

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 21 – September 1

Topic: (P) Prayer

Acceptance of prayer:

- “And when My servants ask you (O Prophet) concerning Me (Allah), surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should hear My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.” — 2:186

This text occurs in connection with fasting. Through fasting a person can attain to feeling the fact that God is near. God answers your call to Him, so are you willing to answer His call to you?

- “And your Lord says: Pray to Me, I will answer you.” — 40:60
- “And Noah certainly called upon Us, and excellent Answerer of prayers are We!” — 37:75
- “Or, Who (but God) answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil (afflicting you), and will make you successors in the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Little mindful are you!” — 27:62

Main objectives to be attained through prayer:

- “Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do.” — 29:45

The recitation of the Book, the keeping up of prayer, and the remembrance of Allah are identical; for the Quran is recited in prayers, and the Quran is the best means of the remembrance of Allah. While, as generally understood, by the remembrance of Allah is meant His glorification and praise in prayer by a person, it is also here meant Allah’s remembrance of man or His raising him to a place of eminence. Through prayer to God, not only is man freed from the bondage of sin, but (which is greater than this) he is raised to a place of higher eminence.

- “And seek assistance through *patience and prayer*, and this is hard *except for the humble ones*, who know that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.” — 2:45-46

How to pray:

- “Guard the prayers and the most excellent prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah.” — 2:238

The *guarding* of prayers is not simply the observance of the outward form; it is both the form and the spirit to which attention is drawn. Prayers are to be said at stated times and a particular method is to be observed, but this does not mean that the Islamic prayer is devoid of spirit. The external form is needed to bring the inner faculty into exercise. As regards the spirit of prayer, attention is called to it again and again in the Quran.

- “Call on your Lord *humbly and in secret*. Surely He does not love the transgressors. And do not make mischief in the earth after its reformation, and call on Him, fearing and hoping. Surely the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good.” — 7:55-56

1. This shows that, along with praying to God for some objective, the person praying must refrain from sins and do good to others as a condition of acceptance of his prayers.

2. The feeling which should be entertained towards Allah should be a combination of fear and hope, of awe as well as love, because the fear of His displeasure ennobles the mind no less than the hope of His mercy.

- “Say: Who is it that delivers you from the calamities of the land and the sea? (When) you call upon Him, *in humility and in secret*: If He deliver us from this, we will certainly be of the grateful ones. Say: Allah delivers you from this and from every distress, yet you set up partners (with Him).” — 6:63-64
- “And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing, and in a voice not loud, in the morning and the evening, and do not be one of the heedless.” — 7:205

Prayer that is devoid of spirit:

- “Have you seen him who denies religion? That is the one who is rough to the orphan, and does not urge the feeding of the needy. So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer, who do (good) to be seen, and refrain from acts of kindness!” — ch. 107

Not taking care of orphans and helping the needy is really a denial of religion. This chapter makes it clear that praying to God is useless, a mere show, unless one is kind to orphans and helps the needy. Being *unmindful* of prayer means not paying heed to the *spirit* of prayer.

For your further interest, here are prayers by women as given in the Quran:

- *Mother of Mary*: “When a woman of Amran said: My Lord, I vow to You what is in my womb, to be devoted (to Your service), so accept (it) from me; surely You, only You, are the Hearing, the Knowing.” — 3:35
- *The Queen of Sheba*: “She said: My Lord, surely I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.” — 27:44

- “And Allah sets forth an example for those who believe — *the wife of Pharaoh*, when she said: My Lord, build for me a house with You in the Garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from the wrongdoing people.” — 66:11
- “Allah indeed *has heard the plea of her* who pleads with you (Prophet) about her husband *and complains to Allah*; and Allah hears the contentions of both of you. Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing.” — 58:1