

Philosophy and Spirit of Prayer

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Abstract

God gave us existence and what we needed for material and spiritual life: intelligence, talents, wisdom, rain drops, leaves of trees, sea fishes, birds in sky, sunlight, guidance of wisdom, and guidance of conscience for our happiness. He gave us fit body, helpful strengths, caring mentors, and tamed nature to become more familiar with Him and thank His graces.

1. Introduction

The worshiper has three feature when praying: the angels surround him from his step to heavens, blessings are provided from heavens up to his head, and the angel who is in charge of him says: If this worshiper knows whom he/she prays, he/she will never separate from his/her prayers (Man La Yehzareh al-Faghih, v 1, Bab Fazl-e-Salat, p. 135).

The prayer as a means of thanksgiving

The man appreciates the love of others. The blessing and goodness make men to thank and appreciate. If someone grants us a favor or gives us an advantage, we thank him/her verbally and practically.

We are servants of God and His blessings for us are plentiful. We must thank these blessings. Just a little awareness of these blessings will reveal the graces of God and make use to say thanks Him willy-nilly.

And ... prayer is a kind of saying thanks to His many blessings.

God gave us existence and what we needed for material and spiritual life: intelligence, talents, wisdom, rain drops, leaves of trees, sea fishes, birds in sky, sunlight, guidance of wisdom, and guidance of conscience for our happiness. He gave us fit body, helpful strengths, caring mentors, and tamed nature to become more familiar with Him and thank His graces. If the lips were not soft, we could not speak. If we had no thumb, we could not even close our collar button. If the waters were salty and bitter, the trees would not grow.

Is it fair the man is overwhelmed by God's graces but not thanks the Lord?

The prayer is a means to say thanks to God; say thanks for blessings. Of course, God does not need our thanks and gratitude, but it is useful for us and is a sign of our knowledge. It is like saying thanks to our teachers and shows our perfection and intellectual growth; this thanks will not have any advantage for teacher.

Imam Sajjad (pbuh) says:

Verily, the right of prayer to you is that you must know the prayer is a means of arriving at the Lord and you stand by means of it before the Lord (Bahar-alAnvar, vol. 74, p. 4).

Then, the prayer is saying thanks to infinite divine bounties! Yes, one of the secrets of prayer is thanks for blessings. The Qur'an says: " O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous".

Saying thanks for blessings is a value. The prayer is the best way of thanksgiving; its way is mentioned by God and all prophets and saints have applied it. The prayer is both practical and verbal and both permanent and constructive thanksgiving.

Every wise men say thanks in favor of kindness and blessing that has been given to them. If someone becomes acquainted with God and enjoys His endless and endearing passions, he/she should thanks Him. Yes, the prayer is saying thanks for blessings.

According to Imam Sadiq (PBUH), the philosophy of prayer is to pay attention and find ourselves (Vasael, vol. 3, p. 5).

2. Prayer and affection

The cooperation and affection is frequent in mosques. In mosques, the worshipers are aware of each other condition. If someone gets sick, others go to visit him/her. If someone has problem, others try to solve it. The worshippers are friend with each other. These are all symptoms of heartily relationship and love among believers in house of God, the mosque.

And [recall] when we took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], "Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakah." Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing (Baqara, verse 83).

We actually may propagate prayer and show our love to others. Those who became Muslims with morality and spirit of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are more than those who became Muslim by intellectual wisdom. Even in the case of controversy with infidels, we must discuss with good behavior, accept their goodness, and express our views. Yes, the prayer may help us to achieve the love of God and the love of His creatures. The prayer causes affection and cooperation. The worshiper always reminds God, feels His love everytime, and is kindat all times.

3. Prayer and Day of Recompense

The people have different views about Day of Recompense:

1. Some suspect the Day of Recompense:

O People, if you should be in doubt about the Day of Recompense, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you. And We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so

that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind.

2. Some believe in Day of Recompense:

And when Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, "Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river. So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand." But they drank from it, except a [very] few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said, "There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers." But those who were certain that they would meet Allah said, "How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient."

3. Some are certain of Day of Recompense:

And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith].

4. Some deny Day of Recompense:

And we used to deny the Day of Recompense.

5. Some believe but forget:

[We said], "O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah." Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account.

To remove doubts, the Qur'an arguments; It appreciates believers; asks for reason from deniers; and warns the fifth group to not forget.

The prayer removes doubts and converts neglect to remind. Telling this sentence (Master of the Day of Judgment), we remind Day of Recompense at least ten times a day.

4. Prayer and guidance

We seek God's direct path in prayer every day.

Every day, man has new thinking. The friends, enemies, relatives, strangers, tyrants, and tempters also have different plans for human. However, people may not be saved from improper wishes, unless they will be helped by God.

Guide us in the right path:

The path of God and His friends, the path that is far from any errors and deviations, the path that its drawer likes me and knows my needs, the path which is connected to Heaven, the path that is in harmony with healthy spirit, the path which is beyond our world and knowledge, the path which will not led to doubt or regret, the path which is close and bright, and the path of prophets, the martyrs, the righteous, and the faithful.

These are the signs of right path which are difficult to understand. The sustainable movement in it requires divine help.

5. Prayer and great soul

In prayer, the man praises Allah, who cultivates the whole being.

He is the source of all mercy and blessings, the owner of the Day of Judgment. The men who praise and sanctify this sacred existence with these qualities will never praise minor and insignificant things and powers.

The people who worship the Creator of World will not worship anything else. Let's not forget that Imam Hussein (PBUH) said: He who connects to Prophet (PBUH) and is educated by Zahra (PBUH) will not accept the allegiance to Yazid.

The Muslims know that if the oppressor is praised, God's throne will shake.

The praise of God gives us a great spirit, so we will not be willing to praise others; this spirit may be achieved by prayer and praise.

It's a pity that we do not pray with attention and do not enjoy its good taste.

6. Prayer as a means to achieve heart health and purity

As Islam determines that the apparent cleanliness in the form of ablution, washing, and Tayammum is required for saying prayer, the acceptance of prayer needs inner purity.

The Qur'an has repeatedly referred to purity of heart. Sometimes, He says that only purified heart is in the path of God. Imam Sadiq (pbuh) said: The purified heart is free from suspicion and polytheism.

In the Hadith, it is stated that the God wants your soul, not your body. However, the prayer has outward and inward aspects like the Quran; what we do, if it is true, is the outward aspect of prayer which should be a trampoline to achieve its inward aspect.

The prayer should be based on knowledge, love, sincerity, and affection.

The prayer should be away from humor and revelation.

The prayer should be constructive and stimulus.

7. Attention in prayer

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) saw a worshiper who played with his face's hair and said: he would not be in this condition if he paid attention to his prayer.

If we pay attention in prayer, all perfections will appear. The philosophy of prayer includes:

- We see grooming and hygiene in brushing, ablution, washing, and body and dress cleanliness.
- We learn dare, courage, and shout out from Azan.
- We learn participation and cooperation from attending at mosques.
- We learn paying attention to justice in choosing the imam of prayer at mosque.
- We learn attention to values and perfections from those who stand in first line of prayer.
- We feel independent orientation in Qibla.
- In regard with respect to rights of others, even trespasser thread should not be in dress of worshiper.

- In regard with politics, the narratives say that a prayer which is not accompanied by admission of Imam is not acceptable.
- The attention to God is seen throughout the prayer; the attention to Day of Recompense is seen in (Master of the day of judgment); the attention to selection of path is seen in (Guide us in the right path), the attention to selection of good fellows is seen in (The path of those whom you blessed), the avoidance from strayers is seen in (not of those who have deserved wrath, nor of the strayers), and the attention to Prophet (PBUH) is seen in Tashahhud.
- In regard with attention to healthy eating, it is stated in the hadith that if someone consumes alcohol, his/her prayer will not be accepted for forty days.
- In regard with appearance of dresses, it has been ordered to use the best clothes, perfumes, and ornaments in prayer. Even women should use their ornaments in prayer.
- In regard with family and wife, the hadith says: If husband and wife offend each other, their prayers will not be accepted.

These are some of the works which are considered during prayer.

Imam Khomeini (peace be upon him) said: Prayer is a factory of human education.

8. Conclusion

In fact, there has been a lot of shortcomings in introduction of prayer. As a result, the prayer still does not have a worthy position, even in our Islamic system.

This is a heavy responsibility of Islamic scholars to introduce prayers to everyone, especially younger generation.

From elementary school students to researcher of higher education, each one may take steps to learn the secrets of prayers and acquaint with its unknowns, according to their own minds and knowledge.

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