

Importance of Ṣalāt in its Prime Time (Awwal-e-Waqt)

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The Ṣalāt is the time when the meeting with Allāh and the ascension (Meʿrāj) of the believer takes place. We all know the importance of this obligatory act, and thus, we do not wish to delve into that area. Rather, we want to look at the greatness and rewards of performing the Ṣalāt in its 'appointed time' – meaning right when the prime time for it sets in.

There are numerous verses of the Qurʾān and countless āḥādīth relating the merits of a punctual Ṣalāt, however, we will just take a look at some of them. We should note that we have omitted most of the 'Arabic text and references for brevity. The selection of āḥādīth presented have been translated from the book entitled, "Reward of Actions : The Reward for Performing the Ṣalāt when its Time Sets in", compiled by the well-known Iranian scholar, 'Abbās 'Azizī.

Importance of Ṣalāt at its Appointed Time

1) The Prophet of Islām Muḥammad (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) said, "No time of Ṣalāt sets in but an Angel calls out (from amongst the people) to the people by saying: 'O people! Get up and perform your Ṣalāt on its prime time so as to extinguish the fire which you have prepared by your own sins!'"

2) The 8th Imām, 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) said: "O so and so! Whenever the time for Ṣalāt sets in, recite it, for you do not know what will happen (after that time)."

3) Muḥammad ibn Muslim says that he heard Imām Ja'far ibn Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) say: "As soon as the time for an obligatory (wājib) Ṣalāt sets in, the doors of the heavens are opened so that the accepted deeds of the servants can ascend upwards, and I do not like that anyone's deeds go up before mine or that anyone's Ṣalāt is written in the books of Allāh before my Ṣalāt."

4) The Holy Prophet Muḥammad (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) said: "The best of deeds in the eyes of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) are the Ṣalāwāt (five daily Ṣalāt) in their prime times and after that, doing goodness

to one's father and mother and after that, the best act is Jihād (struggle) in the way of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He)."

5) It has been narrated that Imām Ja'far ibn Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) has said, "The Angel of Death, 'Izrā'īl states: 'There is no house in the east or west of the earth made of skin or hair (animal hide) except that five times every day I look to the inhabitants of that house.' " The Prophet (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family), after hearing this stated, 'These times are none other than the times of the five daily prayers. If the people of that house are of those who protect the times of their prayers, then at the time of death, the Angel will recite the Shahādātāin to them and Shaiṭān (who at this point in time wants to steal the faith away from the believer), will be pushed far away.' "

Reward of Performing the Ṣalāt in its Prescribed Time

1) Imām Ja'far ibn Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) has said, "When the time for Ṣalāt sets in, the doors of the heavens are opened for the ascension of the (good) deeds."

2) Ishāq ibn 'Ammār said, "I asked Imām Ja'far ibn Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), 'O Abā 'Abdillāh! Inform me what is the time for Ṣalāt al-Fajr that has the most merit in it? The Imām replied, 'Right at the true dawn, since Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) says in the Qurʾān (Sūrah 17, verse 78):

إِنَّ الْفُرْقَانَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

Meaning that the performance of Ṣalāt al-Fajr is witnessed by both the Angels of the day and the Angels of the night; therefore, whichever servant recites his/her Ṣalāt al-Fajr at the true dawn (right when the time of the Ṣalāt starts), it will be written twice for them – the Angels of the day will write it in his books and so will the Angels of the night."

3) It has been narrated from Imām Ḥasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) that Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him) in his

whispered prayer to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) used to say, “O Allāh! What is the reward for one who performs his Ṣalāt in its proper time?” Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) replied, “Whatever he asks from Me, I will give it to him and I will make heaven permissible for him.”

Effects of Performing the Ṣalāt in its Prescribed Time

A Divine Light on the Day of Judgement

1) The Prophet Muḥammad (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) has said, “One who recites his five daily Ṣalāt with complete purity and in their prime time, on the Day of Judgement, this Ṣalāt will be a divine light and proof for him; and one who disregards the Ṣalāt (does not give the Ṣalāt any importance), will be raised up alongside with Fir‘awn and Hāmān.”

Talqīn at the Time of Death

2) The Prophet of Allāh (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) said, “The reason why the Angel of Death looks at all the people during the time for Ṣalāt is because he wants to see who is considering the Ṣalāt important enough to recite it in its proper time; and at the time of death, the Angel of Death will recite the Shahādātāin to the person and will keep Iblis away from him.”

Condition for Acceptance of all our Actions

3) Imām Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said, “The first thing that a servant will be taken to account for on the Day of Judgement is the Ṣalāt. If his Ṣalāt is accepted in the eyes of Allāh, than all of his other actions too will be accepted; however, if the Ṣalāt is rejected, then all of his other deeds too will be rejected.”

The 6th Imām continued by saying, “When the servant prays his Ṣalāt on its specified time and is careful about the other requirements of the Ṣalāt, then this complete Ṣalāt will go up to the heavens in the shape of a white, pure object and will say to the person who performed such a prayer, ‘ You protected me, may Allāh protect you.’ But whenever it is not recited on time or the necessary requirements are not acted upon, then the Ṣalāt will not ascend, rather, it will return to the owner in a state of being dark and gloomy and will say to the person who performed such a prayer, ‘ May Allāh disregard you, just as you disregarded me.’ ”

Protecting the Ṣalāt at its Prescribed Time

4) The 6th Imām, Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) has said, “Recite the Ṣalāt at its prime time and be careful of it (safeguard it).”

Ṣalāt in its Prescribed Time from the Maṣūmīn

5) Anas ibn Mālik said, “Normally, whenever the Prophet travelled, if the time for Ṣalāt would set in, he would stop right there and recite his Ṣalāt.”

6) Imām Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Mujtabā (peace be upon him) said: “When my father ‘Alī (peace be upon him) was struck with the sword, he turned towards me and said, ‘ O my son! I advise you about the Ṣalāt in its appointed time!”

7) Umm al-Hamidah, the wife of the 6th Imām (peace be upon him) narrated to Abū Baṣīr – who was blind – when he came to pay condolences to her on the death of the Holy Imām and said, “Abū Baṣīr you were not here and did not witness the last moments of the Imām’s life, but it was a startling time.”

Abū Baṣīr questioned, ‘ Why? She said, ‘ The Imām was in such a state that he was pretty much unconscious. Then he opened his eyes and said, “Go and tell all the family to come and gather around me.” I obeyed the Imām’s command and asked everyone to come. When everyone had gathered, the Imām who was semi-unconscious, and was in the last few moments of his life opened his eyes, turned to the family members and said only one thing:

لَنْ تَنَالُ شَفَاعَتُنَا مَنْ اسْتَحَفَّ بِالصَّلَاةِ

“Our intercession will NEVER reach that person who takes his Ṣalāt lightly.”

After saying this, the Imām (peace be upon him) left this world for his heavenly abode.

8) At the time of Ṣalāt, Imām Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (peace be upon him) would stop any work he was doing and would not consider anything to be more important than the Ṣalāt. Abū Hāshim Ja‘far said, “I had the honour to go and see Imām al-‘Askarī (peace be upon him) and (when I went to see him) he was busy writing something; but as soon as the time for the Ṣalāt came, he put his writings aside and stood up for the Ṣalāt.”

Giving Preference to Ṣalāt in its Prescribed Time to all Other Work

9) Imām ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) said, “Recite the Ṣalāt in its designated times; and do not recite it before its time just because you are free (don’t have anything else to do) and do not delay it because you feel you are too busy; for you should know that all of your actions are connected to your Ṣalāt.”

10) Imām ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) said, “There is no action that is better in the eyes of Allāh than the Ṣalāt, therefore, one must not let any worldly thing stop one from performing the Ṣalāt at its prime time. Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) condemns the one who is negligent of his Ṣalāt, and know that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) does not accept anything except that which is performed with sincerity.”

11) The late Marja‘, Āyatullāh al-‘Uẓmā al-Ḥājj as-Sayyid Bahā ad-Dīnī gave a lot of importance to the performance of Ṣalāt at its prescribed time and he used to encourage those who would perform the Ṣalāt on time by telling them, “If you want to attain great blessings, then you should not leave out the Ṣalāt at its prime time.”

Awaiting the Time of Ṣalāt

12) The Holy Prophet (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) said, “If someone prepares himself for his obligatory (wājib) Ṣalāt to the extent that he is awaiting the time of the Ṣalāt and he prays his Ṣalāt in its prime time and performs the Rukū‘ and Sujūd properly, with attention and humility, and then he is busy in the praise of Allāh (Ta‘qibāt) until the time for the next Ṣalāt sets in and during this time period, does not indulge in vain or useless actions, then Allāh will write for him the reward of performing Ḥajj and ‘Umrah and will classify him as one of the ‘Illyīn (the most high).”

Delaying the Time of Ṣalāt

13) Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī al-Mahdī (peace be upon him) has said, “Cursed is the one, cursed is the one, who delays his Ṣalāt al-Fajr until the time when the stars disappear.” He then said, “Cursed is the one, cursed is the one who delays his Maghrib Ṣalāt until the time that the stars come out.”¹

¹ Please note that ‘cursed is the one’ which has been used by the 12th Imām means that he is praying that may the mercy of Allāh be removed from that individual.

14) Imām ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) said, “There is no action more beloved in the eyes of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) than the Ṣalāt; therefore, do not let any affair of the world stop you from performing the Ṣalāt right when its prescribed time sets in, since Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He) reproaches you in Sūrah Ma‘ūn and has commanded the people that, ‘*Woe to the people who perform the Ṣalāt, but have accustomed themselves to negligence in regards to the Ṣalāt.*’ Meaning that woe upon the person who performs his prayer, however he is negligent of the timings of the Ṣalāt and is careless in performing the Ṣalāt in its prime time.”

15) The Prophet of Islām (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) told Imām ‘Ali (peace be upon him) that, “With complete and proper Wudhū‘, stand up for the Ṣalāt at its prime time, and do not delay it from its appointed time because delaying the Ṣalāt without a (valid) reason brings about the wrath of Allāh.”

To close this discussion, we narrate an incident about the late Imām Khomeini (may Allāh raise his rank). It has been narrated from Āqa Maḥmūdī Būrujerdī that he said, “Imām Khomeini used to give a lot of importance to the Ṣalāt in its appointed time. He used to often quote the narration from Imām Ja‘far as-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) that “if anyone takes their Ṣalāt lightly, then they will be deprived of our intercession.” Once I asked him, ‘to take the Ṣalāt lightly maybe means that a person sometimes performs the Ṣalāt and sometimes he does not.’ The late Imām replied, ‘No! This goes against the explanation of the ḥadīth. What the Imām meant by this was that the time for Zuhr sets in and the person does not perform his Ṣalāt in its prime time, then in reality, he has given preference to something else (over his Ṣalāt and thus has taken it lightly). ■

“DO NOT TELL YOUR ṢALĀT THAT YOU HAVE WORK TO DO, RAHTER, TELL YOUR WORK THAT YOU HAVE ṢALĀT TO DO!”

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقْوَاهُ ۖ وَالسَّاعَةَ حَقَّ حَقِّهَا ۚ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ كُنُوزُكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ﴾

“Surely the Ṣalāt at fixed hours (of the day and night) has been enjoined upon the believers.” (Sūrah an-Nisā, Verse 103)