



Prayer, Worship and Education

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The aim of the text "Prayer - Worship and Education" is to make the readers become better acquainted with the significance of the prayer and its marked influence on psychological, social and ethical affairs and also to make better understood the unique devotional role of prayer in comparison with other Islamic obligations.

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Introduction

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

“...and keep up prayer for My remembrance.” (20:14)

الصَّلَاةُ مِعْرَاجُ الْمُؤْمِنِ

“Prayer is the faithful's ladder to sublimity.”

- Prophet Muhammad (S)

Praise be to Allah, the ever Sublime; a praise that however sublime, cannot comprehend His mercy and blessings. Prayers and peace be upon the master of mankind, the conveyer of His Message, the truthful and the trustworthy: Muhammad (S), and upon his favourites and beloved ones - the Prophet's descendants, and upon those devoted to Allah and His helpers - the righteous companions of the Prophet (S), and upon all the revolutionaries who are travelling on the path of struggle till the Day of Judgement.

One misconception commonly held is that prayer (salat), and other Islamic rites, represent a mere abstract spiritual relationship between the Muslim and his Creator; a relationship that is irrelevant to the individual and the society's economic, social and political affairs.

This error can even be noticed among good natured Muslims who are involved in proselytizing for Islam. In addition, the enemies of Islam propagate the likes of these misconceptions about Islam in order to keep prayer out of its proper context and thus spiritless. The prayer would then become mere physical movements and unconscious uttering of formulas.

Another common mistake is that the performance of prayer is sufficient to ascertain a Muslim's identity. There is also supposedly no wrong in embracing other concepts and even ideologies, indulging in unlawful dealings with others (e.g. taking usury, swindling and hoarding merchandise) and cooperating with tyrants all the while, thinking that performing prayer is sufficient and that one can still count her or himself among the Muslims. Most surely prayer that does not enjoin what is good and restrain one from committing wrong deeds, will not keep the individual from Allah's pleasure.

Another erroneous idea is that prayer has a single message for people: namely to remain good and honest in dealing with people. It may be argued accordingly that to be upright and 'democratic' with others, justifies cancellation of this Islamic rite. Such misconceptions and ignorance are widespread among a broad section of Muslim youth. This is part of our enemies designs for creating strife within the Muslim ummah.

Al-Balagh Foundation presents this booklet, "Prayer - Worship and Education" as one in its continuing series of publications dedicated to and entitled "Islamic Concepts" for our respected readers, hoping that you will thus become better acquainted with the significance of the prayer and its marked influence on psychological, social and ethical affairs. Our purpose is also to make better understood the unique devotional role of prayer in comparison with other Islamic obligations.

We invoke Allah the Sublime, the Powerful, to guide us to have trust in Him, hold fast to His laws and perpetuate the holy struggle in order to defeat our enemies and have the banner of Islam wave high and indomitable.

Al-Balagh Foundation

Meaning of Prayer

Prayer (salat) literally means: Supplication, invoking Allah's blessings, asking His exaltation and forgiveness. This word 'salat' (prayer) appears several times throughout the Qur'an in its general sense, as for instance the Prophet (S) was addressed:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“Take charity out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them; surely your prayer is a tranquility to them, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing”. (9:103)

Here the word prayer acquired the meaning of supplication for goodness, benediction and purification.

There is also a call to the faithful presented by way of exhorting the believers to offer their blessings and obedience to the Prophet (S):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ۚ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; o you who believe offer your blessings on him and submit to him in full submission”. (33:56)

The meaning of the verse is clear. The context of prayer here defines and clarifies the scope of Allah's compassion and blessings on the Prophet. In addition, the angels invoke Allah to purify and forgive the Prophet, while exhorting the believers to offer their blessings on him. Thus, the believers say “O Allah, may Your blessings be upon Muhammad and his descendants.”

The Holy Prophet (S) used the word 'prayer' in his traditions and instruction in its literal sense, e.g. supplication, and invoking Allah's good and blessings. The Prophet (S) said:

“Whoever of you is invited to food, let him accept the invitation, if he is fasting, he should offer his prayers”.¹

This is to invoke Allah's good and blessing on the hosts.

The Qur'an developed the meaning of prayer from the literal definition of supplication into a special usage, referring specifically to the Islamic rite consisting of particular actions and recitations in a formula related by the Prophet (S) and outlined clearly by him. This is precisely the form of devotion which the Prophet called upon the Muslims to safeguard its content. meaning and dynamic objectives. The Prophet (S) said:

“Perform your prayer as you have seen me performing it.”²

The Qur'an refers to this mode of prayer in several verses such as:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“And keep up the prayer and pay zakat (the poor-due) and obey the Messenger that you may be graced with mercy.” (24:56)

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

“...surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers”. (4:103)

Notes

1. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an (also by Abu Dawud in his works of traditions), Part 3, P. 340.
2. Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Section of the Adhan 18.

Prayer: The Faithful's Ladder

قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

“Say to My worshippers who believe that they should keep up the prayer...” (14:31)

Prayer is a spiritual journey in which man traverses the distance between him and Allah. It is a practical institution of worship, that aims at discovering consciously the relation between the devotee and the Creator. It is intended to inspire an abstract spiritual awareness and lively, vivid conscience in the devotee, who desires to be put in close contact with the great divine love.

During prayer, the individual proclaims his lowliness and servitude to his Creator.

One's poverty and weakness are therein clearly impressed upon the soul and thus it realizes the need for a bounteous Creator whose mercy and blessings are unstinting.

In prayer the veils between the individual and the Lord are lifted and the divine beauty and love shine brilliantly on the human soul, which feels intense joy and experiences deep satisfaction. Such times are the most sublime occasions for awakening a conscientious response to learning and taking up the commands of devotion.

In prayer there is a real attempt to abandon sins and secure salvation from its evils. Indeed, there is an urge to restore the soul to its original state of purity. When facing Allah, a person is solemnly determined to abandon wrong habits and boldly attempts to be freed from the chain of materialism and lust.

What follows is a flight to Allah and ascension towards Him. It is a return to the Source, after set intervals in life's daily activity designed to recall one's personal behaviour and dealings both with people and the Creator. Such reflection helps check one's mistakes, wrong impulses and encourages taking relevant corrective measures.

Failing to perform one's obligations towards Allah or maltreating other people, leads to evil. When the individual is in such a state, there arises the pressing need to stand before Allah, humbly entreating Him for forgiveness and promising to abandon disbelief, with a determination to be upright and virtuous. This opportunity is furnished by daily prayer.

In the individual's heart-felt relationship with Allah, and standing in prayer, one seeks Allah's forgiveness, acknowledges his or her humbleness towards the Creator, and proclaims both repentance and a great desire to choose the righteous path. Thus, one renews the covenant with Allah, identifies the landmarks of the path chosen, and promises to streamline one's life. Praying regularly enhances good traits, weakens evil impulses and diminishes potential for wrongdoing. Consequently, will grows stronger.

Thus, prayer is a practical system of worship specifically intended to protect the soul from its whims and deviant desires. It is an original cure for all its spiritual diseases that subtly cultivates good habits and inclinations.

The Prophet (S) described prayer, its paramount significance, and its role in chastening the soul, and straightening human behaviour by asking “If

there be a flowing river in front of one's house in which he washes himself five times a day; will there remain anything of uncleanness on his body?" We said "No". The Prophet then said, "The (daily) prayer is like the moving river; whenever one says the prayer, his/her sins will be forgiven".¹

A man approached the Prophet (S) and requested, "O Messenger of Allah, advise me". The Prophet (S) replied,

"Never purposefully quit prayer. Whoever abandons it intentionally has in fact quit Islam".²

It is reported from the Prophet (S) that he had said,

"What keeps unbelief distant from faith is giving up prayer".³

The Prophet (S) said,

"Everything has a characteristic symbol, and the character of your religion is prayer. Thus, never defile the visage of your religion".⁴

He is also quoted as having said:

"Whoever makes light of his prayer, he is not from me. He will never meet me at the fountain (of al-Kauthar)".⁵

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s):

"I know nothing better than prayer saving knowledge. Do not you see the righteous slave of Allah, Jesus, son of Mary say: 'And he has enjoined on me prayer and zakat (poor-rate) so long as I live'".⁶

It is due to the outstanding importance of prayer that it was ordained by Allah as a religious duty in every divine message propagated by the prophets, as it is the relationship between the slave and his Creator, and a veritable staircase the individual ascends to the pinnacle of righteousness.

The Holy Qur'an, when talking about the prophets and their messages in this life declares:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ ۖ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

"And we made them Imams who guided (people) by Our command, and we revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the alms, and Us (alone) did they worship". (21:73)

Prayer is indeed the motto of the faithful and the ummah (the Muslim nation). It is precisely the boundary separating the faithful from those who do not belong to the faithful ummah:

فَأَقِمْوَا الصَّلَاةَ ۚ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

"...keep up prayer; surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers". (4:103)

Prayer is the attribute of the monotheists of all generations and throughout the centuries. The Qur'an talks about Muslims and their habits of worship alongside the Prophet Muhammad (S) extolling them and compares them favorably with the followers of the other prophets and their disciples. Allah the Exalted says in the Qur'an:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ۖ سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ ۗ

وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيغِيظَ
بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ

“Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are on their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Torah (Old Testament) and their description in the Injeel (Gospel), like as seed produce that puts forth its sprout, then strengthens it, so it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem, delighting the sowers that He may rage the disbelievers on account of them...” (48:29)

The Qur'an has no goal, when it talks historically of prayer, but to assure the faithful that prayer was the primary rite in all the divine messages and the foundation of their worship after acknowledging faith in Allah.

The Qur'an speaks of the sanctity and importance of prayer in the messages of the prophets. It mentions the supplication of Ibrahim (a.s), the father of the prophets, and the monotheistic adage he received from his Lord, and which he was humbly repeating. That statement represents the spirits of supplication that is constantly flowing in the depths of His followers: a doctrine, an awareness, and a way:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۗ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Say; surely my prayer and my worship and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. No associate has He; for that I am commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims.” (6:162-163)

Deeply eager for nearness to Allah. Ibrahim (a.s) stretches his hands forward to the Creator, beseeching Him to make him and his offspring regular in prayer, so he says:

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي

**“My Lord! make me keep up prayer and from my offspring (too), ...”
Holy Qur'an (14:40)**

The Qur'an, thus, shows us through examples of the revelation given to the prophets, that prayer was an obligatory duty for their people and their followers. This underscores the importance of prayer, and the extremely great role it played in the messages of the prophets and apostles.

Notes

1. Al-Tousi, al-Tahdhib, Part 3, P. 237.
2. Al-Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'a, Part 2, 4th Edition, P. 29.
3. Ibid (also by Ibn Maja in his works of tradition, Section of Tarik al-Salat, Part 1, P. 342.)
4. Al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Part 3, P. 270.
5. Al-Amili, Wasail al-Shi'a, Part 2, P. 16.
6. Al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Part 3, P. 264.

Quitting Prayer - Disobedience and Schism

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

“What has brought you into hell? They shall say: We were not of those who prayed”. (74:42-43)

The aim of worship is maintaining the prayer. It is the most obvious form of thanks and gratitude. It is the most ardent expression of faithfulness and trustworthiness, and the most personal declaration of one's servitude to Allah.

Adversely, giving up prayer is an explicit expression of abandonment. It reflects the disobedience of a lost, fumbling soul, and its separation from its principle and goal, the Great Creator.

This breach leaves dangerously negative and harmful repercussions on the human soul. Thus, the human soul that lives with the feeling of separation from Allah, incessantly seeks an alternative and leaves no stone unturned looking for calmness and bliss. It, however, searches in vain, wandering aimlessly about.

As a cautionary measure, Islam heartily emphasizes the necessity to keep up prayer, so that man will not bring on himself the misfortune of being distant from Allah:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

“Keep up the prayer and the middle prayer and stand up obedient to Allah”. (2:238)

Those who do not offer their prayers, Islam scolds them severely and deems giving up prayer and unbelief alike with regard to the final destiny after death.

With regard to their psychological condition and behaviour both states are far from Allah, and have no relationship whatsoever with Him. They both are ungrateful for His grace and blessings and consequently suffer greatly from the soul's darkness, living under the gravely tiresome a burden of massive accumulation of sins and deviation. For this very reason, prayer in Islam is the separating edge between faith and infidelity.

Hear then what is related from the Prophet (S) which clearly expresses Islam's judgement of the one who does not sustain his prayer:

“Between infidelity and faith is merely giving up prayer”.

It is narrated from him that:

“Islam is based on five principles: bearing witness that 'there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His servant and messenger, keeping up prayer, giving zakat (poor-rate), hajj (pilgrimage) to the house of Allah in Mecca, and fasting during the month of Ramadhan’.”¹

The Prophet (S) is also quoted as having said:

“Prayer is the pillar of religion, whoever keeps it up, he keeps religion, and whoever gives up his prayer he demolishes religion”.

From these quoted texts of Qur'an and Sunnah (the Prophet's tradition), which underline the sublime importance of prayer and its role in solidifying faith, we can see for ourselves the true value of prayer in Islam, which is literally the dividing line between faith and infidelity. Prayer is the badge of the faithful, the trait of the pious, the pillar of Islam and its soul, expressing

its deep sense of obedience to Allah. In essence it is an intense, abbreviated expressing of ultimate obedience in the form of an excellent rite. In prayer all the characteristic objectives of Islam are manifest: faith in Allah, loyalty to Him, expressing gratitude, purifying the soul, training oneself to love the good, improving behaviour, continuing relationship with Allah, setting up a link with the Hereafter... etc.

Consequently, giving up prayer means destroying one's Islam, disconnecting the lifeline with Allah, and opening a gap through which deviation and corruption penetrate.

Note

1. Al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Part 2, P. 28.

Philosophy of Adhan (The Call to Prayer)

At certain times, specifically at five intervals a day, with every time change, and solar movement we find ourselves absorbed in our problems, and drawn into the vicissitudes of this world. Some of us are far removed from Allah, and profoundly attracted by life's distractions, to which we dedicate our attention and time. During all this we hear the adhan perfuming the earth, entering the heart as a declaration of monotheism, raising to the heights the name of Allah, rebuking those ignorant of Allah, calling people to perform the best of rites, namely meeting the Omnipotent.

We hear the adhan and listen to its sublime meaning, and beautiful hymn. We listen but the everlasting call never fades away...? It persists with a life of its own penetrating the thirsty hearts, like a light pouring into the straying souls, awakening in them an awareness of mind; a sharpened conscience, and renewing the flow of hope. It calls out 'Allahu-Akbar' (Allah is the Greatest).

Allah is the great, that cannot be described...

Allah is the great, whose greatness can never be perceived by any human being...

Allah is the great, whose existence cannot be apprehended by any mind.

Great, and how great He is! Is there anything in this entire world that can bar man from meeting Him, enjoying his mercy, delighting in blissful supplication to Him, and subsequently becoming enlightened in His brilliance?

The call ascends like a memory pouring into the mind, and as beacons of light encircling the soul...

'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah'. It awakens the mind from its stupor and the conscience from its lethargy... and the muadhin (the caller to prayer) goes on rhythmically.

'I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah'. It tells of the good news descending from heaven to earth. It is an invitation to people to follow the messenger of right and guidance. Let them hurry up to prayer, amidst this spiritually fragrant atmosphere and psychically enriching feeling.

The muadhin then reiterates the purpose of adhan by saying, 'Hasten to the ritual prayer... hasten to salvation... hasten to the best deed'. O Muslims come on! Get ready for the prayer. Meet your Lord and stand in front of Him. These are the most beautiful moments in your life and assuredly a fruitful deed awaits you. Come with your soul, heart, and mind... in it is your salvation and benediction.

At the end of adhan the muadhin repeats the basic lesson of the message 'Allah is the Great... there is no god but Allah', so that no earthly matter becomes greater than Allah in one's soul. Then he hastens and stands in front of Allah the Exalted.

Facts with Deep Meanings

Islam fixed stated times for prayer, and embellished them with a certain precise, accompanying rituals. It stipulates rules for the prayer's correctness, outlines conditions under which it is fruitless and clarifies the objectives of worship that must be reached in order for the prayer to be complete in its full sense. These conditions weave from the spiritual atmosphere and the rites a sacred formula encompassing the entire scope of prayer. Islam made every dimension of this formula a fact and a realizable state of consciousness, drawing a line on the map of perfection for the soul. When these lines and factors converge, they result in an inspired deed with concerted results and effects on the soul of the person maintaining prayer and on that individual's way of life.

These conditions and dimensions are:

1. Time

When offering our prayer five times a day, most of us may not ask why this correlation between prayer and time? Why is it compulsory for us to offer our prayers at the beginning of every new part of the day? Why is prayer connected to the astronomical changes, and the general, natural cycle of the universe?

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنِ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

“Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation, surely the morning recitation is witnessed”. (17:78)

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا ۖ وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ

“Bear then patiently what they say, and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during hours of the night do also glorify (Him) and during parts of the day, that you may be well pleased”. (20:130)

This connection and relationship is neither a random choice, nor a harmonious circumstance created by the worshipper. It is actually the sagacious divine hand that leads man to the ladder of perfection. It prepares for him the atmosphere for devotion, surrounding which is the ultimate of the prayer's goals: glorifying Allah, acknowledging His grace, and expressing deep gratitude to Him.

The Most Exalted has tied man's desire for worship with certain time, that he may observe the greatness and omnipotence of his Creator. He then imbibes the essence of submission and its connection to the Great Creator's will. Man becomes so habituated that after every time cycle, he greets the coming one with prayer and thanks. He celebrates the praise of Allah. The daily, natural changes etch submission and acknowledgement of Allah's greatness and glory on every aware soul that discovers the true rhythm of this world, comprehends its movement, and the direction towards which it moves.

The Qur'an refers to this sense in many places and in every instance wherein it, wants to turn the human beings' attention to the Creator of this world, like in the following verse:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا

“And He it is Who made the night and the day to follow each other for him who desires to be mindful or desires to be thankful”. (25:62)

2. Purification

Bodily purification, basic cleanliness of the devotee's clothes, and the place of prostration are essential conditions for ritual correctness.

The purification demanded here is from any state of uncleanness stemming from: nocturnal pollution, menstruation, breaking wind, bodily excretions such as urine, blood and excrement... etc., and removing its traces by washing with water or effacing it with earth.

Purification then is a bodily and psychological readiness to attain cleanliness, thus perceiving the loftiness of the Creator in front of Whom one must stand, and the exaltedness of the position to which one aspires, accustoming the worshipper to be always clean and purified. The individual's inclination for immaculateness achieved by getting rid of the physical and spiritual impurities, will grow into a sense of Creator consciousness, interrelated with worship and the desire to be closer to Allah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ ۗ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهَّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“O you who believe, when you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe a part of your head, and your feet to the ankles. If you are in Junub, then cleanse yourselves, and if you are sick or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy, or you have been in touch with women, and you can find no water, then do Tayamum on clean earth and wipe a part of your faces and your hands with it. Allah desires not to make any uneasiness on you, but He desires to purify you, and to complete His blessing upon you, so that you may be thankful.”
(5:6)

لَمَسْجِدٍ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ ۚ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ

“...certainly, a masjid founded on piety from the very first day is more deserving that you should stand in it; in it are men who love that they should be purified; and Allah loves those who purify themselves”. (9:108)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

“...surely Allah loves the repentants and loves those who cleanse themselves.” (2:222)

Islam emphasizes heavily physical purity, i.e. that of the body, clothes, house, environment... etc. Simultaneously, it underlines spiritual cleanliness, and purifying the heart and conscience of evil, corruption, and deviation. This path links piety and repentance - the two aspects of behaviour essential for correcting the intention and stimulating action toward purity. Islam, by no means wants, to attend to man's physical appearance, bodily state and environment, while ignoring that of the soul and conscience, lest purity be

partitioned in the Muslim's conscience, as in the European man, who expresses annoyance with the dirtiness of the street, his clothes and the seat on a bus, while he is inwardly dirty, fetid, and ignorant of his soul's filth, but is never annoyed by telling lies, or swindling others.

3. Qiblah (the Direction of Prayer)

Qiblah is the direction of prayer, and Masjid al-Haram (the Holy Mosque) in Mecca is the Muslims' qiblah, to which their hearts and souls turn, and vibrate for.

At the dawn of Islam, Muslims were turning towards Jerusalem in their prayer. Then the Prophet (S) ordered them to change their qiblah, and turn towards Masjid al-Haram in Makkah al-Mukarramah, when he was addressed by the following verse:

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۚ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا ۗ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ
وَلَيْنِ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ۗ وَمَا
بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ إِنَّكَ إِذَا لَمِنَ
الظَّالِمِينَ

“Indeed We see the turning of your face to heaven, so We shall surely turn you to a qiblah which you shall like; turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your face towards it, and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord, and Allah is not at all heedless of what they do.”

“And even if you bring every proof to those who have been given the Book, they would not follow your Qiblah (prayer direction), nor can you be a follower of their Qiblah, neither are they the followers of each other's Qiblah, and if you follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, then you will surely be among the unjust”. (2:144-145)

That is the exact divine order stating the new qiblah which the Wise Creator has approved to be the qiblah of the Islamic ummah.

Qiblah is the point to which the Muslim turns in his prayer and supplication. It is the direction, whether in wakefulness or sleep to which the Muslim directs his or her heart and feelings. This concept embodies more than a simple definition and imprints on the worshipper's soul indelible impression and a constant awareness.

A single qiblah is then a source of unification of the ummah, whose members sacredly and respectfully turn towards it, several times a day. It is the place to which they look, and incessantly attend. It is the pivot around which their feelings revolve and the point at which their emotions converge. It is the spindle on which the feeling of love and unity are woven. This qiblah which attracts the Muslims and their psychic energy distinguishes the character of the Muslim ummah, and clarifies its direction, and purpose from the rest of the nations.

Identifying the qiblah, and fixing it in one place, was a milestone in the history of worship in that it has set a spiritual center for the ummah to which the souls gather around and made discernable a holy place that inculcates in ourselves the meaning of Islam which grew in its very land. Thus, turning to the Masjid al-Haram - inside Makkah al-Mukarramah - has an import of

doctrinal and emotional attraction; a force prompting a continuous spiritual and psychological response. It constantly reminds us of Islam and its perpetual meanings, and imparts continuous attention to the legacy of the message. It is the site where the Islamic message appeared and from which the Islamic doctrine was initiated and grew. For this reason, turning towards the qiblah is considered one element of the spiritual formula which envelops the meaning of prayer in Islam, and is considered a condition for its correctness.

For the sake of preserving the doctrine of unity and purifying the sense of faith from any vestiges of deviation, the effects of the beliefs of other nations, or of the cult of personality, the Qur'an refers to an exceptionally important fact connected to the qiblah which highlights the core of the relationship between man and his Creator. It cautions that turning towards a certain direction, does not confine seeking Allah to that direction only. It does not mean linking worship to a perceptible, limited thing. Allah the Exalted is never tied to place, time, and direction. He does not need these factors. Facing the qiblah has specific devotional and human goals in mind solely for the benefit of the Muslims. The Qur'an says:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“To Allah belongs the East and the West; whithersoever turn, there is the presence of Allah; He is Infinite, Omniscient.” (2:115)

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۚ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Surely I have turned myself to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth as an upright, and I am not of the polytheists”. (6:79)

4. Permissibility

Permissibility here signifies that the worshipper is free to make use of anything he needs for offering his prayer. The condition must certainly be present in anything the worshipper uses while praying or during preparation, like the water of ablution, or its utensil, the place of prayer, the clothes. All these have to be purely halal (lawful), never usurped (unlawfully taken from other people), so that one stands in front of Allah, completely clean, and abiding by Allah's orders. In this way, prayer is conducive to preserving rights, and property, and in fighting injustice and coercion.

That is why praying on usurped ground is not correct, making ablution with usurped water is disallowed and prostrating in stolen garments is forbidden.

Moreover, prayer in clothes bought with money from which one has not paid the poor-dues (zakat) is not correct. This is stipulated in order to protect the financial system in Islam, and harmonize its laws and commandment.

5. Presence of Heart and Sincerity

The Prophet (S) is quoted as having said:

“When one stands up to offer his prayer, he communes with his Lord”.¹

And he said:

“Whoever makes light of prayer, he would never meet me at the spring of Kauthar, never by Allah”.²

Prayer is quite worthless if it is no more than automatic actions, verbal formulas and soulless physical movements.

Prayer can never achieve its distinct goals, if the worshipper is physically present, but spiritually absent and thus removed from the object to which he offers his devotion. There must be a genuine presence, to the point that one deeply realizes the value of the position of standing in front of Allah and the grandeur of the Creator he speaks to in his prayer. The soul, then, absorbs the meanings of prayer psychologically, spiritually and morally... which equates to submission, love of Allah, desire for His reward, uprightness in behaviour, and correctness in dealing with people... etc.

The soul is, in this way, affected by the ritual verbal formulas and actions. Every word pronounced by the worshipper and every action performed has a correspondingly deep effect on the human spirit. When man prostrates he realizes the meaning of submission and respect for Allah's greatness, and becomes aware of the falsity of human prides. When the individual raises his hands to supplicate for parents and his faithful brothers and sisters that soul feels love, mercy, sympathy and love of good towards others. The Qur'an praises highly the respectful devotees and lauds their uniquely sublime position:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

“Successful indeed are the believers. Who are humble in their prayers”. (23:1-2)

The Prophet (S) calls sincere hearts to be tied to Allah, to be deeply attached to Him and to have genuine presence in front of Him. by saying:

“Allah never accepts a prayer if the man's heart is not present along with his body.”³

It is related that the Prophet (S) was once present in the mosque, when a man came into the mosque and offered his prayer. He did not bow or prostrate perfectly. The Prophet (S) commented:

“He pecked like a crow. If he dies, and his prayer is like this, he will die as a non-Muslim”.⁴

He has also been quoted to have said:

“Whoever offers two rakas (cycles of prayer) and does not talk to himself of this world, Allah forgives all his previous sins.”⁵

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) said:

“A heart where love of Allah and fear of Him join together, its reward would be paradise. So when you pray let your heart be present with Allah, because never does a faithful servant of Allah pray to Him with a conscious heart, without Allah gathering the hearts of the faithful round him, and grants him paradise as he is loved by the faithful”.⁶

Presence of heart must certainly be accompanied by the sincere intention to offer the prayer as a means of the nearness to Allah, without hypocrisy, the pretension of being sincere, humble and pious in front of people, or pride over one's prayer. The worshipper should concentrate his intention and will and turn all his feelings and the depths of his existence towards the Allah Glorified.

The soul becomes composed and serene through sincere deeds. Its powers are then ready to receive the blessings of divine perfection. By achieving this, it deserves to be granted divine mercy, forgiveness and ample reward.

The Most Exalted says:

وَمَنْ يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

“And whoever submits himself wholly to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he indeed has taken hold of the firmest thing upon which one can lay hold: and Allah's is the end of affairs”. (31:22)

Most certainly, the worshipper must cross the plain, both of material and perception in order to spiritually enter the majestic and divine world and be humbly present in front of Allah.

Heavily burdened by life its troubles and sins, the soul finds rest and inhales the fragrance of the nearness of Allah in this spiritually charged atmosphere.

The Prophet (S) was speaking the truth when he used to call Bilal al-Habashi to give the adhan by saying:

“O Bilal, give us rest by it”.⁷

Notes

1. Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Part 1, P. 112.
2. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Part 38, P. 9.
3. Al-Naraqī, Jami al-Sa'dat, Part 3, P. 327.
4. Al-Amili, Wasail al-Shi'a, Part 1, Section of Wujub Itmam al-Salat; (also by Ibn Jabir in his works of traditions; ibn Maja, Part 1, P. 459).
5. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Part 84, P. 249.
6. Al-Naraqī, Jami al-Sa'dat, Part 3, P. 328.
7. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Part 83, P. 16.

Prayer Between Performance and Contemplation

Prayer is a formula for worship with concordant factors and elements and a systematic method aiming at schooling man to live righteously and happily. It is a continuous spiritual and psychological movement that aims at rising above the baseness of life and attaining a superior position by rebuilding the self with the prayer's inspiration, according to its rules and in the light of its import.

Prayer is a ritual unit composed of suitably arranged words and movements, with harmonious goals and aims, designed both a clear intention and spiritual consciousness. Every element in this formula has a psychic impact and reformative effect which it achieves along with its other aspects.

These elements and factors are to be governed by a deep consciousness, and feeling for the profound implications they embody. Otherwise the devotion literally becomes an empty formula and automatic movements devoid of any of the effects of worship or reformative motives. Eventually it becomes what the Prophet (S) describes as ‘...pecking of a crow...’

Thus, if prayer is to achieve its goal, the worshipper must ponder its every word and movement so he can realise what he says, and be cognizant of the spoken formulas and physical actions as the means through which one expresses the relationship with Allah and true feelings towards Him. Through prayers deep and cumulative effects, the personality is rebuilt and life taken on a new meaning as a result of the connection with Allah, the attempt to extend the self's horizons, and rendering the soul capable of perceiving new meanings inspired by the Creator's attributes and His messenger's teachings like mercy, justice, humbleness, forgiveness, love of goodness... etc. The moral and spiritual values thus grow and extend deeply into the human soul, becoming a means of correcting behaviour and directing life's development.

By repeating prayers and contemplating over its meanings, moral inspirations intensify, and the spiritual impulses gather to form a single redemptive current. Its effects are reflected even outside the prayer times and encompass man's entire life; his actions and attitudes.

Prayer, in addition to being a duty, becomes a training good for the human being and an instrument for shaping moral conduct, making out of the worshipper an upright individual living life, filling it with good and benevolent deeds. This ritual devotion is actually a formula which accommodates through its words and movements (recitation, supplication, bowing, prostration, humbleness, beseeching, feeling), all Islam's teachings concerning submission and humility endeavouring to purify the soul and improving behaviour, cultivating the feelings of love for all other people, schooling mankind, and putting the human being on the right path.

Congregational Prayer

The Prophet (S) said:

“Whoever offers his evening prayer, night prayer, and noon prayer in congregation in the mosque, it is as if he had spent the whole night worshipping”.¹

“Congregational prayer is 25 times better than individual prayer”.²

“Allah is obliged toward His servant, who has prayed in a congregation then asked him something, to grant him what he asked before leaving.”³

“Whoever offers the five daily prayers in congregation, people will think good of him”.⁴

Islam ordained congregational prayer and emphasized it in the compulsory prayers except for the prayer of al-Tawaf (circumambulation) prayer during Hajj, and al-Nawafil Prayers (voluntary prayers). It made it compulsory in al-Jumu'a prayer (Friday prayer) and al-Eid prayers (festival prayers) as a display of (group) worship and a means of unity, brotherhood, and equality between Muslims.

In al-Jama'a prayers the worshippers, arrayed in lines, turn towards Allah with one heart and one mind. They stand facing one qiblah, one Lord, harboring the sense of the entire humanity's directing itself to Allah, unity of the community, and taken the same path in life. Through all this, the devotee is involved in the process of dissolving himself in the movement of people towards achieving human unity, as if a single soul and moving in the same direction. This exemplifies the definition of agreement and the community's submission to Allah's will - in unison with other created beings and existing objects - in their forms of group worship.

The devotees in congregation are actually a column of souls comprising an entity of unified members that supplicate and beseech Allah in quest of nearness and in search of spring of the sacred divine love. This ultimately intensifies the sense of humbleness in the depths of the worshippers and confers on the prayer an atmosphere of sacredness and glory. Not only does the al-Jama'a (general congregational prayer as distinct from Friday congregational prayer) reach these objectives but exceeds this to fulfill its reformatory role in the life of the community and the individual.

In the group prayer, acquaintance between the worshippers is achieved. Brotherhood, love, and peace are solidified. All devotees feel they are equal, humble, and exalted owing to their standing in the same position, reciting similar words, performing expressive, symmetrical actions, and turning toward one Lord. Their position inspires them with the feeling of the value of humanity and the equality of all human beings in front of Allah.

Meeting each other, cooperating to establish benevolent projects, like helping the needy and visiting the sick, are some fruits of the daily congregational prayers.

Sermons are given in the prayer gathering so the community's religious education gradually increases; its social conscience awakens; its political and ideological awareness blossoms and the way of goodness and righteousness is clearly identified. Consequently, Islam exhorts Muslims to attend al-Jama'a prayers, particularly al-Jumu'a prayer. The Qur'an declares:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ۚ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know.” (62:9)

Due to the previously cited reasons, al-Jama'a prayer is of a paramount importance in Islam. Consequent to the above-mentioned realities, Islam made it clear that al-Juma'a prayers should be attended by men and women and even prisoners, who are to be temporarily released on Fridays and the two Eids (festivals), to attend the prayers and then return to detention.

It is reported from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s) that he said:

“Surely the Imam (leader of the prayer) should release the prisoners on Fridays and the Eids and send with them someone who teaches them their religion. When, then, they have offered their prayers on Friday and the Eids, he returns them to the prison”.⁵

It is narrated that Imam Ali bin Musa al-Ridha (a.s) said:

“The sermon on Friday prayer was ordained because Friday is a day whereon Muslims congregate. So Allah made it a means for the imam to advise them, exhort them to obedience, frighten them into abstaining from sin, show them the true interests of their religion and life and convey to them the news reaching him from far-flung areas, which tells of what is harmful and beneficial. Two sermons were ordained so that the first is exclusively for the praising and glorification of Allah, the Most Exalted, while the second one addresses the needs, permissions, warnings and supplications, whereby Allah wants to teach the worshippers what He orders them to do and what He forbids them from doing, thus defining for them righteousness and deviation.”⁶

Imam Ali (a.s) was quoted as having said:

“The Messenger of Allah warned Muslims not to talk on Friday during the sermon of the imam. Whoever does it he speaks nonsense and he who speaks nonsense, his worship on Friday is not accepted”.⁷

These unambiguous Islamic texts are sufficient to urge us to pay more attention to group prayers, keep them, and attain their aims, especially when Islam strongly underscores the necessity of not abandoning congregational prayers or the mosques.

Many narratives and traditions were conveyed to this effect. The Prophet (S) said:

“Whoever does not offer his prayers in the mosque with the Muslims and has no legal excuse, surely his prayers are not accepted”.⁸

Imam al-Baqir (a.s) is quoted as having said:

“Whoever lives near the mosque and does not offer his prayers in it, without being sick or busy, surely his prayers are not accepted”.⁹

Notes

1. Al-Amili, Wasail al-Shi'a, Part 3, Page 378 (also by Siyuti in Jam'e al-Saghir, Part 2, P. 531).
2. Al-Amili, Wasail al-Shi'a, Part 3, P. 374 (also by Sahih Muslim, 3rd Edition, Part 5, P. 151 and 165).
3. Al-Amili, Wasail al-Shi'a, Part 3, P. 374.
4. Ibid, P. 372.
5. Al-Amili, Wasail al-Shi'a, Part 3, P. 36.
6. Ibid, P. 39.
7. Ibid, P. 30.
8. Ibid, P. 377.
9. Ibid, P. 375.

Effect of Prayer on Social Life

The reforming effect of prayer is certainly not confined to the individual only. It encompasses a wide range of social domains, so that the life is organized and straightened according to Allah's will.

In order to fulfill the objectives of prayer, the Qur'an links keeping up prayers to social reformation and doing good deeds.

The Holy Qur'an declares:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

“...and you shall speak to people good words and keep up prayer and pay zakat (the poor-rate) ...” (2:83)

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

“Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands, and keep up prayer...” (4:77)

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ

“And We made them imams who guided (people) by Our command and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer...” (21:73)

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ
وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

“Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay zakat (the poor-rate) and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allah's is the end of affairs.” (22:41)

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

“Recite that which has been sent down to you of the Book and keep up prayer; surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest and Allah knows what you do”. (29:45)

Examining these verses, we notice:

1. Prayer is always linked to good speech, “and you shall speak to men good words”, lest the worshipper say something evil, he or she should say nothing except what is good and constructive. Nor does the devotee tell lies, backbite, vilify, or curse. Such an individual should never say defamatory words but seek to promote good and virtue. As a tool to attain this goal the Muslim uses a good word, the word of reform, and faith, and should always speak what is charming and pleasing... because speech plays an effective role in reforming the community, and the individual ideologically and educationally. It is conducive in establishing healthy psychological and social ties:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ صَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِي
أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ
كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ

“Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word (being) like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven. Yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord? And Allah sets forth parables for people that they may be mindful. And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth’s surface; it has no stability”. (14:24-26)

2. Similarly, prayer is linked to abstaining from mistreating people, and dealing with them unjustly, or encroaching on their property, souls, honour and anything that belongs to them.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

“Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands, and keep up prayer...” (4:77)

This has been revealed so that crime and transgression be rooted out entirely and peace and stability prevail.

3. Prayer is also linked to doing good, and calling man to righteousness. instructing mankind to do what is beneficial, and endeavour to fulfill humanity's objectives of progress in social construction, politics, economics, sociology, ethics... and in fact, the entire sphere of life.

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ ۗ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

“...and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the alms and Us (alone) did they worship”. (21:73)

4. Prayer is also linked to enjoining good and forbidding wrong:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“...surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil...” (29:45)

Linking prayer to social reform, fighting against corruption and decadence as personified in evil and wrong, certainly has the best reformatory results in the life of both the community and the individual.

Thus, the individual and the community that maintains prayer, are centres of enlightenment, human reform, and uprightness, because prayer cultivates deep inside man:

A. Conscious awareness through continual worshipping of Allah, fear of committing sins and shame of disobeying Him. How can a devotee commit any crime or disobey Allah, when he stands in front of Him praying, asking His forgiveness and reward, five times a day?

B. Prayer nurtures in man the desire to repent, and turn to righteousness by continually asking Allah's remission of sins and seeking refuge with Him from committing further sins. Inwardly the gap between man and sins widens and the desire to righteousness and reform is intensified.

C. Prayer cultivates in man love of good for others and saves him from bearing grudges and egoism which are the source of myriad evils and human misadventures in all of life's domains. In prayer the worshipper asks good for all people. He or she requests for them goodness and forgiveness. Consequently, feelings of love, and benevolence in their broader, general social context are encouraged.

Loving of what is good is not only expressed by du'a (supplication). This most noble human feeling extends outward and is reflected in the behaviour and actions humanity securely and calmly undertakes in its shade.

And praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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