

CONCENTRATION IN PRAYER

Jameel Kermalli

COURSE ONE



25 WAYS
TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE
AND ATTENTIVE IN YOUR
PRAYER

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PART ONE

Jameel Kermalli

Imam Al-Sadiq (AS) narrates that it is written in the Torah:

"O' Son of Man, if you EMPTY yourself, i.e. disengage yourself from all other pre-occupations to make yourself available for My worship, I will fill your heart with richness and I will not abandon you to what you seek and long for. And it will be upon Me to close the door of poverty upon you and to fill your heart with awe for Me.

And if you don't empty yourself for My worship, I will fill your heart with preoccupation with the world. I will not close upon you the door of overtly and will abandon you to what you seek."

(Al-Kulayni (RA), Usul Al-Kafi, 2, "Kitab Al-'Iman wa1-Kufr', "Bab Al-'Ibadah", Tradition number 1)

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Prayer is the most effective way of spiritual migration towards Allah (SWT) and attaining the exalted position of His nearness. When Al-Sadiq (AS) was asked what was the best deed that brings human beings close to Allah (SWT) and is also liked by Him? He replied:

After enlightenment of God's Essence, I do not know anything better than the Prayer. The most esteemed and favorite deed before Allah (SWT) is Prayer. Prayer is the last dying will of all Prophets (AS).

How good it is that a human being takes a bath or performs ablution, then retires into a secluded corner where he is not seen by anyone, and has the honor of performing genuflection and prostration. When a servant bows himself down into prostration and prolongs it, then Shaytan says, 'O', *Woe Upon Me! This servant has obeyed Allah (SWT), while I transgressed, and he has offered prostration that I refused*'.

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In *Falah As-Sail Page 23, Chapter 2, On the Description of the Prayer*, on the authority of As-Sayyid ‘Ali ibn Tawus (RA), As-Sadiq (AS) said:

The Prayer will not be complete except for the one who has full purity and a mature completeness, and is away from temptation and deviation. He knows Allah (SWT) and so stands before Him, submits to Him and persists. He thus, stands between despair and hope, between patience and worry, as if the promises to him have been done, and the threats upon him have happened, lowering his fame and manifesting his aim.

He sacrifices for Allah (SWT) his soul, treads upon the road to Him as his goal willingly. He severs the relations of interest for the sake of the One to Whom he bounds and comes, and from Whom he seeks help. Should he achieve all these, the Prayer would be of the ordered type and of the informed about, and it is the very Prayer which forbids evil and vice.

In *Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, Book of the Prayer*, Muhammad, son of Ya’qub (RA), quotes As-Sajjad (AS) as having said:

As regards the rights of the Prayer, you are to know that it is a visit to Allah (SWT) and that in it you are standing before Him. If you realized that, you would deserve to be, through it, in the position of a slave who is humble, desirous, horrified, frightened, hopeful, distressed, and imploring.

He is also glorifying the state of the One in front of Whom he stands with complete stillness, solemnity, submission of the limbs, humility, well supplicating to Him for himself, requesting Him to free his neck, which is encircled by his faults and consumed by his sins. And there is no power except by Allah (SWT).

THE REALITY OF PRAYER

Saying your Prayer on time is a highly recommended act and none other than Allah (SWT) reminds us of this obligation:

And when he (the worshipper) knows that it is time of Prayer and he does not pray, he is indeed careless about Me.
(Hadith Al-Qudsi)

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In *Wasa'ilush-Shi'ah*, vol. 3, Page 90, as-Sadiq (AS) is reported to have said:

Whoever performed the obligatory Prayer at the beginning of their times and observed their restrictions, the angels would raise them white and pure into heaven. The Prayer would say (to the performer): *'May Allah (SWT) preserve you as you preserved me and entrusted me to a generous angel'*.

But whoever performed them after the appointed times with no excuse, and did not observe their restrictions, the angels would raise them, black and dark. The Prayer would shout at the performer: *'You have lost me, may Allah (SWT) lose you, and may He not care for you as you did not care for me'*.

Prayer has several built in properties that make the worshipper far better than the angels and makes life worth living. Only when the true reality of Prayer is understood then one is awestruck by its daily performance. In explaining the true nature of Prayer, Al-Ridha (AS) comments:

The reason for Prayer is that it is the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Allah (SWT) and negating all kinds of partners and plurality for Him. Prayer is standing before the Omnipotent, with humility, humbleness and confession (of sins), and begging forgiveness of the previous sins. Prayer is placing the face on dust five times a day as (a sign of) recognition and confession of His Greatness.

Prayer is for remembering Him and keeping away from arrogance and negligence. Prayer leads to humility, submission and humbleness towards Allah (SWT), and the enthusiasm for the desire to material and spiritual progress (both in this world and the hereafter).

Moreover, Prayer enables a person to constantly engage in remembering Allah (SWT), both day and night, so as not to forget one's Lord, Master and Creator, since forgetting will cause rebellion. Man, while offering Prayer, stays in the presence of His Lord and in the state of His remembrance, and this very condition constrains and stops him from sins and many kinds of corruption.

In order for you to be part of manifestation of the authority of Allah (SWT) on this earth, you must pledge complete submission, bondage and servitude to the Lord of the Worlds. You must manifest all this in your behavior, in general, by remembering Allah (SWT) at all times and seeking His Will and specifically, by performing the ritual acts of worship e.g. giving alms, fast, etc.

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Scholars have noted that if a man does not fulfill the conditions of this act of Prayer, he defies Allah (SWT) becoming a rebel and a devil. For man to climb higher in the realm of existence, he must lower himself to Allah (SWT). The more he lowers himself to Allah (SWT), the higher he reaches in the realm of existence.

It has been the practice of Allah (SWT) to conceal important grace to mankind, and Prayer is no exception. S. V. Mir Ahmad ‘Ali (RA), in his *Commentary of The Qur’an*, narrates seven values that have been kept concealed by Allah (SWT), The Most High:

According to some reports, the Night of Power (Qadr) is concealed in the year as a whole. This is because man may ever seek His grace every night as much as he possibly can. Similarly, one of these several nights in the months of Sha’ban and Ramadhan are said be the Night of Qadr, the Night of Grandeur.

The Greatest Name of Allah (SWT), with which one could have everything he desires, is concealed in several names, so that one may remember and recite all the Divine names of the Lord.

The Prayer *Al-Wusta* or the Middle one of the prescribed Daily Prayer is kept concealed in the five Daily Prayer so that one may offer every one of them with eagerness to earn its special reward.

In one particular hour of Friday, every week, it is said, the prayer is heard without fail. However, the hour is not disclosed particularly so that one may engage in Prayer the whole day as much as he can.

God’s pleasure is concealed in Prayer so that one may always worship the Lord.

The displeasure of the Lord is mentioned to be in sinning in general so that man may abstain from all kinds of sinning.

The most honorable with Allah (SWT) is the most pious, so that one may acquire piety for himself and seek the friendship of the most honorable ones with the Lord; love the pious and the righteous one, hate impiety, and stay away from disobedience.

The Prophet (S) in his last remaining hours of life further advised his followers to take Prayer seriously, and pray according to what has been prescribed upon them.

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THE VALUE OF PRAYER

Allah (SWT) manifests Himself to His perfect friends in a kind manner, and the attraction of love becomes their guide. As the tradition says that The Prophet of Allah (S) used to be waiting for the time of the Prayer, his longing ever increasing, until at last he would say to Bilal (The Prophet's Caller to Prayer): *'Relieve us, O' Bilal'*.

(Al-Mahajjat Al-Bayda fi Tahdhib Al-Ahya vol. 1, Page 377)

In advising Abu Dhar (RA), The Prophet (S) says:

O' Abu Dhar! Allah (SWT), Glorious is His Praise, has made the pleasure of my eye in (daily) Prayer, and has made me love Prayer like food is made lovable to the hungry and water to the thirsty. And surely, while the hungry one, when he eats is satiated, and the thirsty one, when he drinks he is quenched; I am not satiated from Prayer.

O' Abu Dhar! Anyone who voluntarily prays 12 units of Prayer, other than the obligatory, he has earned the right to a House in Paradise.

O' Abu Dhar! Surely, so long as you are in Prayer, you are knocking on the door of the Great King, and whoever knocks long on the door of the King it will be opened for him.

O' Abu Dhar! There is no believer that stands in Prayer but falls on him goodness onto what is between him and the Throne. And, an Angel is appointed for him that calls out, *'O' Son of Adam (AS), if you knew what there is for you in Prayer and whom you are calling, you would not turn away'*.

O' Abu Dhar! Be like him, who in a deserted place (though alone), calls Adhan and Iqamah (Call for Prayer) and says his Prayer. So your Lord says to the Angels, *'Look at My servant! He is praying and no one sees him but Me?'* Then descend 70,000 Angels and pray behind him and seek forgiveness for him until the next day. And a man who stands in the midst of night and prays alone, prostrates, and falls asleep while prostrating, Allah (SWT) says, *'Look at My servant! His soul is with me and his body is in prostration; and (be like) a man who is in a war and all his companions flee, but he stays firm fighting until he is killed'*.

O' Abu Dhar! No man puts his forehead (in prostration) in any place on earth but that place bears witness of that for him on the Day of Judgment. There is no place that a group of people visit but that it starts either sending salutation on them, or cursing them.

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O' Abu Dhar! Do you know the reason behind revelation of the verse: '*Be patient, exhort others to be patient, establish Prayer, and fear Allah that you may be successful?*' I said, '*I don't know - May my father and mother be sacrificed for you*'. The Prophet (S) said, '*For waiting for the next Prayer after every Prayer*'.

PRAYER AND THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

On the Day of Judgment, before one is even permitted to present the good deeds that he has performed in this world, the first question asked will relate to Prayer and only then will he be allowed to proceed. The Prophet (S) has made this clear by saying:

All good deeds depend on Prayer. Prayer is the cornerstone of Islam. If Prayer is accepted then the good deeds will be accepted. If Prayer is not accepted, then the good works will not be accepted.

This proclamation becomes clear when we examine Shaykh Al-Qummi (RA)'s comments in his *Manazil Al-Akhirat*, that there will be approximately 60 stations over the Bridge on the Day of Judgment. Each one of us will have to answer questions satisfactorily at each of those stations. Only after one is finished with one station, is he going to proceed to the next one. Each station is named and the first station, according to Shaykh Al-Qummi (RA), is *Prayer*.

Therefore, the first station in the Bridge involves *Questioning on Prayer* and how you fulfilled this obligation. If, in any case, you don't fulfill the requirements at that station, then unless you get intercession of the Infallible Imams (AS) or by your own actions, you would fall down into the bellies of Hell without establishing the remainder of your good deeds in this world. Undoubtedly, the first thing Allah (SWT) will ask on the Day of Judgment is Prayer, and this comes to us from all The Prophets and Imams (AS).

THE BLESSINGS OF PRAYER

Muhammad, son of Ya'qub, quoting Al-Sadiq (AS), says:

When you recite the Adhan and the Iqamah, two rows of angels will perform the Prayer behind you; but if you said the Iqamah (only), one row of the angels would perform the Prayer behind you.
(*Furu' Al-Kafi, Volume 3, Page. 303*)

There are many other traditions to the same effect, some of which say that the length of each row is as the distance between the east and the west.

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Al-Baqir (AS) has quoted The Prophet of Allah (S) as saying:

When a believing servant stands for the Prayer, Allah (SWT) looks at him until he finishes. Allah's Mercy shadows over his head, the angels surround him from all sides up to the horizon of the heaven, and Allah (SWT) assigns an angel to stand at his head, saying: 'O' Worshipper! If you know who is looking at you, and to whom you are supplicating, you will look nowhere else, nor will you leave your position.'
(*Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, Chapter 2, Tradition 22*)

He further said:

Whoever performs 2 units of Prayer without paying attention to any worldly matter, Allah (SWT) will forgive him his sins.
(*Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, Chapter 2, Tradition 13*)

Considerable importance has been attached to Prayer, and no words can describe the amount of reward Allah (SWT) grants to this individual, who is only fulfilling an obligation. The Aimmah (AS) have said:

Prayer is what angels love,
Prayer is the practice of The Prophets (AS),
Prayer is the light of understanding,
Prayer is what makes faith strong,
Prayer is what makes actions accepted,
Prayer increases sustenance,
Prayer keeps you away from illness,
Prayer is what Shaytan hates,
Prayer is a weapon to confront your enemies,
Prayer is what will assist you with the Angel of Death (AS),
Prayer is the light in your grave,
Prayer is an answer to Munkar and Nakeer (AS), and
Prayer is what will help you in the grave till the Judgment Day.

TREATING PRAYER LIGHTLY

Some wives of The Prophet of Allah (S) have said that:

The Prophet of Allah (SWT) used to talk to us and we used to talk to him. But when the time for the Prayer arrived he appeared as if he did not know us and we did not know him, as his attention was fully directed to Allah (SWT).
(*Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, Chapter 2, Tradition 17*)

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Ibn Tawus (RA) says, in *Falah As-Sail*, that when Al-Husayn (AS) used to perform the Wudhu, his face changed color and his joints trembled. Asked about the reason, the Imam said:

When one is going to stand before the Owner of The Throne, his color ought to turn pale and his joints to tremble.

The same narrator also states Al-Hasan, son of ‘Ali (AS) used to experience a similar condition before and during Prayer. (*Bihar Al-Anwar, Volume 77, Page 346.*)

Unfortunately, many of us treat Prayer as another kind of daily entry in our logbook. Some of us not only treat the timely performance of Prayer lightly, but others do not even offer this obligation, which is a duty that carries immense weight. To those who treat Prayer lightly, The Prophet (S) says:

The one who takes Prayer lightly is not of me. No! By Allah (SWT)! Such a person will not reach the Pond of Al-Kawthar.

According to The Prophet (S), one who wastes his Prayer will be raised with *Qarun* and *Haman*, so that it will be right for Allah (SWT) to put him in Hell together with the hypocrites.

Al-Sadiq (AS) said to Zurarah (RA):

Don't be negligent in regard to your Prayers. Verily, The Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him And is Progeny) said on his deathbed:

One who makes light of his Prayers does not belong to me, nor the one who takes intoxicating drinks. And, by God! He will not reach me at the Pond (of Al-Kawthar).
(*Furu' Al-Kafi, iii, 269*)

Al-Kulayni (RA) further reports with his trustworthy narrators, from Abu Basir, that Al-Kadhim (AS) said:

At the time of his death my father said to me, ‘My son, the one who makes light of Prayer will not receive our intercession’.
(*Furu' Al-Kafi, iii, 270*)

Al-Khumeini (RA) has the following advice to those people who treat the performance of the Five Daily Prayer lightly and of no concern:

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A devout person should be observant of the times of his worship under every circumstance. Of course, he should observe the timings of Prayer, which is the most important of the acts of worship, and carry it out in the most meritorious part of its time, refraining from engaging in any other work during those times.

In the same way as he assigns a certain time to making an earning and for study and debate, he should do the same in respect of these acts of worship. During this time, he must be free from other pre-occupations, so that he can achieve concentration of the heart. This makes up the quintessence and kernel of worship.

But should he, like this author, offer his Prayers out of compulsion and consider the performance of the worship of the Lord as a superfluous matter, he would, of course, delay it as long as it can be delayed. And when he offers it, he offers the Prayer in a perfunctory manner, considering it as an impediment in the way of what he imagines to be important tasks. However, such worship has not only no spiritual brilliance, it deserves Divine wrath, and such a person is one who makes light of Prayer and neglects it as something trivial.

I seek refuge in God from making light of Prayer and not giving it its due importance.

(Al-Tawhid, Quarterly Islamic Journal. 27th Hadith – Prayer and Concentration)

GENESIS OF THE PRESCRIBED PRAYER

Al-Majlisi (RA) writes a long narration in his book *Hayaat Al-Quloob* (Part Two), about one of the incidents that took place during Me'raj:

At Bayt Al-Ma'moor, The Prophet (S) beheld the Ka'bah directly under him, so that if he had dropped anything from his hand, it would have fallen on its roof. The Prophet (S) says:

I heard a voice saying, 'This is the sacred place, and you are the ordained Prophet, imparting honor to the temple. Whatever exists on earth has its similitude in Paradise'.

My Lord then commanded me to open my hand, and take of the water flowing from the right pillar of the Empyrean, which I did; and for this reason it became meritorious to take up water for ablution with the right hand.

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A voice then commanded, *‘Wash your face with this water that you may be pure to behold the Light of My Majesty and Glory. Then wash your hands, for you will take My Word. Then draw your wet hands over your head and your feet, which signifies that I will draw the Hand of Mercy over your head, and send down My Blessings on you. Drawing the hand over the foot will elevate you up through several regions where no foot has ever trodden, nor will it ever after you’.*

The Most High then commanded, *‘Turn towards the Black Stone which is before you and extol Me according to the number of curtains by saying ALLAHU AKBAR!’* On account, seven repetitions of this phrase have been recommended for Prayer, because there were seven curtains.

He (S) passed the seven heavens and seven curtains of exaltation and glory, and arrived near the place of communion with the Merciful Lord of Glory. *Prayer is the Celestial Ascent of the Believer.*

When the perfect believer thus ascends, and recites the seven *Takbeers*, the curtains of darkness, which on account of errors of worldly inclination come between him and the Most High, are removed, and he approaches the Lord of the lords.

The Lord then commanded The Prophet (S), *‘Now you have arrived at this place of communion with Me, pronounce My Name’.* Accordingly The Prophet (S) said, *‘In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful’*, and thus this phrase became established as the beginning to each chapter.

Being commanded to offer praise, he said, *‘Thanks to Allah (SWT), the Lord of the Universe’*, and proceeded in this manner till he recited the whole Chapter *‘Praise be to Allah (SWT), the Lord of all creations’.*

A voice then commanded him to recite the Chapter of Divine Unity, saying, *‘That Chapter is a description of My Praise and Attributes. What likeness can exist between Me and My creations?’*

After I had recited this Chapter, *‘Say! Allah is One; He is Perfect; He neither begets, nor is begotten; and there is none like Him’*, the voice said, *‘Bow before My exaltation, and put your hands on your knees and look toward My Empyrean’.*

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On doing this, Light from the Glory of God overpowered me, and I fell into a swoon, and by divine inspiration, I said, '*Praise and thanks to the God of the Glory*'. In purity I named the Lord of exaltation, and I am employed in His Praise.

After repeating this I soon recovered, and the tremor of my spirit subsided, when by divine inspiration, I had seven times pronounced the ascription of praise. It was then ordained that this expression of praise should, in the performance of Prayer, be recited in the bending position.

Allah (SWT) then commanded me to raise my head and stand erect, I heard the voices of the angels uttering praises and ascribing unity and thanksgiving to God. I said, '*Allah (SWT) hears everyone that utters His Praises*'.

I looked up and saw a light more intense than that which had caused me to swoon before, and my fear was greater than in the former instance. Out of awe, I fell into prostration before the King, the Lord of the Glory, and placed my face in the dust of humility, and on account of the exaltation, I witnessed, seven times repeated by divine inspiration, '*Glory and praise to the Exalted Allah*'. At each repetition of this ascription, my terror diminished, till I recovered from the state of the overwhelming awe, and attained to perfect knowledge of Allah (SWT).

I then raised my head from prostration, and sat till I recovered from the amazement into which I had fallen. By divine inspiration, I again looked upward, and saw a light more overpowering than I had witnessed before, and again fell involuntarily in prostration before the Lord, and repeated seven times, '*Glory and praise to Allah*'. Thereafter, I was more worthy of beholding the divine lights.

I again raised my head, and sat for a while, and looked toward the angels.

For this reason, Al-Majlisi (RA) says, two prostration in (a unit of) Prayer were established, and sitting a short time after them became meritorious.

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The Prophet (S) continues,

I then arose and stood in the attitude of a servant before my Lord, when He commanded me to recite again the Chapter of Praise, and afterwards the Chapter of Power (Qadr). I again bent with my hands on my knees, and then prostrated myself with my head on the ground. As I was about to rise, the Most High commanded, *'Mention My favors to you and pronounce My Name'*.

By divine inspiration I said, *'In the Name of Allah, and by Him, There is no God but Allah, and all perfect names belong to Allah'*.

When I had repeated the two testimonies, He commanded, *'Pronounce blessings on yourself and on your Family'*. I prayed, *'O Allah! Have mercy on me and on my Family'*, which was answered with blessings from the Most High.

On looking around, I beheld the angels and spirits of The Prophets arrayed in ranks behind me, and the Most High Commanded me to salute them and I said, *'Peace be upon you and the Mercy and Blessings of Allah'*. The Most High then addressed me saying, *'I am your Peace, Mercy, and Blessing, and of the Imams after you'*.

THE PRESENCE OF HEART IN PRAYER

Al-Sadiq (AS) has said:

Dear to me is the believer from among you who attends to God with his heart at the time of Prayer and does not pre-occupy his heart with any mundane matter. For, whenever a devotee turns with his heart to God, the Exalted, during Prayer, God heeds him and turns towards him the hearts of the faithful who regard him with affection, following God's love of him.
(Al-Hurr Al-'Amili, Wasa'ilush-Shi'ah, iv, 686)

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (AS) says:

If the worshipper knew to what extent His (Allah's) Mercy surrounded him during Prayer, he would never raise his head from the state of prostration.

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According to a number of traditions, the Prayer has been called - a believer's heavenly journey that protects him from moral indecencies. Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini says in his book *Self Building* that, 'it is a pure sparkling stream of spirituality that whosoever enters it five times a day will purify his soul from all sorts of pollution and contamination'. Likewise, a Prayer offered without heart's presence, although satisfies the performance of compulsory religious obligation, nevertheless, does not help in elevating the worshipper towards higher spiritual realms.

In another tradition, he said:

A Prayer, half of it may be accepted, or one-third, or a quarter, or one-fifth, or even one-tenth. Another Prayer may be folded like an old dress, and be thrown back at the face of its owner. No part of the Prayer is yours except that part which you perform with an attentive heart.

(Bihar Al-Anwar, Volume 81, Page 260, Chapter 16, Tradition 59)

A similar tradition is narrated by Al-Kulayni (RA) in Al-Kafi, 3, page 363. Al-Baqir and Al-Sadiq (AS) have further said:

Nothing of your Prayer is yours except that which you did with an attentive heart. So, if one performed it completely erroneously, or neglected its disciplines, it would be folded and thrown back at its owner's face.

(Wasa'ilush-Shi'ah, Volume 4, Page 687, Chapter 3, Tradition 1)

Al-Sadiq (AS) warns us that:

When a servant stands to offer Prayer, Allah (SWT) pays attention to him and does not shift His attention until the servant deviates from His remembrance for the third time. When this happens, Allah (SWT) too turns His attention away from the worshipper.

Therefore, the heart's presence is a must in every single act in Prayer and that is the only way to achieve the merits hidden in this great obligation. It is narrated in *Bihar Al-Anwar* that in the above instances, if the worshipper returns his attention and struggles not to lose his concentration, then his past sins are erased and he shall be granted such blessings that his reward cannot be counted. Allah (SWT) says:

Pay attention to Me, because I and the Angels are paying attention to you (in your Prayer).

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According to Al-Khumeini (RA), *‘the reality of invocation and remembrance is the invocation of the heart, without which the invocation of the tongue will be futile and worthless. This is referred to in a number of traditions’.*

In his book *Self Building*, Al-Amini relates:

In as much as heart’s presence is important and worthwhile, in the same proportion, its attainment is extremely difficult. No sooner a person starts his Prayer, Shaytan whispers in his heart pulling him from one side to another, and continuously engaging him into all sorts of thoughts and memories.

The heart engages itself into accounting, planning, reviewing past and future problems, solving academic problems, very often recollecting during Prayer, and topics, which were forgotten by him completely. And when he returns to himself, he discovers his Prayer are over.

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MEMOIRS/ANECDOTES OF THE GOD-WARY

Abu Muhammad Zaynul ‘Abideen

... 'How much time is left for midday?' because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing prayer at the beginning of its time...

... Once again, he said with disappointment: 'why do you deal with me in such a way. Take back the food, so that I perform my prayer.'

... I only have hope of God's Grace and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful.

... so that his eyes does not even fall once at a ghayr mahram woman. I observed this from him as an established habit...

I: Spiritual Ablutions

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

Surely Allah Loves those who turn unto Him constantly and Loves those who continually purify themselves. [43]

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَكُونَ أَبَدًا عَلَى وُضُوءٍ فَافْعَلْ: فَإِنَّ مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ إِذَا قَبَضَ
رُوحَ الْعَبْدِ وَهُوَ عَلَى وُضُوءٍ كُتِبَ لَهُ شَهَادَةٌ

If you can always be in the state of wudu', than do so; for verily if the Angel of death were to take the soul of a servant of God while the latter is in the state of wudu, martyrdom is written for him. [44]

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Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (‘a) is reported to have said:

الْوُضُوءُ عَلَى الْوُضُوءِ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ

Wudu upon wudu is light upon light. [\[45\]](#)

I

IMAM KHUMAYNI REGULARLY RENEWS HIS WUDU'

[In one of her memoirs, Ms. Dabbagh says:] "...One of these points was the orderliness & discipline of the personal life of that great man [i.e. Imam Khumayni]: discipline in reading the papers, discipline in [his] meetings, discipline in reading letters, and discipline (even) in renewing his wudu'. Definitely it was not such that you suddenly ask for him, and are told that he has gone to renew his wudu'. He rather had a specific time for that. I remember one day in the building that was opposite the house of the Imam in Paris, I together with other brothers was busy listening to an audiocassette. Suddenly I remembered that I must leave, for it was the time of the renewal of Imam's wudu'. I thought that I must inspect the basin so that it is clean and orderly. I did not like the house for which I was responsible, to look disorderly. The brothers said, 'Come on, does it mean that he has a specific time for that?' However, I went and cleaned, and incidentally, the Imam came at that very moment. [\[46\]](#)

Ms. Marziye Hadidechee

Famously known as Dabbagh: a member of the team sent to Moscow for conveying the late Imam Khumayni's message to Gorbachev.

II

IMAM KHUMAYNI CLOSES THE WATER TAP BETWEEN THE ACTS OF WUDU'

"On several occasions I have seen Imam Khumayni performing wudu', and noticed that he closes the water tap between the acts of wudu', and re-opens it (only) when it is necessary, to avoid any extra water to flow from the tap. This is while most of us do not have the smallest degree of attention toward the matter of israf (wastage). For example, from the time we intend to perform wudu', the tap is open until when our ablution is completed. Whenever Imam [Khumayni] wanted to perform wudu', he was very careful in using less water. This vigilance was witnessed in the most minor of his movements. He always performed ghusl (the Friday major ablution) before the call of prayers at Friday noon, and his Friday ghusl was never left.

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Whenever the Imam performed wudu', he would perform all the parts of it facing the qibla. Even if the basin was not in the direction of the qibla, at every instance, after taking a handful of water, he closed the tap, and facing the qibla, washed his face or hand. Imam Khumayni, in accordance with his self-commitment and Islamic belief, tried to practice whatever he preached. For example, if during wudu' he reminded one of his family members not to use water more than necessary, he too carefully followed the same..." [\[47\]](#)

Dr. Mahmud Burujardi
Imam Khumayni's son-in-law

III

'IT IS NOT THE TIME FOR AN INTERVIEW NOW.'

"One day in Paris a person came and said: 'The Americans have come to take an interview with Imam Khumayni, and this program shall be broadcasted live. If such an action transpires than naturally other European countries would follow suit, and this can be effective in revealing the stances and movement of the revolution.'

Incidentally it was a Friday. I came to Imam Khumayni and informed him of the matter. He said: 'Now is the time of doing the recommended acts-the Friday ghusl, not the time for an interview.' When he had performed the recommended acts of Friday, he said: 'I am ready for the interview.'" [\[48\]](#)

Ms. Marziyeh Hadidechi

II: On Prayer

Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوَسْطَىٰ وَ قَوْمُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

Be you watchful over the prayers, And the middle prayer; And stand obedient to God.
(2:238)

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَفْضَلُ الْأَعْمَالِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصَّلَاةُ فِي أَوَّلِ وَقْتِهَا

The best of deeds to Allah is prayer in the beginning of its time

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What follows are thought provoking memoirs of people who got the advantage to observe great Muslim scholars at prayer time:

I

A YOUTH EXTREMELY OBSERVANT OF PRAYER TIME

"Of the important distinguishing characteristics of Imam Khumayni was that he always performed the prayer at the beginning of its time, and would give importance to the recommended prayers (nawafil). This characteristic was present in him since the beginning of his youth age, when he hadn't exceeded twenty years. Some friends used to say: "We thought in the beginning that God forbid, he performs his prayers at the beginning of its time, out of show off. For this very reason, we tried to do something that if this action was out of showiness, we stop the same. For a long time we thought of it, and tried him several times in various ways. For example, exactly at the beginning of the prayer time, we would spread the tablecloth (for having our meals); or arrange to set out on a journey. However, he would say, 'you go on with your food, and I shall perform my prayers. I shall eat whatever remains.' Or while leaving for a journey (at the beginning of the prayer time) he would say: 'you go ahead. I shall follow and reach you.' A long time had passed since this matter took place, and not only was his timely prayer not left, he (also) compelled us to perform our prayers at the beginning of its time."

Muhammad `Aba i

II

WHAT IMAM AL-SADIQ (A) ACTUALLY MEANT

"The other issue was prayer at the beginning of its time, that he lay great importance to. He would narrate a tradition from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq that said: 'If a person takes his prayer lightly, he shall be deprived of our intercession.' Once I said to him: 'Taking prayers lightly may mean that a person sometimes performs his prayers, while sometimes he does not.' He said: 'No. This, rather, is against the religion. Imam al-Sadiq meant that when zuhr (noon) comes to transpire (for example), and the person does not perform his prayers at the beginning of the prayer time, he has in reality given preference to something else."

Mahmud Burujardi

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III

PRAYERS IN TIMES OF GREAT DIFFICULTY

[This refers to the time Imam Khumayni was captured by the forces of the Shah.]: "Imam [Khumayni] narrated the following to me: I had said on the way that I haven't performed my prayers. 'Stop at a place, so that I perform wudu'. They said: 'We do not have the permission to do so.' I said, 'But you are armed, while I do not have any weapon. Besides, you are all together, while I am alone; I cannot do anything.' They said, 'We don't have the permission to do so.' I understood that there is no use (to go on explaining), and they shall not stop. I said, 'All right, at least stop so that I may do tayammum.' They listened to this and stopped the car. However, they did not give me the permission to come out. Whilst in the car, I bent myself and hit my hand on the ground and performed tayammum.

The prayer I offered was in the state of facing opposite the qiblah. This was because we were heading to Tehran from Qum, and the qiblah was at the South. It was a prayer recited with a tayammum, opposite the qiblah and whilst the car was moving. This is how I prayed my subh (dawn) prayers. Maybe these two units of my prayers please God."

Farideh Mustafawi

IV

INDEED SUCH ARE MOMENTS WHEN THE TRUE BELIEVERS ARE CLEARLY DECIPHERED

"In one of the gatherings where, Hadhrat Ayatullah Khamenei, as the President of the time was also present. Also among those present were Agha Rafsanjani (the president of the parliament), the Commanders of the Revolutionary guards, other forces, and I, who was there as the commander of the land forces. The gathering took place in the small room of the Imam. He was seated on a chair and we sat on the ground in front of him in a circle. I do not remember whose turn it was to deliver a report, that suddenly the Imam left the room. Imam's confrontation was extremely shocking to us. The reporter could not finish what he was saying, for he was astounded and astonished as to what should he say and to whom should he address. (Thereafter) the first one to speak was Agha Rafsanjani, who said: 'Agha, are you feeling unwell?' Imam Khumayni returned quickly and cleanly said, 'No; It is the time for prayer.' I looked at my watch unconsciously. I knew the prayer

time of Tehran beforehand, and can (confidently) say that the time of Imams leave for the purpose of prayer had no difference of even a minute with it ...

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In reality, the Imam's state of worship was such that he could not pay attention to what the reporter said moments before the beginning of prayer time."

The Martyr 'Ali Sayyad Shirazi

V

IN FRONT OF ALL THE REPORTERS LOVE OF THE BELOVED GIVES HIM NO RESPITE

"The Day when Shah escaped, we were in Neauphle-le-Chateau in Paris. The French police had closed the main highway of Neauphle-le-Chateau; all the news-reporters of different countries of the world were present. The foreign news-reporters from Africa, Asia, Europe and America, and probably 150 cameras just broadcasted the Imam's speech. Believe it that the news-reporters numbered as such, because they were reporting about the greatest event of the year. The Shah had gone, and they wanted to know Imam Khumayni's decision. Khumayni stood on a chair near the highway, and all the cameras were focused at him. He spoke for a few minutes and said what he wanted to say. I was standing besides the Imam. Suddenly, he faced me and said: 'Ahmad, has the midday come to transpire?' I said: 'Yes, it is midday now.' Imam Khumayni, without any fear, bade them off as follows: 'Wassalamu...' Look at what moment did he leave his speech to perform his prayer at the beginning of its time. That is, at such a sensitive moment when International Television Broadcasting Stations, which have millions of viewers, such as the C.N.N., the B.B.C. London, all the television channels of London and America, all the news-reporters such as the Associated Press, the United Press, Reuters, and all the reporters of (the different) news-papers, magazines and radio-television stations were present, Imam cut his conversation and went after his prayer."

Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni, Late son of Imam Khumayni

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VI

IMAM IS INFORMED OF MARTYR RAJAI'S DECISION

"That which Imam Khumayni highly emphasized, and showed great sensitivity towards was prayer at the beginning of its time. My father would say also, that ever since his adolescence and youth age he (Imam Khumayni) used to pray at the beginning of prayer time. If you remember, during the beginning of the victory of the revolution, Martyr Rajai, introduced a law that the ministries and governmental organizations should remain closed for half an hour for prayer. This issue was very interesting and lesson-giving. When it was asked from Imam Khumayni concerning his opinion on this matter, he said: 'If it does not cause harm to the time and work of anybody, do it (as suggested).'"

Dr. Mahmud Burujardi
Son-in-law of Imam Khumayni

VII

WHAT KIND OF LOVER WAS THIS WHO EVEN IN THAT STATE NEVER FORGOT THE ONLY BELOVED

"The time was ten minutes to eight when they brought Agha to the C.C.U. I whispered near the Imam's ears: 'Agha, it is the time for prayer; should Mr. Ansari come, so that you (can) perform wudu?' Imam Khumayni made a sign with his eyebrows. Dr. Ilyasi said: 'Agha is listening to everything, but cannot reply.' That is when I saw the Imam pointing with the fore-finger of his right hand, and we thought that he is performing his prayers."

Mustafa Kaff-ashzadeh

VIII

'IT SHOULD NOT HAPPEN THAT THE SUN RISES AND I HAVE TO PRAY QADA!'

"One night before his demise, I was near him (Imam Khumayni) in the hospital from 10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. in the morning. He woke up several times from his sleep and asked for water. When I brought juice for him, he said: 'Give me natural water.' He did not take fruit juice. He also asked about the time a number of times; and continually said: 'It should not happen that the sun rises and I have to pray qada.'"

Husayn Sulaymani

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IX

WHO IS THIS ANGELIC FIGURE WHO IS SO PARTICULAR OF THE TIME OF MEETING HIS ONLY BELOVED?

"The very same day he [Imam Khumayni] prayed his zuhr and asr prayers with wudu'. From an hour before noon, he asked whoever came to him: 'How much time is left for mid-day?' And his aim (behind this) was that he should not delay in praying at the beginning of its time. From 3.30 afternoon an overwhelming anxiety overcame all (of us). The treatment had reached at a point when, following utmost efforts by the physicians and the Hospital personnel, everyone was in wait for a miracle to transpire. During Maghrib, the doctors, considering their awareness of his sensitivity toward prayers, called him and said: 'Agha, it is time for prayer.' Imam Khumayni, who was unconscious from 1.30 afternoon, attended to this voice. All of us witnessed that he prayed his Maghrib prayer in that state of restlessness by moving his hands and eyebrows."

Firishte I'rabi

X

REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS BY THE MENTION OF PRAYER

"He (Imam Khumayni) loved performing his prayer at the beginning of its time. Even in his last day, he prayed the prayer of Maghrib and 'Isha' by means of signs at 10.00 p.m. He was in the state of unconsciousness when one of the doctors came besides him and, with the likelihood that probably by means of (mentioning) prayer Agha could be brought into consciousness, he said: 'Agha, it is time for prayer.' The moment he said this, Imam regained his consciousness and performed his prayer with signs of his hand. In the morning of that day too, he would always ask us: 'How much time is left for midday?', because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing prayer at the beginning of its time."

Na'ime Ishraqi

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XI

HOW CAN YOU SNATCH THE CUP OF DIVINE LOVE FROM THE INTOXICATED?

"He [Imam Khumayni] always prayed at the beginning of the prayer time, and advised his children the same. I remember that in the beginning of the war [Iraq-Iran imposed war], a gathering was held with some presidents and officials, both local and foreign. When there was a call for prayer, Imam Khumayni without paying attention to the others, stood up and performed his prayer at the beginning of its time, and those present (also) prayed behind him. And in that very period, not only did he recite the 8 units of nafila prayers of zuhr, but also prayed the 8 units of nafila prayers of `asr. During the days when he was in the hospital, prior to the call of midday prayer, he would ask: 'How much time is left for the call of zuhr prayer?'

And in the middle of the night too he would ask: 'How much time is left for the call of subh prayer?' so that he may recite his nafilah prayers. The time he left this mortal world too, the last moments of his life was together with the word of prayer. Even when he regained consciousness, the first sentence he pronounced was Allahu Akbar (Allah is great than what is attributed to Him)."

Ayatullah Muhammad Rida Tawassuli

XII

'TAKE BACK THE FOOD, SO THAT I PERFORM PRAYER.'

"The day when he [Imam Khumayni] was transferred to the hospital, he requested that he should be informed about the time for midday and afternoon prayer; and he would pray at the beginning of the prayer time and then take his meal. One day he suddenly noticed that the plate of food was brought inside the room. He asked: 'Do you mean that it is time for prayer?' Those present said: 'Yes, it is prayer time.' Imam, facing them said in an angry tone: 'Why then didn't you wake me up?' They said: 'Due to your particular unfavorable state, we did not want to wake you up.' Once again, he said with disappointment: 'why do you deal with me in such a way? Take back the food, so that I perform my prayer! '"

Mahdi Imam Jamarani

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XIII

GREAT STATIONS ATTAINED BY PRAYING AT THE BEGINNING OF PRAYER TIME

[This narrative is from a contemporary scholar and a student of the contemporary master of philosophy- Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi] : "I asked him [my teacher- Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi] : What is the correct and balanced program of worship for a seeker of knowledge in your opinion?' He said with his ever humble attitude: 'I feel ashamed to talk about this, for I myself am greatly deprived of the same. However, I have heard things from great people, of which I shall narrate: ...The late `Allamah Tabatabai and Ayatullah Behjat (a contemporary Shi'ah Gnostic presently residing in Qum-Iran) quoted Ayatullah Qadi (the teacher of `Allamah Tabatabai in `irfan), as saying: If a person prays the obligatory prayers at the beginning of its time and does not attain lofty stations, he should curse me! (or, he said: he should spit at my face!)" [49].

The beginning of prayer time is a great secret! Safeguard your prayers **حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ**
(Hafizu 'ala salawatikum) is itself a point other than **وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ** 'Establish the prayer'
fact that man gives importance and binds himself to perform prayer at the beginning of its time in itself has many effects, even if the prayer is not performed with the presence of heart (and concentration). [52]

Shaykh Muhsin Gharawiyyan

III: The Hereafter

وَاللَّهُ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا الْبَرْزَخَ

I swear by Allah, I do not fear for you except in barzakh
Imam al-Sadiq (a) [53]

If great authorities of gnosis (irfan), who had already purified their inner selves and entirely sacrificed their lives for the sake of human salvation, believed that migration to the next world- the intermediate realm (barzakh) is difficult, what should those like the author, who have drowned themselves in the mundane pleasures of the world, express?

Following are some narratives worthy of reflection.

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I

I HAVE NO ACTION TO MY CREDIT

[The night before he left for the hospital where he was to pass the last moments of his life, the late Imam Khumayni was in the company of Fatima Tabatabai - his daughter-in-law - among other relatives. The latter narrates the following conversation, which took place after Imam Khumayni had eaten very little of his dinner:]

"Imam said: 'Now I have one or two advices for you: I shall not return. However, I don't want you to express grief and anxiety on my demise. I am asking God to give you patience. Be careful not to weep and lament. This is what I had to say.' I and Khanum (the wife of Imam Khumayni) were present; I do not recollect exactly; I think Zahra Khanum Ishraqi was (also) present. I don't know whether someone else was present or not. It was difficult for us to listen to this issue; all of us had turned sad. Khanum said: 'No, Agha, God Willing, you will recover...'

He [Imam Khumayni] said: 'No, I will not return. However, let me tell you this: to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.' I [Fatimah Tabatabai] said: 'Agha, If you say all this, then we shall greatly lose our hopes. This is because, as far as I know, although I am young, those who have been with you narrate that not only have you performed all the obligatory deeds, and abstained from the forbidden ones, you have also observed the recommended acts and even abstained from most of the unpleasant deeds (makruhat). If it is really difficult for you also, then what should we say? We get greatly despondent'. He said: 'No, you must not despair from God's Mercy; [54] this itself is the greatest sin ... [55] However, bear this in mind that to go [to the next world] is very difficult; I do not have any [good] deed, so that I should want to be happy thereby.' I said: 'But Agha, these words that you utter are very difficult for us to bear, for if it is as such, we are extremely frightened, worried and upset.' He said: 'It is really as such. If Hadrat Sajjad [a] wept and said: "O Lord it is likely that my good deeds are bad" [56], do I possess a deed to get happy and confident thereby? I only have hope of God's Graces and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful...; and to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.' The doctors then came, and Imam [Khumayni] said: 'It is time to leave.' [58]

Fatima Tabataba'i

The daughter-in-law of Imam Khumayni

الصِّرَاطُ أَتَقُ مِنَ الشَّعْرَةِ وَأَحَدٌ مِنَ السَّيْفِ

'The path (sirat) is finer than the hair and sharper than the sword.' Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) [59]

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II

THE TASK IS VERY DIFFICULT

[Not very long before his demise, the late son of Imam Khumayni, Hujjatu 'l Islam Haj Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni, dreamt of his father. He narrates: "I saw Imam Khumayni in my dream. He said to me: 'Tell your friends that I [have already] crossed the straight path (sirat). However, the task is very difficult.'" [60]

The Late Hujjatu'l Islam Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni
The late son of Imam Khumayni

IV: Extreme Chastity

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'an:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ
ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ. إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ.

Say to the believers,
That they cast down their eyes
And guard their private parts;
That is purer for them.
Allah is aware of the things they work. [61]

THE LATE AYATOLLAH MAR'ASHI'S EXTREME CHASTITY

[This narration is from a student of the late Ayatollah Shahab al Din Mar'ashi, who at present ranks among the esteemed tutors of the Islamic Seminary in Qum.]. "During his (Late Ayatollah Mar'ashi's) old age, I had observed several times that on entering the holy shrine of Hadrat Ma'suma (‘a) for teaching or praying, and noticing the apparition of a woman from far, he would raise his cloak above his face, so that his eyes do not even fall once at a ghayr mahram woman. I observed this from him as an established habit" [62].

Hujjatu'l Islam al-Sayyid `Adil al-`Alawi
A contemporary scholar in Qum

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[43] Holy Qur'an, 2:222

[44] Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, Mizan al-Hikma, new ed., vol. 4, pg. 3563, tr. 21920

[45] Ibid, tr. no. 21924

[46] Imam Dar Sangar-e Namaz, pp. 12-13

[47] Ibid, pp. 11-12

[48] Ibid, pg. 14

[49] This decision is mentioned in the book. It is not by the translator

[50] Holy Qur'an, 2:238

[51] Ibid, 2:43

[52] Muhsin Gharawiyyan, Dar Mahzare Buzurgan, [A Persian treatise on the Memoirs of saints contemporary to the author], p. 99

[53] Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, Mizan al-Hikma, new ed., vol. 1, pg. 252, tr. 1681

[54] The Holy Qur'an [39:54] says: Say: O My servants who have been extravagant against yourselves, do not despair of Allah's Mercy; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. Surely, He is the All-forgiving, the All-Compassionate. The Holy Quran [15:56] also says: He said, 'And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord, excepting those that are astray?'

[55] Iman 'Ali ('a) is reported to have once told a person, whom fear had made to despair, due to the amplexness of his sins: 'O you! Your despondency of Allah's Mercy is worse than your sins.' [Jami al Sa'adat, Mawla Muhammad Mahdi al-Naraqi, vol. 1, pg. 247]

[56] This also refers to what Imam al-Husayn ('a) says in his famous supplication of 'Arafah. He says: 'O God, one whose good deeds are bad, how can his bad deeds not be bad?' [Mafatih al Jinan, Du'a al-'Arafah, Imam al-Husayn (A), compiler- Marhum Shaykh Abbas Qummi].

[57] The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said: 'Know that no one of you will be saved by his action, including me; except if Allah's Mercy and Grace were to cover me.' (Mizan al-Hikmah, Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, new ed., vol.3, pg. 2131)

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[58] Fasl-e Sabr, Memoirs of the days of Imam's illness and demise by the team of physicians and those affiliated to Imam Khumayni, pp. 83-84.

[59] Mizan al-Hikmah, Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, new ed., vol. 2, pg. 1610, tr. 10481

[60] Dalil-e Aftab, Memoirs of the Reminder of Imam Khumayni, pg. 169.

[61] Holy Qur'an, Surat an-Nur (24), verse 30

[62] Sayyid `Adil `Alawi, Qabasat min Hayati Sayyidinal Ustadh, p. 95