

Home > Greater Sins Volume 3 > Thirty-sixth Greater Sin: Omitting Prayer Intentionally > Qaḏa of Invalid Prayers is very Important

Thirty-sixth Greater Sin: Omitting Prayer Intentionally

The thirty-sixth greater sin is to omit prayer intentionally. The traditions of Imam Taqi (a.s.), Imam Riḏā (a.s.) Imam Mūsā Kadhīm (a.s.) and Imam Ja'far as-Sādiq (a.s.) (mentioned in Abdul Azīm's Sahifa) support this view. This fact is also confirmed by the tradition of Amir ul-Mu'minīn (a.s.). In Islam prayer is an obligatory duty which has to be performed without fail. Anyone who does not offer prayer considering it non-obligatory is an infidel and outside the pale of Islam. To deny prayer is to deny the Holy Prophet (S) and to deny the Holy Qur'an and such a person is an unbeliever. Many traditions have been recorded in this connection¹

Imam Ja'far as-Sādiq (a.s.) says,

A person came to the Holy Prophet (S) and begged him for a moral lesson. The Messenger of Allah (S) said, "Do not omit prayer intentionally because whoever leaves prayer voluntarily has exited from the pale of Islam."²

The Messenger of Allah (S) says:

"The thing that turns a Muslim into Kafir is to omit prayer intentionally or to offer prayer considering it insignificant and unimportant."³

The Holy Prophet (S) also says,

"There is no difference between faith and infidelity except the omitting of prayer"⁴

Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) writes in the commentary of al-Kāfi that some of these traditions emphasise that to omit all or some obligatory acts is infidelity. This itself is one of the connotations of 'Kufr' as recorded in ayats and traditions. It is mentioned, 'One who intentionally omits prayer is a Kafir, one who doesn't pay Zakat is a Kafir one who omits Hajj is a Kafir.'

In the traditions omitting obligatory acts is not separately mentioned as a greater sin. This is perhaps so, because when a person commits an act which is *Harām*, he is under some compulsion, either emotional or physical or social or of some other need which he seeks to fulfil. For example a person may commit fornication due to a physical urge; or under the influence of anger he may use foul language or may even commit murder and do injustice to others in many other ways. But in the case of omitting obligatory acts and particular prayers, there are no such compulsions. Obligatory acts are avoided by those who consider religious commands insignificant and attach no importance to them; and this amounts to denial of the Almighty.

In the tradition which equates omitting prayers to infidelity it may be argued that a person may avoid Hajj and Zakat for being a miser, or he may not fast out of concern for his health or because the idea of hunger and thirst deters him. But as far as prayer is concerned, there is not a single factor that can come in the way of a person offering prayer to the Creator, except that he considers religion insignificant and takes prayers lightly.

Sadiq (r.a.) quotes a tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) wherein it was asked from the Imam (a.s.) why adulterers and drunkards are not called Kafirs while one who omits prayer is labelled so? Imam (a.s.) said, "Adultery etc. are committed when a person is subdued with sensuality but prayer is not omitted except that it was considered insignificant because one who commits adultery, does so to derive pleasure but one who leaves prayer does not get any pleasure."

The above hadith proves that if one leaves an obligatory duty considering religion unimportant one is a kafir. The Messenger of Allah (S) says,

"One who considers prayers light (insignificant) is not from us." Another hadith mentions that such a person will not get the intercession of Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.). "And one who consumes intoxicants is not from us and by Allah one who drinks wine will not be able to arrive at the Pool of Kawthar."⁵

In his last moments, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has been recorded to have said,

"Our intercession will not reach those who consider prayer light (insignificant)."⁶

It may be mentioned that a person who accepts that prayer has been prescribed by the Almighty and he believes in the prophethood and in the message of the Seal of the prophets (S), but fails to offer prayers due to sheer laziness, is not considered an unbeliever, but a transgressor.

Misunderstanding of some stupid people

When those who do not pray are warned and exhorted to pray and asked why they do not pray, they say that the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) is not in need of their prayer. These thoughts are inspired by Shaitan. The fact is that these people believe that they are not in need of Allah (S.w.T.). They do not realize that they owe their very existence to Allah (S.w.T.)'s mercy and they function because they are always

surrounded by divine favours. This attitude prompts them to give up all acts of thankfulness and service to their Benefactor. Their refusal to pray is due to hard heartedness, stubbornness and injustice. Accordingly Allah (S.w.T.) will also give them the destination they deserve (hell) and reward the obedient in the abode of peace.

Promise of chastisement in the Qur'an

There are numerous Qur'anic Verses that emphasise the importance of Prayer and the certainty of Divine chastisement for neglect. A few of these ayats are given below:

“In gardens, they shall ask each other. About the guilty: What has brought you into hell? They shall say: We were not of those who prayed; And we used not to feed the poor; And we used to enter into vain discourse with those who entered into vain discourses. And we used to call the day of judgment a lie.” (Surah al-Muddaththir 74:40-46)

“So he did not accept the truth, nor did he pray, But called the truth a lie and turned back, Then he went to his followers, walking away in haughtiness.” (Surah al-Qiyāma 75:31-33)

“Nearer to you (is destruction) and nearer, Again (consider how) nearer to you and nearer.” (Surah al-Qiyāma 75:34-35)

Some commentators of Qur'an explain that 'destruction' is 'wael' (a place in hell). And the repetition of word 'nearer' four times is for emphasis. Or the four repetitions may signify four stages of destruction: Once in this world, second the punishment of grave, terror in Qiyāma and fourth the everlasting stay in Hell.

In Surah al-Mā'īn, the Almighty remarks,

“And wael (woe) to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayers, who do (good) to be seen.” (Surah al-Mā'īn 107: 4-6)

'Waelun' (terrible punishment) is for those who are unmindful about prayers; prayer which is a pillar of faith and the dividing line between belief and disbelief. 'Waelun' is one of the sections of Hell, or a well situated in Hell. It is also used as a word denoting terrible punishment the 'Un' which is added at the end makes it a superlative.

The Almighty Lord says in Surah Maryam,

“But there came after them an evil generation, who neglected prayers and followed sensual desires, so they will meet perdition.” (Surah Maryam 19: 59)

The word 'gayya' which is translated as 'perdition' above is a valley in Hell where the punishment is far more severe than other areas. Even the inmates of Hell seek Allah (S.w.T.)'s refuge from this

punishment. Ibn Abbas has related that, ‘There is a serpent in this valley which is sixty day’s journey long and thirty day’s journey wide. Since the day it was created it has opened it’s mouth only to swallow those who neglect prayer and those who drink.’ Allah (S.w.T.) the Almighty remarks in Surah ar-R^um,

“...And keep up prayer and be not of the polytheists...” (Surah ar-R^um 30: 31)

This verse implies that a person who neglects prayer is at par with the idol worshippers and polytheists.

Fifteen terrible Consequences in the life and the Hereafter for those who neglect prayer

The Messenger of Allah (S) says that a person who neglects prayer and is lazy in its fulfilment is punished with fifteen calamities by Allah. Of these, six are related to this life, Three are with regard to the time of death, Three occur in the grave and Three calamities strike him in Qiy^ama. That is when he will emerge from his grave (for the final accounting). The six calamities with regard to this life are:

1. The Almighty Allah reduces his life span.
2. And He terminates his sustenance.
3. He makes the signs of righteousness to disappear from his face.
4. None of his good deeds will be accepted and he will not be rewarded for them.
5. His invocations will not be accepted.
6. The supplications of righteous people will not benefit him.

The Three calamities to befall him at the time of death are:

1. He will die a death of degradation and disgrace.
2. He will die in hunger
3. He will die in a state of such a terrible thirst that even if he were to drink all the streams of the earth his thirst will not be quenched.

And the Three punishments that he will suffer in the grave are:

1. An angel will be appointed over him to give him squeeze and chastise him.
2. His grave will be made narrow.
3. His grave will be dark and horrifying.

And the Three calamities with regard to Qiyāma are as follows:

1. The angel will be dragging him for accounting in such a way that other people will be a witness to it.
2. His accounting will be very strict.
3. The Almighty Allah will not look at him with mercy, will not purify him and there is a terrible punishment for him.

The Most Important Religious Obligations

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“In Qiyāma the first thing that one has to account for is one's prayer. If it is accepted, his other good deeds will be accepted too. And if it is rejected his other good deeds will be rejected too.”⁷

Muawiyah Ibn Wahab asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “Which is that meritorious deed that brings one closer to his Lord?” Imam (a.s.) replied,

“After the Marefat (recognition) of Allah, the Prophet and Imam no deed is superior to Prayer. Don't you see that the righteous slave of Almighty, Hazrat Isa (a.s.) said, ‘As far as I am alive, the Almighty Allah has commanded me to pray and pay the poor-rate’? The Holy Prophet (S) was queried regarding the Best of deeds and he replied: Of all the good deeds the best is a prayer that is offered at the earliest hour.”⁸

Hazrat Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

“Prayer is a pillar of faith, it is like the centrepole of the tent. As far as it is fulfilled, the ropes and pegs remain taut. When this centre pole does not remain straight or is broken, the other ropes and pegs also loosen from their places and the tent collapses.”⁹

In the same way all the good deeds and acts of worship are connected to Prayers. Such that if this (Prayer) is neglected the other good deeds will also be wasted.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) comments on the Verse,

“...and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is of no account...” (Surah al-M³ida 5:5)

Imam (a.s.) says,

“This ayat denotes those who neglect prayer without any disability or problem.”¹⁰

Hazrat Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says,

“The foundation of Islam is based on five things: Upon the prayer and Zakat and Hajj and Fasting and

Wilāyat.”¹¹

Zurarah asked Imam (a.s.) which of these were the most superior. Imam (a.s.) replied,

“It is Wilāyat, Because Wilāyat of ʿAlī Muhammad (a.s.) is the key to other things. And after Wilāyat the most superior is Prayer. Because the Messenger of Allah (S) has said, ‘The Prayer is the Pillar of your religion.’”

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

“When the day of Judgement is established a serpent of the species of scorpion will emerge from Hell. Its head will be on the seventh heaven and its tail will reach lower than the earth. Its mouth will be wide open from the west to the east. He will say, ‘Where are those who warred against Allah and his Messenger?’ Then Jibrīl the trustworthy will descend and ask him as to what people he wanted. The serpent will reply, “I want five groups of people. Those who neglected prayer, those who didn’t pay Zakat, those who took usury, the drunkards and those who talk of worldly things in the Masjids. (Meaning Harām conversation. For example the backbiting of Muslims and falsely accusing them, or to start an illegal practice, praising an oppressor or praising a person who doesn’t deserve this praise, or criticising a person who is free from blame.)¹²

The Messenger of Allah (S) also said,

“There is a valley in Hell and the inmates of Hell scream 70000 times daily due to the severity of its punishment. There is a house of fire therein and this house has a well of fire. In this well is a casket which houses a thousand headed snake. Each of the head has a thousand mouths and each mouth has a thousand fangs and each of the fangs is one thousand metres long.”

Anas said, “O Messenger of Allah (S), for whom is this punishment reserved?” The Prophet (S) replied,

“For those who imbibe wine and those who omit Prayers.”

Numerous traditions have reached us describing the severity of the punishment for neglecting Prayer but we think the above mentioned ones shall suffice for our purpose.

Helping those who omit Prayer

Many traditional reports mention terrible consequences for those who help and assist the people who neglect prayer. As mentioned by the Messenger of Allah (S),

“One who helps the neglecter of Prayer by giving him food or cloth acts as if he has murdered 70 prophets, the first of whom being Adam (a.s.) and the last Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (S).”¹³

He (S) also said,

“One who gives a draught of water to the neglecter of prayer, acts as if he has made war against me and battled with all the prophets.”¹⁴

The Holy Prophet is also reported to have stated,

“One who laughs with the neglecter of prayer, it is as if he has demolished the Ka’ba 70 times.”¹⁵

Obviously the general implication of these traditions is that if help and assistance given to a person, who neglects prayers, makes him complacent about his lapse and he continues to neglect his prayer; or if this assistance encourages him to be even more neglectful, then such help should not be given. And indeed whenever helping the sinner induces him to sin more, it is absolutely *Harām*. And from the point of view of Nahy Anil Munkar it is obligatory not to render such a person any help.

It may also be that helping or not helping does not have any effect on the person who neglects prayers. In this case it is not clear whether one should withhold help. There is a possibility that some assistance may in fact encourage a person to start praying or to stop sinning, in which case, needless to say, helping becomes obligatory.

Different ways of Neglecting Prayer

1. As we have already seen there are some who do not offer prayers because they refuse to believe that it is an article of faith and a religious obligation, commanded by Allah (S.w.T.). Such denial amounts to denying Allah (S.w.T.), Allah (S.w.T.)’s Prophet and Allah (S.w.T.)’s book, the Holy Qur’an. These are the people who shall be in everlasting chastisement. There is no escape for them.

2. It has also been mentioned that there are others who do not deny Allah (S.w.T.)’s complete supremacy and accept the fact that prayers have been made obligatory, but they never pray out of sheer laziness or due to excessive involvement in worldly affairs. These are the people who are not condemned as unbelievers but they are transgressors who have committed a greater sin, for which they will have to undergo severe punishment. Even if such a person were to die a believer, he can get salvation only after he has undergone the rigours of punishment. That a person who omits prayer can die a believer is itself a highly remote possibility, because sins make a person hard hearted and destroys his faith; except that the Almighty with His kindness and mercy heeds the call for help at the time of death and because of the sinner’s love for Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) allows him to die a believer. It is possible that intercession by Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) may lighten his punishment or remove it altogether. On the other hand these divine personalities have themselves said that their intercession will not reach those who consider prayer insignificant.

3. A third category of people are those who do not omit prayers altogether but pray occasionally. These are people whose faith is weak and lacks the strength of firm conviction. Such people when they do pray may be inclined to postpone prayers after the time has set it, on the grounds that they would pray later

and may not pray at the earliest hour.

Certainly this way of neglecting Prayer is different from the previous two kinds but such a person has also considered Prayers unimportant, so whatever punishment is promised for those who belittle or omit Prayers will be applicable to him also. Traditions have made a special mention of such types of people. In one narration Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

“If one prays after the prescribed time the prayer rises up as the prayer of one who omits it and in a horrid condition. It tells the person: You have wasted me. May Allah waste you as you have wasted me.”

Imam (a.s.) also said that the first deed about which one shall be questioned in the presence of Allah on the day of Qiyāma is Prayer. If Prayer is valid the other worship acts shall be considered valid too, but if it is not correct his other deeds are also invalid.

In the same way the Messenger of Allah (S) says,

“My intercession shall not reach the person who delays prayer (even) after its time has arrived and (he delays it) till the time has expired.”¹⁶

He (S) also said,

“As far as one exercises caution and performs the five obligatory prayers the Shaitan is in awe of him. But if he wastes these prayers, the Shaitan gets an upper hand and lures him towards more dreadful sins.¹⁷

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said,

“If one performs prayer on time keeping in mind its due importance and does not give preference to anything else, the Almighty writes for him salvation from punishment (that is Allah (S.w.T.) will not punish him). And one who recites prayer after its time has lapsed and prefers the worldly affairs to his prayers, his consequences are in the hands of Allah (S.w.T.). He may forgive or punish him.”

Emphasis on Reciting at the Earliest time

Traditions have greatly emphasized on punctuality with regard to prayer times and performing it on time. One should not delay prayer without a valid excuse. Our guides did not ever miss the best time of prayers even in the most difficult circumstances.

Thus in the book *Irshad ul Quloob* a narration states that one day Hazrat Amir ul-Mu'minīn 'Ali (a.s.) was in the midst of fighting during the battle of Siffīn. In spite of these circumstances he often glanced at the sun between the rows of fighters. Ibn Abbas asked him why he kept glancing at the sun? Imam

(a.s.) said, "I am looking towards Zawḡl (decline of sun from its zenith) so that I may perform Prayer." Ibn Abbas asked him if there was opportunity to recite prayer in these trying circumstances? Imam (a.s.) replied, "Why are we fighting these people? Our aim in fighting these people itself is the establishing of Prayer."

Ibn Abbas has related that 'Ali (a.s.) never omitted the Midnight Prayer, not even during the battle of Siffīn when it was extreme winter.

It is reported that on the day of Aash-Shūrā at the time of Zawḡl, Abu Thamama Saidawi came to the Chief of Martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s.) and said, "O my Master! We shall all be killed without any doubt and the time for noon prayer (Zuhr) has arrived. So you please lead us in Prayer. This shall be our last Prayer and we hope that on this great occasion we meet the Lord in the condition of having performed one of the religious obligations. Imam (a.s.) lifted his head towards the sky and said,

"You have remembered Prayer, may Allah (S.w.T.) include you among the praying ones. Yes, it is the time for Prayer."

Then he said, "Recite Azḡn (the call for Prayer)."

After Azḡn he (a.s.) called out, "O son of Sa'ad. Have you forgotten the Islamic Shari'a? Would you not halt hostilities so that we can offer Prayer?" Thus Imam (a.s.) offered the 'prayer under perilous circumstances (Salḡt al-Khauf) in such a way that Zuhair Ibn Qayn and Saḡd bin Abdullah Hanfi stood in front of Imam Husain (a.s.) and whenever an arrow was shot towards the Chief of Martyrs one of them acted as a shield and took the arrow upon himself. At last Saḡd received thirteen arrow wounds in addition to the injuries caused by spears and swords and finally Saḡd fell down and breathed his last.

Omitting an Obligatory ritual of Prayer

There are some who pray in the manner it has been commanded. They are heedless of the obligatory rituals essential for the correct fulfilment of prayers. They may not recite the Qur'anic chapters and other obligatory recitations, or they may recite them incorrectly, without making any effort to improve themselves; or they may not remain still during its recitation. Also, they may pray in clothes which are usurped or ritually impure; or they may pray at a place belonging to someone whose permission for use has not been sought or granted, or which has been usurped.

All such people who do not pay attention to the obligatory rituals of prayer come under the category of people who take prayer lightly and all that has been said regarding persons who waste their prayers also applies to these people.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

"One day the Messenger of Allah was sitting in the Mosque when a person entered and started praying.

But he did not perform the Rukūʿ and Sajdahs properly (he did not recite the Wajib formulas or did so incorrectly, or he might not have remained still or failed to maintain composure during recitation or movements) The Messenger of Allah (S) said, He (this man) touches his forehead to the ground like a crow pecks at the earth and lifts it. If he dies praying like this he would not die on my religion.”¹⁸

The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

“The greatest thief is one who steals in his Prayer.” Someone asked him, “O Messenger of Allah! How could one steal in his Prayer?” He (S) replied,

“It is not performing the Rukūʿ and Sajdahs of Prayers properly.”¹⁹

He (S) also said,

“The prayer of one who does not performs Rukūʿ and sajdah properly is invalid.”²⁰

The Holy Prophet (S) also said,

“The prayer of one who performs Rukūʿ and as-Sajda properly goes up in a condition of illumination and splendour. The doors of heaven open wide to accept it and the Prayer says, ‘You have protected me, may Allah (S.w.T.) protect you. The angels say, ‘Mercy and Grace of Allah be on the one who has performed this prayer. But if the prayer is not performed properly it rises up in a state of darkness and the door of heaven slams on it and the prayer says, ‘You have wasted me, may Allah waste you.’ And the Prayer is thrown at his face.”²¹

Allah’s Messenger (S) also stated,

“Everything has a face. (The most important part of a body). And the face of your religion is Prayer. Then none of you should deface and destroy his Prayer. (Which like the face is to the body, it is to ones religion).”²²

A large number of traditional reports mention this subject. The ones quoted by us should suffice to emphasise the fact, that is one who skips even a single Wajib part of prayer is like one who has omitted the prayer as a whole.

There are other conditions for Acceptance of Prayers

One who recites Prayer in the proper manner has fulfilled his obligation. There is no punishment for him. But there are additional conditions for the acceptance of this Prayer by the Almighty and for being rewarded. The most important condition for this is to pray with concentration. One who aims for such a high status while being careful of these conditions is raised to such a degree that no other doers of good deeds can reach it. Here we shall be content to mention some of the traditions with the hope they shall benefit the readers.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“One who performs two units (rakats) of Prayer while being conscious of what he is reciting, then after he completes the Prayer, Allah will erase all his sins.”²³

Imam (a.s.) has also stated,

“The Prayers that you have offered with concentration are with you but if one is unmindful in all the Prayer or recites it omitting some rituals, it is wrapped up and tossed at ones face.”²⁴

Hazrat Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) says,

“None of you should recite Prayers in sloth, laziness and sleepy condition. And neither should you think about yourself or any other thing. Because in the condition of praying he is in the presence of his lord and only that prayer of a person is acceptable which is recited with concentration.”²⁵

The Messenger of Allah (S) says,

“Two rakats (units) of prayers recited with concentration and consciousness of the meaning of recitation is better than standing up the whole night in worship.”²⁶

He (S) also stated,

“The Almighty Allah does not accept the prayers of one who does not recite it with concentration.”²⁷

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“When you stand up to pray, prepare your mind for prayers. Because whenever you step towards prayers and concentrate on it, the Almighty Allah will also turn His mercy towards you, And whenever you turn your attention from it, or are unmindful or leave one of its rituals or necessary condition, Allah will also not glance at you with mercy. That's why, sometimes prayer is not accepted, except one third, one fourth or one sixth part that the person had recited with concentration. And one who remains absent minded in the whole prayers, will not be bestowed anything by Allah, the High and Mighty.”²⁸

The Late Aga Naraqhi (r.a) says in the book Me'rajus Sadqat: Prayer is a divine composition that is made up of various aspects, the co-ordination of which brings the prayer to perfection. An analogy is the human form with its different external and internal characteristics, the co-ordination of which makes a complete functioning human being. The most important is the soul and its relation with the heart and the mind, which decides the spiritual calibre of the person. Then there are vital organs like the heart, liver, brain, without which life is not possible; and their absence is death. Some features like limbs, eye, tongue etc. live without them, but their absence leaves a person incomplete. Then there are features like eyebrows, eyelashes, beard, ears etc. which contribute to the person's good looks and their absence would make a person look very unpleasant. For the enhancement and perfection of physical beauty are

characteristics like big eyes, dark hair and a glowing complexion. In the same way for the divine conditions to be observed for prayers; the soul is the intention, piety, sincerity and concentration. Its rituals, Takbīratul Ehram, Ruku, Sajdahs, Tashahud and Qiyām are the vital organs, omitting even one of which nullifies the prayer. Other obligatory acts like, Qirā'at, Zikr, unhurried Rukū', as-Sajda and Tashahud are such that if they are neglected intentionally the prayer will be invalid. They can be compared to the limbs and tongues of the human body. A loss of these sometimes results in death and sometimes the person survives. The recommended rituals like Qunut, the Mustahab Takbīrs and Mustahab Zikr etc. are like the decorative features which contribute to good looks and those, whose absence destroys the perfection of physical elegance.

Therefore concentration is a necessary condition for acceptance of prayers. It is like the soul in the human body. A prayer bereft of these conditions will be like a lifeless body. The prayer of the one who recites it without any concentration is just like a lifeless body, without any human feeling or consequence. The worshipper is also deprived of the blessings and rewards of prayers. And one of the most important consequence of reciting prayer according to the Qur'an is as follows:

“Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil.” (Surah al-'Ankabūt 29:45)

If a person who recites prayers is prone to sin, it implies that his prayer was soulless.

What is concentration and attention of mind?

Attention of the mind means that a person should be aware as to what he is reciting and what he is doing. He should be conscious of the greatness of the High and Mighty Allah and be in awe of Him and he should realize that Allah (S.w.T.) deserves total and complete attention. He should consider himself an accused in the fulfilment of his duty of worship and slavery of Allah (S.w.T.). He should confess his mistakes with all humility before Allah (S.w.T.) and be hopeful of His widespread Mercy and unlimited beneficence. In essence, he should balance his feelings with both fear and hope; a desperate fear of Allah (S.w.T.)'s wrath, and yet not despairing of His boundless mercy.

The degree of concentration possible, will of course vary with individuals but we must mention here, the perfection in concentration achieved by Amir ul-Mu'minīn (a.s.) and the exceptional example of Ebad bin Bushr. In the battle of Siffīn an arrow head pierced the thigh of 'Ali (a.s.). It was not possible to pull it out because of the unbearable pain it caused. When Imam Hasan (a.s.) was consulted in the matter, he told the people to just wait till 'Ali (a.s.) stands for prayer and to remove the arrow while 'Ali (a.s.) was praying. Accordingly the arrow was pulled out while 'Ali (a.s.) praying and 'Ali (a.s.) was totally oblivious of the excruciating pain. When 'Ali (a.s.) stood for prayers, the world ceased to exist for him. His entire being was totally immersed in the contact he had established with his Creator and his relationship with Him.

In *Safinat'ul-Bihār*, volume 2, Page 145 it is mentioned that on the way to a battle, the Messenger of

Allah (S) encamped at a spot to spend the night. The night watch was entrusted to Ebad bin Bushr and Ammar Yasir. It was agreed that Bushr would vigil the first part of the night and, Ammar the other half. So Ammar Yasir went to sleep and Bushr was guarding the camp. The infidels decided to attack the sleeping Muslims. An attacker moved stealthily and came near the camp but he saw Bushr standing in prayers. However, Bushr was so still that the attacker could not understand whether it was a tree, an animal or man. To make sure the infidel shot an arrow towards Bushr. It pierced Bushr but he continued to recite the prayer with the same composure. The second arrow was shot but Bushr didn't show any sign of discomfort. Finally the third arrow struck and Bushr shortened his prayers and awoke Ammar. Ammar awoke to find Bushr smeared in blood. He asked why he had not woken him at the first arrow. Bushr replied, "I was reciting Surah al-Kahf in the prayers and I didn't like to discontinue. And if there had been no risk to the life of Prophet (S) and the Muslims and fear of dereliction of the duty entrusted to me I would have continued my prayers till I were dead."

Continuing the topic of concentration it needs to be added that it is necessary for the worshipper to be in awe of Allah (S.w.T.) and to be sincere, patient and unhurried with his prayers. Every time a person offers his prayers he should pray with the intensity of the one who is offering the last prayer of his life and who will not get another chance for repentance and seeking forgiveness.

It is also important to bear in mind that the words expressed during recitation of prayer are not merely a verbal exercise. The words in fact embody the principles on which our thoughts, actions and philosophy are to be based. For example when we say: Thee alone we worship, worship does not imply only rituals; worship is a total commitment to live and die as would please the Almighty, and not as we would prefer ourselves. It is a total subjugation to His will, which we express by implicit obedience to all His commands. With this awareness of Allah (S.w.T.)'s supremacy, it is only natural that we will seek the fulfilment of our needs and wishes from Him alone with no expectation from any other source. Even while our desire remains unfulfilled we can have the comforting assurance that our appeal lies with the ultimate authority, Who is the best giver, the best supporter and Who alone knows what is best for the invoker in his interest.

The Barriers Should be Removed

It is necessary that we distance ourselves from Satanic instigations and avoid the causes that obstruct the acceptance of Prayer. Some of these are pride, thinking highly of ones own deed, considering oneself praiseworthy, showing off, especially not fulfilling the husband's rights causes the prayer of wife to remain unaccepted. Non-payment of Zakat and not fulfilling the rights of others. Similarly, jealousy, arrogance, eating Harām things and drinking wine.

"Allah only accepts from those who guard (against evil)." (Surah al-M'ida 5:27)

Thus the Prayer of a transgressor and sinner is not accepted. Some of the factors that decrease divine rewards for prayers are sloth, sleepiness, unmindful prayers, or praying in hurry or reciting it while

restraining urine, stool or flatulence. Prayers are to be recited with due humility, sincerity with the eyes half open. During prayers are some of the practices that fetch additional divine blessings like applying perfume, wearing the most ritually pure clothes, wearing a ring of Aqīq (cornelian), combing hair and brushing teeth before Prayers.

Obligatory Prayers

Obligatory Prayers are six in number. The details of which are as follows:

1. Five daily prayers that are 17 rakats in all. Morning, two; Noon, four; Afternoon, four; Evening, Three; and Night, four.
2. Prayers of Ayāt: It is an obligatory prayer of two rakats, that has to be offered in case of a natural phenomena like lunar or solar eclipse or a natural calamity like earthquake or any other natural phenomena that causes fear in general.
3. Prayer of Tawāf (Circumambulating the Ka'ba): Anyone performing the Tawāf of Ka'ba is obliged to perform two rikat prayers at the Maqām al-Ibrāhīm (the standing place of Prophet Ibrāhīm).
4. The Prayers that become obligatory on account of vow, oath or promise or if one accepts compensation for offering prayers of a deceased person.
5. The prayers missed by the deceased father (and also the deceased mother on the basis of precaution) are obligatory on the eldest son.
6. The Prayer of Mayyit (Burial Prayer). It is obligatory to bathe and shroud the dead body of every Muslim and to perform the burial prayer before burying him. The Prayer of Mayyit is obligatory for all deceased Muslim children aged six or above.

Qaḏa Prayers (Prayers that are to be offered after its time has lapsed)

It is obligatory to offer Qaḏa prayer of every obligatory prayer that has been missed, whether it was intentional, or inadvertent or because a person had slept through the entire prayer time. Qaḏa prayer is also Wajib for the prayers missed by being in a state of intoxication. Qaḏa is also obligatory for all those obligatory prayers that were rendered invalid due to flaws and lapses. Like prayers offered without ritual purification or forgetting a rukn (pillar) or intentionally omitting an obligatory component.

The Qaḏa of prayers missed due to lunacy or unconsciousness is not Wajib. Also, when a person accepts Islam, the new convert is not obliged to make up for the prayer he has missed as a non-Muslim. Ladies are not required to perform the Qaḏa of Prayers they miss during monthly periods or after

childbirth.

Apart from the daily Prayers the Qaža of other obligatory prayers must be performed as and when they have been missed in accordance with the detailed practical law encased in the Tauzihul Masael etc.

Qaža of Invalid Prayers is very Important

It is not permitted to be negligent in the fulfilment of the Qaža of Obligatory prayers. If some Qaža prayers remain pending in a person's account he should leave instructions that his omitted prayers be performed. It is then obligatory on the legatee of this person to use one-third of the property of the deceased to pay for the performance of these prayers and also fasts if necessary. If the person does not leave behind any property it is obligatory on his eldest son to perform the Qaža prayers or to pay for their performance by someone else. In the absence of both, instruction and son, there is no obligation on other inheritors. Yet on the basis of precaution they must perform the Qaža or each one of them should pay his share so that it can be performed on payment.

Carrying out duties, left unfulfilled by the deceased or doing good deeds on their behalf will help the dead earn divine rewards and alleviate some of the sufferings of chastisement. Authentic traditions of Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) have been recorded on this subject. The dead can no longer benefit themselves, but divine mercy has left a door open, a means still available for those who die believers, to avail themselves of Allah (S.w.T.)'s blessings through the efforts of those that are alive.

Traditional reports mention the incident of a companion of the Holy Prophet (S) who had willed to give in charity all the dates stored in his store house. After the death of this person the Messenger of Allah (S) distributed as Sadaqah all the dates and at last only one date remained fallen on the ground. The Messenger (S) picked up the date and said,

“Had the deceased given away this single piece in Sadaqah with his own hands! It would have been better than me giving in Sadaqah the whole lot on behalf of this person.”

The following incident mentioned in Darus Salām of the late Agha Nūrī (r.a.) proves that the deceased person benefits from the good deeds performed by the living on his behalf: The most pious and good-fearing Haji Mulla 'Ali Tehrani narrates from his father, the late Mirza Khalīq that he said, “In a public bath of Tehran was a servant named 'Ali Talib who never prayed or fasted. The late Mirza Khalīq says that when he was in Najaf al-Ashraf he saw 'Ali Talib in his dream and that he had come to Wadi us-Salam, the valley of peace (a part of Barzakh). He was surprised and asked, “How did you reach this elevated position while you neither prayed nor fasted?”

The person replied, “O man! When I died I was tied in iron collar and chains and was being dragged towards punishment when Mulla Muhammad Kermanshahi (a Scholar of Tehran), May Allah (S.w.T.) bestow him a good recompense, appointed someone to perform Hajj in my place and to perform Prayers

and fast on my behalf. He gave Zakat on my behalf and restored the rights of those whom I had oppressed. He did not leave out any of the duties that had to be performed on my behalf and saved me from the divine chastisement. May Allah (S.w.T.) give him a goodly reward.” Mirza Khalīl woke up from sleep, filled with terror. He was astonished at this dream. After a few days some people came from Tehran and Mirza Khalīl asked them regarding ‘Ali Talib. They confirmed that the Mulla had compensated for all the duties of ‘Ali Talib. In fact even the names of the persons appointed were identical as the Mirza had seen in his dream.

Needless to add that it would be foolish on our part to be casual about our obligatory duties, in the belief that they can be fulfilled after our death. We can obviously not be sure that those we leave behind would carry out these obligations, nor can we be sure that it would be done with the same degree of sincerity as we would do it ourselves. Besides our Wajib duties carried out by someone else may suffice to save us from the punishment but we will be deprived of the numerous special benefits reserved for those who carry out their obligations.

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1. Layali al-Akhhār page 394, Salāt & Z̄sail
 2. Salāt, Wasa’il ul-Shia Vol. 3 page 29
 3. Wasa’il ul-Shia Vol. 3 page 29
 4. Wasa’il ul-Shia Vol. 3 page 29
 5. Furu K̄fi, Vol. 3, page. 271
 6. Furu K̄fi, Vol. 3, page. 241
 7. Bihār al-Anwār Vol. 18 page 52
 8. Furu al-K̄fi Vol. 3 page 264
 9. Bihār al-Anwār Vol. 82 page 218
 10. Bihār al-Anwār Vol. 82
 11. Bihār al-Anwār Vol. 111
 12. Layalul Akhhār
 13. Layalul Akhhār Vol. 4 page 51
 14. Layalul Akhhār page 395
 15. Layalul Akhhār Page 395
 16. Wasa’il ul-Shia Vol. 3 page 81
 17. Wasa’il ul-Shia Vol. 3 page 81
 18. Wasa’il ul-Shia Chapter 8
 19. Wasa’il ul-Shia Chap. 8 Hadith no. 18
 20. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il, Chap. 8, tradition no. 18
 21. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il Chapter 8, Hadith No. 15
 22. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il Chapter 6, Hadith No. 5
 23. Wasa’il ul-Shia, Vol. 4, page 684
 24. Wasa’il ul-Shia
 25. Wasa’il ul-Shia: Vol. 4, page. 687
 26. Wasa’il ul-Shia: Vol. 3, page. 54
 27. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il
 28. Wasa’il ul-Shia and Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il

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