

Right n. 29: The Right of the Caller to Prayer

حق المؤذن

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُؤَذِّنِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ مُذَكِّرُكَ بِرَبِّكَ وَدَاعِيكَ إِلَىٰ حَزِّكَ وَأَفْضَلَ أَعْوَانِكَ عَلَىٰ قَضَاءِ الْفَرِيضَةِ الَّتِي افْتَرَضَهَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ فَتَشْكُرُهُ عَلَىٰ ذَلِكَ شُكْرَكَ لِلْمُحْسِنِ إِلَيْكَ. وَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي بَيْتِكَ مُهْتَمًّا لِذَلِكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ لِلَّهِ فِي أَمْرِهِ مُتَّهِمًا وَعَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ، لَا شَكَّ فِيهَا، فَأَحْسِنْ صُحْبَةَ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا عَلَىٰ كُلِّ حَالٍ.

And the right of your caller to prayer is that you should know that he is¹ the one reminding you of your Lord, and is calling you to your good fortune, and is your greatest helper in fulfilling an obligation that God has made incumbent upon you. Therefore, thank him for that just as you thank one who does some good to you.

And if you are upset with him at home due to this, you should not accuse him for this since his act is for God. And you should know that he is one of the blessings of God for you. There is no doubt about it. Then you should kindly treat God's blessing, by praising God for him under all circumstances. And there is no power but in God.

In short, we must remember that the one who calls us to prayer has the following rights incumbent upon us based on the following reasons:

1) He is the one who reminds us of our Lord.

2) He is the one who unites us to get the benefits that we can derive from praying.

3) He is our best assistant in fulfilling an obligatory duty.

Thus, we must thank him in such a way that we thank one who does good to us. If we are upset with him, we should not accuse him since his act is for the sake of God. We should know that he is one of God's Blessings. We should treat him with kindness and be grateful to him. Materialistic forces draw us away from God. It is the one who calls us to prayer who reminds us of the Lord. He helps save us from indulging in material pleasures. He assists us towards performing the prayer that helps us prosper. A high value has been recorded for the one who calls us to prayer in the traditions and books on Islamic jurisprudence. Few have been promised the rewards that those who call the people to pray have been promised.

The Meaning of 'Azan'

'Azan' in Arabic means announcement. Consider the following verse:

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

"And an announcement from God and His Apostle." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Tawbah 9:3]

The caller to prayer loudly announces that it is time to pray. We read in the following verse:

فَأَذِّنِ بَيْنَهُمْ

...But a crier shall proclaim between them..." [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7:44]

The Decree to Call for Prayer

The decree to call for prayers was revealed in the first year of the immigration of the Noble Prophet to Medina. Other dates are also recorded. The need for it became apparent when the number of Muslims became so many that it was hard for them all to know when to pray. They talked to each other and decided to establish a sign indicating that it is time to pray.

Some suggested to ring a bell but the Prophet did not agree since this was a Christian practice. Some suggested the use of a horn but the Prophet did not agree since this was a Jewish practice. Some suggested playing on the tambourine but the Prophet said that this was a Roman practice. Others suggested using fire but the Prophet said that this was a practice of the Magians.²

Some suggested raising a flag, but the Prophet did not say anything. Therefore, they did not settle on anything specific. Gabriel descended when the Prophet was in Ali's house and revealed the decree for the call to prayer. Sadooq narrated in *Man La Yahzuruhu al-Faqih*: "Mansoor ibn Hazim quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq : Gabriel descended to the Prophet of God when he was sleeping in Ali's house. Gabriel recited the 'Azan' and the 'Iqamah.' Then the Prophet said: O' Ali! Did you hear that? He said: "O' Prophet of God! Yes." Then the Prophet said: "Did you memorize it?" Imam Ali said: "Yes." Then the Prophet said: "Then teach it to Bilal." Then Ali taught it to Bilal.³

The Jurisprudents' Rule on the Call to Prayer

It is recommended for men and women to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' before they pray. It has been quoted on the authority of Al-Mashoor, as quoted by many others that it is recommended to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah'. It is quoted in the books Al-Jomal and its commentary, Al-Moqna'eh, Al-Nahayat, Al-Mabsoot, Al-Waseeleh, Al-Mohaz'zab, and Mofid's Akham Al-Nisaa that it is obligatory for men to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' in congregational prayers. The jurisprudents have specified the following cases in which there is no need to say the 'Azan':

- 1) For the afternoon Friday prayer once it is said right either after the noon prayer or after the Friday prayer.
- 2) For the afternoon prayer on the day of Arafah if it is said right after the noon prayer.
- 3) For the night prayer on the day of celebration of sacrifice⁴ for one who is in Mash'ar al-Haram if it is said right after the evening prayer.
- 4) The afternoon or the night prayer of a 'Mustahazeh' woman who must say them right after the noon or evening prayers.
- 5) The afternoon or the night prayer of one who cannot control his urination or bowel movement.

In either of the above cases, there is no need to say the 'Azan' if the prayers are said right one after the other or shortly thereafter.⁵ Certain conditions have been stated by the jurisprudents for 'Azan' and 'Iqamah'. First, one must have the intention to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' from the start to the end. Therefore, if one says them without intending to approach God, it is not accepted of him.

Secondly, the one who says the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' must have faith. However, it is not required for the one who says the call to prayer to be mature, especially when it is used as an announcement. However, all the jurisprudents require that the one who says the call to prayer as an announcement should be a man. It is also required that the one who says the call to prayer for men should be a man.

Thirdly, 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' must be said in order. Fourthly, there must be proper continuity of expression in between the parts of the 'Azan'. Finally, the call to prayer should be said using correct

Arabic.

There are certain conditions other than the prayer in which the jurists have deemed it good to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' as follows:

- 1) When a child is born, it is good to say the 'Azan' in his right ear and the 'Iqamah' in his left ear.
- 2) When someone gets afraid of ogres or jinns in awesome deserts.
- 3) It is recommended to say the 'Azan' in the ear of one who has not had any meat for forty days.⁶

Now that it was said that according to the Shiites, the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' are stressed and recommendable, and said that some jurists consider them to be obligatory for men in congregation prayers, let us see what the Sunni jurists say about this issue. Malik and Abu Hanifah agree with the Shiites and say that 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' are good in all prayers whether at home or on a trip, whether said in person or in a congregation. They consider that there are no cases in which it is obligatory to say the 'Azan' or 'Iqamah'. However, Ahmad ibn Hanbal as well as the Shafi'iyah and Malikiyah have said that 'Azan and Iqamah' are obligatory as much as necessary.

The Difference in 'Azan' Between the Sects

The Shiites believe that there are two "Hayya Ala Khayril Amal" after "Hayya Alal Falah" but the Sunnis believe that "As Salat Khayron Min al-Nawm," should follow in the morning prayer. Shiite scholars believe that "Haya Ala Kharil Amal" had been used during the lifetime of the Prophet , and his family and the Imams continued saying it. Imam Ali said:

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُولُ: «إِنَّ خَيْرَ أَعْمَالِكُمُ الصَّلَاةُ.» وَأَمَرَ
بِلَالًا أَنْ يُؤَذِّنَ: حَيَّ عَلَى خَيْرِ الْعَمَلِ.

I heard the Prophet of God say: 'The best of your deeds is the prayer. He ordered Bilal to say "Hayya Ala Khayr'il Amal" in the 'Azan'.⁷

The Sunnis accept this to be the case at the time of the Prophet , but say that Umar ibn al-Khattab ordered it to be removed, and to be replaced with "As Salat Khayrun Min al-Nawm" in the morning prayer. Sa'd ed-Din Taftazani quoted on the authority of Umar in Hashiyeh Bar Sharhul Uzzad: Umar said: There were three things at the time of the Prophet which I forbade. One was Hajj Tamattu', the second was temporary marriage, and the third one was "Hayya Ala Khayr'il Amal."⁸ In Sharh al-Tajrid by Qushji, the above is narrated, but it ends with "I will punish whoever performs any of these." It is not clear who had authorized Umar to do that. The responsibility for this only rests upon those who follow him.

The Parts of 'Azan'

According to many traditions in Wasa'il al-Sh`ah, there are four "Allahu Akbar", two "Ashado An La Illaha Illal'lah", two "Ashado An'na Muhammadan Rasoulul'lah", and two "Hayya Alas- Salat", two "Hayya Ala al-Falah" and two "Hayya Ala Khayril Amal", two "Allahu Akbar", and two "La Illaha Illal'lah" in the 'Azan'. "Ashado An'na Ali'an Hojatul'lah" is not a part of the 'Azan', but it is recommended to say it.

The Philosophy behind 'Azan' as Expressed by Imam Ridha

The late Sadooq quoted on the authority of Imam Ridha : In fact, the people were ordered to say the call to prayer for many reasons, among which we can mention to remind those who might have forgotten to pray; to awaken the ignorant ones; to recognize those who are ignorant when it is time to pray. The one who calls to prayer invites the people to worship God through his call to prayer. He makes the people more inclined to pray and confess to the unity of God. He publicizes his own faith and submission and reminds those who have forgotten.

The one who calls to prayer starts by glorifying God and ends by testifying to His unity. Each part is repeated twice in order to affect the person who hears it. If he does not notice it the first time, he will recognize it the second time it is recited. Since the testifying to the unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad are the foundations of our faith, they are repeated twice. Thus, when one testifies twice to the unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad , he has whole-heartedly testified to all the pillars of faith. The next part of the 'Azan' is the invitation to pray, as this is its main purpose. Thus, this is the call to prosperity and good deeds, and the 'Azan' ends in the name of God, as it started with it.⁹

The Reward for Saying the Call To Prayer

Mu`awiyah ibn Wahab quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ أَذَّنَ فِي مِصْرٍ مِنْ أَمْصَارِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ سَنَةً وَجَبَتْ لَهُ الْجَنَّةُ.

*Whoever performs the call to prayer in one of the Muslim towns for one year, Heaven is incumbent on him."*¹⁰

Suleiman ibn Ja'far quoted on the authority of his father that once when a man from Sham went to see Imam Sadiq , the Imam told him that Bilal is the first person to go to Heaven. The man asked the reason. The Imam said: "Because he was the first one to say the call to prayer."¹¹ In another tradition Jabir Ja'far quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir that God's Prophet said:

المُؤَدِّنُ الْمُحْتَسِبُ كَالشَّاهِرِ سَيْفَهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الْقَاتِلِ بَيْنَ الصَّفِّينِ.

“The one who calls to prayer, seeking a reward from God, is like one who has drawn his sword in the way of God and is fighting in between the rows.”¹²

Imam Ali said:

يُحْشَرُ الْمُؤَدِّنُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ طِوَالَ الْأَعْنَاقِ.

“Those who say the call to prayer will be raised as chiefs on the Day of Resurrection.”¹³

The late Sadooq quoted in the Manafi tradition on the authority of Ja'far ibn Muhammad on the authority of his father on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ أَدَّنَ مُحْتَسِبًا يُرِيدُ بِذَلِكَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ أَرْبَعِينَ أَلْفَ شَهِيدٍ وَأَرْبَعِينَ أَلْفَ صَدِيقٍ وَيَدْخُلُ فِي شَفَاعَتِهِ أَرْبَعُونَ أَلْفَ مُسِيءٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ. إِلَّا وَإِنَّ الْمُؤَدِّنَ إِذَا قَالَ: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ وَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لَهُ وَكَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي ظِلِّ الْعَرْشِ حَتَّى يَفْرُغَ اللَّهُ مِنْ حِسَابِ الْخَلَائِقِ وَيَكْتُبُ ثَوَابَ قَوْلِهِ: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ أَرْبَعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ.

“God the High will grant the reward of forty-thousand martyrs and forty-thousand veracious ones to whoever says the call for prayer for the sake of God. Due to such a person, forty-thousand sinners from my nation shall be allowed into Heaven. Indeed, when the one who says the call to prayer testifies to the unity of God, seventy thousand angels will send greetings to him and seek God's forgiveness for him. They will be in the shade of the Lord's Throne on the Resurrection Day until God finishes the reckoning of all people. Forty-thousand angels will record the reward of his testifying to the Prophethood of Muhammad .”¹⁴

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1. In the other version it continues: "reminding you of your Lord, calling you to your good fortune, and helping you to accomplish what God has made obligatory for you. So thank him for that just as you thank one who does good to you."
 2. Magians were priests of religious settlements from Mesopotamia and its surroundings, and existed up to the Christian epoch. They believed in the old nature religion of Iran, which preceded Zoroastrianism.
 3. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.89.
 4. Known as Eid al-Qurban or Eid al-Azha.

5. 'Urwah al-Wuthqa, chapter on Azan and Iqamah.
6. Ibid.
7. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.90.
8. Ibid.
9. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.4, p.646.
10. Ibid. pp.613-616.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.4, pp.613-616.

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