

Appendix 15

Religious Duties: A Gift From God

When Abraham implored God in 14:40, he did not ask for wealth or health; the gift he implored for was: "Please God, make me one who observes the contact prayers (*Salat*).” The religious duties instituted by God are in fact a great gift from Him. They constitute the nourishment required for the growth and development of our souls. Without such nourishment, we cannot survive the immense energy associated with God’s physical presence on the Day of Judgment. Belief in God does not by itself guarantee our redemption; we must also nourish our souls (6:158, 10:90-92). Additionally, 15:99 states that observing the religious duties instituted by God is our means of attaining certainty: "Worship your Lord in order to attain certainty."

The Contact Prayers (*Salat*)

The five daily contact prayers are the main meals for the soul. While a soul may attain some growth and development by leading a righteous life, and without observing the contact prayers, this would be like surviving on snacks without regular meals.

We learn from 2:37 that we can establish contact with God by uttering the specific Arabic words given to us by God. Sura 1, The Key, is a mathematically composed combination of sounds that unlocks the door between us and God:

1. The Dawn Prayer must be observed during two hours before sunrise (11:114, 24:58).
 2. The Noon Prayer is due when the sun declines from its highest point at noon (17:78).
 3. The Afternoon Prayer can be observed during the 3-4 hours preceding sunset (2:238).
 4. The Sunset Prayer becomes due after sunset (11:114).
 5. The Night Prayer can be observed after the twilight disappears from the sky (24:58).
- * The Friday noon congregational prayer is an obligatory duty upon every Muslim man and woman (62:9). Failure to observe the Friday Prayer is a gross offense.

Each contact prayer is valid if observed anytime during the period it becomes due until the next prayer becomes due. Once missed, a given contact prayer is a missed opportunity that cannot be made up; one can only repent and ask forgiveness. The five prayers consist of 2, 4, 4, 3, and 4 units (*Rak'ahs*), respectively.

The proof that *Salat* was already established through Abraham is found in 8:35, 9:54, 16:123, & 21:73. This most important duty in Islam has been so severely distorted that the contact prayers (*Salat*) have become a practice in idolatry for the vast majority of Muslims. Although the Quran commands that our contact prayers must be devoted to God alone (20:14; 39:3, 45), today’s Muslims insist on commemorating “Muhammad and his family” and “Abraham and his family” during their prayers. This renders the prayers null and void (39:65).

The Obligatory Charity (*Zakat*)

Zakat must be given away “on the day of harvest” (6:141). Whenever we receive “net income,” we must set aside 2.5% and give it to the specified recipients—the parents, relatives, orphans, the poor, and the traveling alien, in this order (2:215). The vital importance of *Zakat* is reflected in God’s law: “My mercy encompasses all things, but I will specify it for the righteous who give *Zakat*” (7:156).

Zakat must be carefully calculated and given away on a regular basis whenever we receive any income. Government taxes should be deducted, but not other expenses such as debts, mortgages, and living expenses. If one does not know needy persons, he or she may give the *Zakat* to a mosque or charitable organization with the distinct purpose of helping poor people. Charities given to mosques or hospitals or organizations cannot be considered *Zakat*.

Fasting

The full details of fasting are given in 2:183-187.

Pilgrimage: Hajj & 'Umrah

Once in a lifetime, Hajj and 'Umrah are decreed for those who can afford it. Pilgrimage commemorates Abraham's exemplary submission to God (Appendix 9), and must be observed during the four Sacred Months—Zul-Hijjah, Muharram, Safar, & Rabi' I (12th, 1st, 2nd, 3rd months) (2:197; 9:2, 36). 'Umrah can be observed any time. Like all other duties in Islam, Hajj has been distorted. Most Muslims observe Hajj only during a few days in Zul-Hijjah, and they consider Rajab, Zul-Qi'dah, Zul-Hijjah, and Muharram (7th, 11th, 12th, 1st months) to be the Sacred Months. This is a distortion that is strongly condemned (9:37).

The pilgrimage begins with a bath or shower, followed by a state of sanctity called "*Ihraam*," where the male pilgrim wears seamless sheets of material, and the woman wears a modest dress (2:196). Throughout Hajj, the pilgrim abstains from sexual intercourse, vanities such as shaving and cutting the hair, arguments, misconduct, and bad language (2:197). Cleanliness, bathing, and regular hygiene practices are encouraged. Upon arrival at the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, the pilgrim walks around the Ka'bah seven times, while glorifying and praising God (2:125, 22:26-29). The common formula is: "*Labbayka Allaahumma Labbayk*" (My God, I have responded to You). "*Labbayka Laa Shareeka Laka Labbayk*" (I have responded to You, and I proclaim that there is no other god besides You; I have responded to You). The next step is to walk the half-mile distance between the knolls of Safa and Marwah seven times, with occasional trotting (2:158). This completes the 'Umrah portion of the pilgrimage.

The pilgrim then goes to 'Arafat to spend a day of worship, meditation, and glorification of God, from dawn to sunset (2:198). After sunset, the pilgrim goes to Muzdalifah where the Night Prayer is observed, and 21 pebbles are picked up for the symbolic stoning of Satan at Mina. From Muzdalifah, the pilgrim goes to Mina to spend two or three days (2:203). On the first morning at Mina, the pilgrim offers an animal sacrifice to feed the poor and to commemorate God's intervention to save Ismail and Abraham from Satan's trick (37:107, Appendix 9). The stoning ceremonies symbolize rejection of Satan's polytheism and are done by throwing seven pebbles at each of three stations, while glorifying God (15:34). The pilgrim then returns to Mecca and observes a farewell circumvolution of the Ka'bah seven times.

Unfortunately, most of today's Muslim pilgrims make it a custom to visit the prophet Muhammad's tomb where they commit the most flagrant acts of idolatry and thus nullify their Hajj. The Quran consistently talks about "The Sacred Mosque," while today's Muslims talk about "The Two Sacred Mosques!" In a glaring act of idolatry, the Muslims have set up Muhammad's tomb as another "Sacred Mosque!" This is a blasphemous violation of the Quran, and, ironically, even violates *Hadith*. The *Hadith* shown below illustrates this strange irony:

لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْيَهُودِ وَالنَّصَارَى اتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ مَسَاجِدَ

Translation of this false statement: "God has cursed the Jews and Christians for turning the tombs of their prophets into mosques." [Bukhari, Nawawi Edition, Vol. 6, Page 14]

Physical Benefits

In addition to their invaluable spiritual benefits, there is a plethora of physical, economic, and health benefits from observing the contact prayers (*Salat*), obligatory charity (*Zakat*), fasting during the month of Ramadan, and Hajj.

Observing the Dawn prayer interrupts long periods of stillness during sleep; this is now proven to help prevent arthritis. Also, getting up early in the morning helps combat depression and other psychological problems. The prostration position which is repeated during the contact prayers expands the blood vessels in our brains to accommodate more blood, and this prevents headaches. The repeated bending of the back and the joints is a healthful exercise. All these are scientifically established facts.

The ablutions required prior to the contact prayers encourage us to use the toilet more frequently. This habit protects us from a common and devastating cancer, colon cancer. Harmful chemicals are excreted in the urine and fecal matter. If these excretions are kept in the colon for prolonged periods of time, the harmful materials are re-absorbed into the body, and cause cancer.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan restores our expanded stomachs to their normal sizes, lowers our blood pressure through temporary dehydration, rids the body of harmful toxins, gives our kidneys a much needed rest, and reduces our weight by removing excessive and harmful fat.

Zakat charity and Hajj pilgrimage have far reaching economic and social benefits.