

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Do you sometimes feel that your Salah [prayer] is not quite having the effect it is supposed to on you and your life? Have you ever considered that perhaps it is because we are not giving it its due importance? It seems we have lost [or were never taught] that ability to ‘connect’ in Salah that makes all the difference in its effect on us.

Consider the following examples of those who came before us:

- The Muslims once headed out with the Prophet ﷺ on way to battle. During the trip the Prophet ordered two companions, one of the Ansari [helpers] and one of the Muhajireen [emigrants], to stand guard over them. As they did the Muhajir decided to rest while the Ansari chose to stand in prayer. Along came a disbeliever and cast an arrow striking the Ansari in the chest. The Ansari pulled out the arrow and continued in prayer. The disbeliever struck him with a second arrow. Again the Ansari removed it and continued his prayer. A third arrow was cast but now the Ansari could no longer stand and finally fell bleeding into his Ruku [bowing position] and Sujood [prostration]. The aggressor fled as the Muhajir rushed to his brother’s aid, “Subhanallah! Why didn’t you alert me from the first arrow?” The Ansari replied, “I was in the middle of a [beautiful] Surah and didn’t wish to interrupt my recitation of it.”
- Imam Bukhari was once stung by a wasp 17 times while standing in prayer. When he finished, he felt some discomfort and asked if anyone was aware of what caused it.
- Ibn Zubair stood firm and unflinching in his prayer while catapults fired upon the ground he stood on.
- It was said that when Ali washed in preparation for prayer, he always went pale and trembled with anxiety as he thought of himself about to stand before his Lord.

- Another companion needed an amputation. He requested that it be performed while he was engaged in Salah.
- An entire wall collapsed in the mosque that one companion was praying in, but he was too engrossed to realize what happened till his prayer was completed.

How did they attain that level of pleasure and inner peace that Salah is meant to inspire? Is it possible for us to reach that level too? How can we make our Salah effective? This is what we hope to learn.

### **Outlook is Key**

Now before any change in us can take place, we need to re-examine our outlook on prayer.

Ask yourself: Why do I pray? Is it just because I have to? Is it just to get this daily duty out of the way and over with? Or maybe it is because everyone just does it so I do it too?

It's time to make a change. We need to start praying out of sincere **Love**. Pray out of *longing* to be with the one you love. Pray for the peace and comfort that comes from being with the one you love.

There are 3 reasons which make you love someone:

1. Either because that someone is beautiful!
2. Or because that someone always deals kindly with you.
3. Or because that someone has done many favours for you.

Think of Allah now. He is all of the above and more, isn't He? Doesn't He then deserve to be the most worthy of our love over everything and anyone else? To truly love Allah [swt] is to truly taste the greatest love in existence! It is to truly taste the beauty of faith:

As to Allah's beauty, look around at all that is beautiful in creation, be it inner or outer beauty. It is all but a small hint to the ultimate beauty He beholds. If every person was created with the beauty of Prophet Yusuf and this total beauty was combined with the beauty of everything we see around us - all this in comparison to the beauty of Allah, would be like that of a weak candle light to the brightness of the sun! And Allah's beauty is unique, for it's coupled

with everlasting glory! And just think. He sets this Most Beautiful, Glorious Face to yours when you stand in prayer!

Allah's beauty is so immense that we cannot see Him in this world, for if He were to manifest to us His glory, it would burn everything in existence! Recall what happened to Prophet Musa when he once asked to see Allah [swt]. Allah [swt] said, "*You cannot see Me. But look upon the mountain, if it remains firm in place then you will be able to see Me.*"

To this, Allah manifested Himself to the mountain, and the mountain crumbled in total annihilation! Musa collapsed, and fainted [see 7:143]. This was what happened to Musa when he only saw *the mountain* which saw Allah's beauty. So imagine if it was a direct sight!

As to Allah's kindness and favours upon us, just close your eyes momentarily to appreciate just the gift of sight alone. If we were to count His favours upon us, never will we be able to enumerate them. And sometimes we gripe when a favour has not been granted us. Don't we then realize in hindsight, that it was much better for us this way? The denial of this favour, we realize later, was a favour in itself. For Allah has nothing but good.

And imagine. When we dare and sin against Him, we sin using the very gifts and blessings He has given us! But out of His love and mercy for us, He continues to guard over us and protect us, even while we're in the act! You will not find anyone more kind; you will not find anyone more giving. You will not find anyone more worthy of your love than He.

Remember this: The sweetness of this life lies in *remembering* Him, the sweetness of the next life lies in *seeing* Him! The next time you proceed for prayer, go because you *love Him*, go because you *miss Him* and long to be with Him. Feel your heart flutter. Only then, will you be on your way to attaining that inner peace and comfort Salah was prescribed for.

## Upon “Allahu Akbar”

الله أكبر

So what really happens at “*Allahu Akbar*”?

But before we go into what really happens. Have you ever wondered why we start our prayer with “Allahu Akbar”? Why don’t we say “Subhanallah”, for instance? “Allahu Akbar” is the key phrase because with it we affirm that Allah, before Whom we are about to stand, is greater than anything occupying us at that moment. He is greater than our job, greater than our business, greater than our sleep, our bills, our family and our children, greater than all that troubles or preoccupies us. And why do we raise our hands with it? We raise our hands to *throw all of that behind us*. We raise our hands, as a gesture of *complete surrender*.

When one stands to pray Allah commands, “Raise the veils from between Me and my servant!” From the instant you proclaim “Allahu Akbar”, Allah now sets His Beautiful Glorious Face to yours ready and engaged, with you. And He doesn’t turn away from you...*unless you do* - That’s when either you turn away with your head/sight, or drift in heart and mind back to worldly matters. And if you turn or drift, He calls to you: “[you turn] To what is better than I?” and orders for the veils, to draw back down.

When you announce “Allahu Akbar”, imagine that you are before the cameras and the red “ON THE AIR” button has now been switched on. But it is not ordinary people who are watching you, it is The King Himself. In His hands is everything you are and everything you will ever be. In His hands is the entire universe, running in perfect order. Nothing, however big or small, escapes His control. How will you stand? Feel your heart race!

Upon “Allahu Akbar” and as we proceed to recite; any bad deeds committed by our faculties suddenly begin to float up...up until they reach our head and shoulders. Subsequently, with every Ruku [bow] and Sujood [prostration] we move to, these sins fall off and away, scattered and gone! [All the more reason for us to hold in those humbling positions longer before our Lord.]

With “Allahu Akbar”, things we were permitted to do just moments before suddenly become forbidden...like food, drink, talk, unnecessary movement. What happened? What is different now? Well, these acts are not befitting of a meeting of this nature. For the servant has answered the call and now stands

in humility before his Master. You are on a much higher level now. Focus. Are you still drifting? This is why we repeat these great words, “Allahu Akbar” as we move to each position. It is a reminder, and a new chance to refocus.







