get closer to God and not being hypocritical are also important in this issue."⁶

Hope in the Forgiveness of God

This hope is derived from the recognition of the source of Mercy of God. Once you notice God's endless nobility and kindness, and really believe in God's promise to reward us with Heaven for praying, then you will become hopeful of the Forgiveness of God.

Being Shy of God

Once one realizes that he is unable to fulfill God's rights that are incumbent upon him, has faults and weaknesses which constantly pull him towards the luxuries of this life, and realizes that God is Majestic and knows everything that goes on within him, then he becomes shy of God.⁷ We quoted the true

aspects of prayer as mentioned by Fayz Kashani so far. Now let us quote what Hajj Mirza Javad Malaki Tabrizi said in this regard.

He refers to the writings of Shahide Awwal⁸ and says: “The Shahid compiled the one thousand obligatory points about the prayer in one book, and compiled the three thousand recommended points about prayer in another book.” Then he points out an important philosophy behind the prayer that is expressed in the following verse:

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

“Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of God is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And God knows the (deeds) that ye do.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ankabut 29:45]

The Qur’an has clearly stated that prayer restrains us from engaging in shameful and unjust deeds. If our praying does not serve this purpose, we can conclude that we are praying out of hypocrisy. Even the slightest bit of sincere attention to the true spirit of the prayer will restrain man from shameful and unjust deeds.⁹

As expressed by this late scholar, there is no other issue in Islam about which there are as many points as there are about praying. The issue of prayer always takes up the biggest chapters in books on traditions and jurisprudence. The description of Imam Sajjad’s illuminating words about the prayer presented here are but a few drops of the sea! Praying also has some personal, moral and social effects, which we shall briefly discuss here.

The Personal Effects of Praying

One of the personal effects of praying five times each day and appearing at the threshold of God is the strengthening of our spiritual powers and determination. Thus, we can stand up against the difficulties that we encounter just like a mountain. Another personal effect of praying is the cleansing of our heart from the filthiness of this material world since we separate ourselves from this material world and travel into the divine world each time we pray. Thus, we can attain peace of mind. It has been recorded that whenever the Prophet got troubled with the events that happened, he sought refuge in praying a lot.

Since praying is a state of meeting the Lord, he would forget his sorrow once he rushed to visit God. He said: “Once one of you stands up to pray and says supplications to his Lord, he knows that there is no distance between him and his Lord. God hears his prayers, responds to his call and fulfills his prayer.”¹⁰ Another personal effect of praying is that it will help us get rid of the selfishness and haughtiness we might experience due to our misunderstandings when we get wealth or position. This is a point of human

perfection for which we strive. The late Imam Khomeini said the following about the secrets behind standing, bowing down and prostrating in prayer:

الصَّلَاةُ قُرْبَانُ كُلِّ تَقِيٍّ

“Prayer is a pious believer’s means of approach (to God).”

It is dependant on two acts – one of which is the basis of the other. The first prerequisite is to abandon selfishness – that is true piety. The second prerequisite is to seek the truth and to seek God. This is true ascension and approach to God. That is why we read in the traditions that “praying is the means of approaching God for every pious man.” These prerequisite states are gradually achieved in the three positions of standing up, bowing down and prostrating in prayer.

While standing up, we realize God the Absolute exists and is everlasting. Then we forget our selfishness. While bowing down and seeing the positions of the Names and Characteristics of God, we forget our own selfishness. When prostrating we totally abandon our selfishness, and absolutely submit to and seek God. All the positions and ranks of those who trot in His way are derived from the ranks of these three positions.”¹¹ Another personal effect of praying is that one who prays gets encouraged to improve himself and attain the highest degree of noble characteristics. He tries to eliminate all his moral wickedness. That is why the Holy Qur’an praises the believers for the good characteristics that they attain as we read in the following verses:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

“The believers must (eventually) win through – those who humble themselves in their prayers.”

[The Holy Qur’an, al-Muminun 23: 1-2]

This winning has been interpreted to imply both worldly gains and winning in the Hereafter. Worldly gains imply survival, richness and honor. Winning in the Hereafter implies the following four:

- 1) Lasting without ever being destroyed¹²
- 2) Richness without any poverty
- 3) Honor without any humiliation
- 4) Knowledge without any ignorance

Believers are recognized by being humble in these verses. This implies that their praying is not just a series of meaningless words and actions; rather it is accompanied by full attention to God – such an attention with which they cut off themselves from others than Him.

Factors Which Yield Humbleness

The first factor that yields humbleness is recognition of the Majesty of God and the minuteness of the world. Imam Ali has indicated in *Nahjul Balaghah* that one of the signs of the pious people is:

عَظُمَ الْخَالِقُ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَصَغُرَ مَا دُونَهُ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ.

*“Once the Creator was recognized to be Majestic by them, everything else seemed small to them.”*¹³

The second important factor that will result in humbleness is to direct one’s attention to his prayer and not pay any attention to various other issues. The third important factor is the place where one prays. We should choose a place to pray that is lacking luxury items. That is why it is not recommended to pray in front of pictures, sculptures, open doors or where people cross. Another important factor for becoming humble is to avoid committing sins. It is also important to be well familiar with the meaning of what we say in prayer and understand the philosophy behind the movements. It helps to perform the initial or post-prayer recommendable acts. One must practice praying just like any other thing in order to become apt at it and be careful not to forget to pray.¹⁴

The Social Effects of Praying

Since praying fosters a sense of social responsibility, it has important social effects. There is no doubt that man is created to be a sociable creature. The tendency to live in a group is inherent in man. Living alone bothers us. The worst form of punishment for man is to imprison him in an individual cell. Man has two kinds of responsibilities – that is individual and social responsibility. The Qur’an says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ

“Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Muddath’thir 74:38]

We also read the following verse in the Holy Qur’an:

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

“Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee is from God; but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy (own) soul. And We have sent thee as an Apostle to (instruct) mankind. And enough is God for a witness.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:79]

When we consider social responsibility, it is not the individual that is important. The society is important,

and we must consider what social responsibility individuals have. The Noble Prophet said:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ.

“Each one of you is a ruler, and each one of you is responsible for his subjects.”

One of the most important effects of praying is that it will foster the sense of social responsibility. That is why there is a distinction made in Islam between praying individually and attending congregational prayers. The reward for these two is different. Attending congregational prayers is highly recommended in Islam. Islam has decreed a socio-religious Friday prayer that is held each week, where all the Muslims stand to pray side by side.

The prayer leader delivers his sermons and expresses the social problems of the day for all the people to know. Then they can think of solutions. When all the Muslims stand side by side, their majesty is demonstrated. This will prevent their enemies from plotting against them. Then the Muslims can form an independent nation, rely on themselves and benefit from their power and honor. It is recommendable for the lines of the people attending the congregational prayers to be densely formed and orderly.

It is even more important to note that everyone stands there side by side regardless of his position, wealth, race or nationality, and shakes hands with those around him after the prayers. Thus, the true spirit of social equality is fostered, and class differences that always hinder freedom-loving people are eliminated.

Love and sincerity are substituted for hate and animosity. Attending the congregational prayers also helps the people become aware of each other's conditions. Should one not attend the prayers one week, others will miss him, and ask what has happened to him. They will then do their best to help resolve his problems. Generally, the prayer unites the whole nation of Islam and establishes an independent society.

[The Moral Effects of Praying](#)

Man cannot approach God unless he eliminates his wicked traits and characteristics and prepares himself for the development of noble characteristics. The Qur'an says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

“But those will prosper who purify themselves and glorify the name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in prayer.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'la 87: 14-15]

Praying is the means of morally purifying oneself. Continued praying will help educate us in a good

moral way, and restrains us from shameful deeds. We read in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“...For Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ankabut 29:45]

Praying will uproot wickedness from man, and plant nobilities instead. The following verses stress this very point:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا الْأَمْصِلِينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

“Truly man was created very impatient – fretful when evil touches him, and niggardly when good reaches him. Not so those devoted to Prayer – those who remain steadfast to their prayer.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ma'arij 70: 19-23]

These verses clearly demonstrate the effect of praying in the elimination of impatience, fretfulness and niggardliness from our souls. Those who are devoted to praying can rid themselves of these negative traits. It is narrated in Jami' as-Sadat by Naraghi that Imam Ali was questioned about the meaning of prostrations in the prayer.

He replied: “The first prostration means: O' God! You created us from the dirt. When we raise our head it means: And You brought us out of the dirt. The second prostration means: You will return us to the dirt. And when we again raise our heads it means: And You will bring us out of the dirt again.”¹⁵ It is obvious that if one really considers these points, he would try to improve himself.

Praying and the Obstacles to Perfection

Sheikh Mahmood Shabastari has beautifully expressed the obstacles to the acceptance of our prayers by God in a poetic fashion. To make it short, he states the following four conditions:

- 1) Cleansing one's self from physical filth.
- 2) Purification of one's self from sins.
- 3) Freeing one's self from wicked characteristics.
- 4) Total elimination of other than God in our inner thoughts.

Once one attains these four conditions, he can hope for his prayers to be accepted.

Now that we have briefly expressed the importance of praying, its philosophy, and its personal, social and moral effects, let us consider how Imam Sajjad practically taught his followers about the importance

of praying. There were even times when his close relatives felt sorry for him due to his extended prayers.

It is recorded in Bihar ul-Anwar by Allameh Majlesi that once Fatima, the daughter of Imam Husayn went to see Jabir ibn Abdullah and said: “O Companion of God’s Prophet! We have rights incumbent upon you. One of these rights is that if you see one of us endangering his life due to worshipping too much you must remind him and ask him to guard himself. O Jabir! Ali ibn Al-Husayn¹⁶ has prayed so much that his forehead’s skin has hardened, his feet have swollen and his body has lost all the flesh on it. Please ask him to save himself.”

Jabir went to see the Imam and asked permission to enter. When he entered, he saw that the Imam was sitting in his praying niche. The Imam stood up and had Jabir sit next to himself, and asked Jabir about his health. Jabir said: “Is it not true that God has created Heaven for you and Hell for your enemies? Then why do you pray so much?”

The Imam replied: “O Companion of God’s Prophet! Do you know that God forgave all of the past and future sins of the Prophet, but he still did not stop worshipping? He worshipped so much that his blessed feet became swollen. When told that his past and future sins were forgiven he replied: Should I not be grateful for that?”

Then Jabir realized that his question did not have any effect on the state of affairs. He said: “You are from among the people through whom God fends off the calamities and protects the heavens and the Earth.” Then Imam Sajjad said: “I will follow in my father’s and my grandfather’s footsteps until I meet them.” Jabir said: “I have not seen anyone like Ali ibn al-Husayn among the descendants of the Prophets.” ¹⁷

Tavoos Faqih said: “I saw Imam Sajjad circumambulating the House of God and worshipping God from after the night prayer until dawn. When he looked around and saw that there were few people left who were circumambulating, he looked up to the heavens and said: “O Lord! The stars remaining are few, and are about to set. The eyes have been closed to sleep. However, the gates of your Mercy to those who ask are still open. O Lord! I have come to the door of your House to encompass me with your Mercy, to forgive me, and to show me the face of my grandfather Muhammad in the Hereafter.”

Then the Imam cried and said: “I swear by your Majesty and Honor! I do not intend to oppose you by sinning. I am not ignorant of You and your chastisement when sinning. I do not want to expose myself to your chastisement. However, my Self wants to fool me, and your veil of Mercy helps it. O Lord! Who will save me from your chastisement? O Lord! What shall I hold on to if you cut off your rope of saving from me?

Woe to me! I will be brought to your threshold in the Hereafter. Those whose load is light shall be told to go. Moreover, those whose load is heavy shall be told to stay. I do not know whether I will be from among those whose load is light and are told to go. Or will my heavy load force me to stay there? O

Lord! The older I get, the more my mistakes become. Now it is time for me to repent. O My Ultimate desire! Will you burn me in the Fire? Where then is my hope? What will then happen to my friendship? I have come to You with my wicked deeds. There is no one else with crimes like those of mine.”

Then he cried and prostrated on the ground. He felt good. I went to him and cried. My tears dropped on his face. Then he suddenly said: “Who has prevented me from the remembrance of my Lord?” Then I replied: “O Grandson of the Prophet! That is I. I am Tavoos. Why are you doing this? Why do you cry and moan so much? We feel obliged to follow you. O Sir! Your father was such a noble man. Your mother was the Blessed Fatima . Your grandfather was God’s Prophet .” Then Imam Sajjad said: “O Tavoos! Forget about the father, the mother or the grandfather. God has created the Heaven for those who obey Him whether they are a servant or a Tunisian slave. God has created Hell for those who commit sins – even if they are masters from the Quraysh tribe. Have you not heard God say?

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

“Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that Day, nor will one ask after another!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mu’minun 23: 101]18

Praying and the Forgiveness of Sins

At the end Imam Sajjad said: “...and by saying the best supplications to Him by yourself and beseeching Him to save you from the responsibilities which rest on your shoulders – surrounded by your faults and exhausted by your sins.” You should ask God to save you and forgive your sins that have overtaken you and will finally destroy you. We said earlier that praying is effective in restraining us from committing sins and wicked deeds. Now let us see how the Prophet of God represents praying as a means of forgiveness of our sins. Abi Basir quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir , on the authority of God’s Prophet :

لَوْ كَانَ عَلَى بَابِ دَارِ أَحَدِكُمْ نَهْرٌ وَاغْتَسَلَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ مِنْهُ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ أَكَانَ يَبْقَى فِي جَسَدِهِ مِنَ الدَّرَنِ شَيْءٌ؟ (قلت: لا. قال) فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ الصَّلَاةِ كَمَثَلِ النَّهْرِ الْجَارِي؛ كُلَّمَا صَلَّى صَلَاةً كَفَّرَتْ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ

“If there was a flowing river right beside your house in which you washed yourself five times each day, would any dirt remain on your bodies?” He was told: “No.” Then he added: “Praying is similar to this river. Whenever you pray the sins you committed between the last time you prayed and this time will all be washed off.”19

If the person who prays fulfills all the required conditions, he will then surely be forgiven and saved from punishment as the Prophet said. The Commander of the Faithful also said the following that is recorded in *Nahjul Balaghah*:

He advised his companions as follows:

تَعَاهَدُوا أَمْرَ الصَّلَاةِ وَحَافِظُوا عَلَيْهَا وَاسْتَكْتَرُوا مِنْهَا وَتَقَرَّبُوا بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْفُوتًا. أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ
إِلَى جَوَابِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ حِينَ سُئِلُوا: مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ؟ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ. وَإِنَّهَا لَتَحِطُّ الذُّنُوبَ حَطَّ الْوَرَقِ
وَتُطْلِقُهَا إِطْلَاقَ الرَّبْقِ.

*“Adhere to praying and guard it. Pray a lot and seek nearness to God through it, for prayer **..is indeed a timed prescription for the believers**”(4: 103). Have you not heard the answer of the residents of Hell when they are asked: **“What drew you into Hell? They will answer, ‘We were not of those who prayed”**”(74:42-43). Indeed, prayer sheds sins just as trees shed their leaves, and it sets loose (a person’s) sins just as bonds are let loose.”*

1. And fix your eyes looking down to the ground. In the other version it is followed by: “You will approach the praye with humbleness, deep from your heart and you will perform it according to its bounds and its rights”. Then it continues.
2. Being humble.
3. Majma’ al-Bayan, v.5, p.201.
4. Tafsir Namuneh, v.4, pp. 104–105.
5. Kimiyaye Sa’adat, v. 1, pp. 165–166.
6. Ilm-i-Akhlaq-i-Islami, v.3, p.403.
7. Al-Haqa’iq, p.223.
8. Al-Shahid al-Awwal, Faqih al-Sarbidaran.
9. Translation and Commentary on Risalat al-Huquq, Sepihri, p.92, quoted from Asrar al-Salat, pp. 176–177.
10. Sharh Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.292.
11. Adab-i-Namaz, p.350.
12. Being eternal.
13. Nahj al-Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Sermon no.104.
14. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 14, pp.204–205.
15. Ilm-i-Akhlaq-i-Islami, v.3, p.442.
16. Imam Sajjad .
17. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.305.
18. Bihar al-Anwar, v.46, pp.81–82.
19. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.3, p.7, Tradition no.3.

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