

perfection. If every existence fulfills its specific duty and continuously glorifies the Creator, without doubt it is totally unacceptable and illogical that humans, a creation fashioned in the most excellent form and bestowed with innumerable blessings by their Creator, can neglect their duty of worship and glorification.

God the Almighty provided us with heat and energy from the sun, and He blessed us with the means of breathing in the oxygen we depend on in every moment of our lives. He created us with eyes that give us sight, ears that provide us with hearing, and a brain that enables us to think. God adorned the entire universe with unlimited blessings, but the greatest blessing of all is being created as a mindful human. God the Almighty created humans as the most honorable, and in every aspect the most excellent of the entire existence; He created humans as His vicegerents on earth. The only thing He asks from us in return for all these blessings is our devotion and worship.

Worship is submission to God, obeying the Divine commands and restrictions, and living every aspect of our lives to please the Creator, not to satisfy our own desires or the evil commands of Satan. Worship is the most excellent means of expressing our gratitude, the means of showing affection and glorification for all the blessings the Creator bestowed upon us. The greatest accomplishment of worship is gaining the pleasure of God. When a human obtains God's pleasure, he attains contentment in both this world and in the world beyond, what more could a person possibly desire in life?

Worship Reminds Us That We Are Servants

The most excellent aspect of a person's life is recognizing and familiarizing ourselves with the Creator and believing in the existence and unity of God. Faith is strongly related to human worship. Worship both nourishes the soul with spiritual awareness and protects the soul from evil. Human faith is dependent

on worship, so the more we worship and gratify the Lord, the stronger our faith becomes, and without worship, faith gradually weakens every passing day.

Our worldly duties and activities constantly occupy and very often distance us from the Creator. However, when we turn to Him in worship and glorification, we sense His presence, a feeling of contentment which brings us even closer to the Lord. Every time we stand before Him in worship, we are reminded of God's affection that He is with us in every moment of our lives. Our hearts are protected from evil thoughts and our bodies guarded from sin, and whenever we do feel the desire to sin, the spiritual awareness we obtain from worship and glorification of the Lord reminds our conscience: "Beware of your actions! Your Lord sees all that you do, never offend or displease Him, for His affection and benevolence is sufficient for you!"

Worship of any kind, whether this is praying, fasting, or reciting the Qur'an, awakens us to our duty towards God. A human who worships God, recognizes everything acquired in life as a blessing, "a gift from the Creator," and constantly praises the Lord for His endless generosity. As those who follow their egoistic desires and listen to the whisperings of Satan boast of their world-





The *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is divided into two categories, the *sunnah mu'akkadah* and *sunnah ghayr mu'akkadah*. *Sunnah mu'akkadah* refers to the traditions that the Prophet continuously practiced and very rarely abandoned, for example the *Sunnah* prayers of the morning, noon, and evening prayers.

Sunnah ghayr mu'akkadah are the traditions that the Prophet practiced most of the time and abandoned occasionally; for example, the first *Sunnah* prayers of the late noon and night prayers.

The *sunnah ghayr mu'akkadah* also includes the traditions of the Prophet's good manners and actions, his manner of dressing, his eating and drinking habits, his manner of sitting, and even how he walked. Although practicing these traditions of the Prophet bears great reward and abandoning these *sunnahs* is not considered a sin, those who choose not to practice the traditions of the Prophet may be deprived of his intercession on the Day of Judgment.

Why is practicing the Sunnah so important?

The Prophet's Sunnah constitutes an important dimension the Islamic faith. The best way of Islamic living can be found in every aspect of the life of the Prophet, who is "*an excellent example (for everybody) to follow*" (Ahzâb 33:21). Truly observing the sunnah, or practices, of the Prophet means doing as he did in not only the obligatory practices of Islam but also the non-obligatory matters. If the Prophetic traditions were made compulsory, without doubt every one of us would have repeatedly sinned hundreds of times every day. For example, washing our hands before and after a meal, eating and drinking with our right hand, brushing our teeth, praying before going to sleep and on waking up, and being kind to others are all *sunnahs*, or practices of the Prophet. These are just a few of the hundreds of the Prophetic traditions that all of us may perform daily of our own choice, but can you imagine if all the traditions were deemed compulsory? It is quite likely

said that the angels pray and ask forgiveness for whoever is in a state of purity and performed ablution before going to bed. Purification is so important that it was reported that whoever is in a state of purity at all times:

- ◆ Will be blessed with rewards continuously.
- ◆ His every limb glorifies God constantly.
- ◆ Is protected by the angels during the night from anything that may cause harm.
- ◆ Will constantly be under the protection of his Creator.

Ghusl: The Complete Ablution

What is the meaning of ghusl?

Ghusl means washing the whole body (bathing). The Islamic meaning of *ghusl* is washing the entire body with clean water, ensuring that no area of the body remains dry. Another word for *ghusl* is the full ablution.

When must ghusl be performed?

There are three conditions of impurity that require *ghusl*, or full ablution:

1. The state of major impurity (*junub*). One of the states of major impurity is the emission of semen from the male sexual organ. This is the ejaculation of semen due to touching and the thought or sight of the opposite sex that sexually arouses a person.

Semen is a white thick substance emitted from the male sexual organ due to sexual lust. If a person who, after experiencing the emission of semen, performs *ghusl* immediately or before urinating and later notices even a tiny drop of semen discharged from the sexual organ, he must repeat the *ghusl* again. *Ghusl* is not necessary if the discharge of semen is not due to sexual lust.

Anyone who experiences the discharge of semen while sleeping must perform *ghusl* even if they cannot remember the wet dream

or cause of the discharge. *Ghusl* is not necessary if a person wakes from sleep assuming they are in a state of impurity but sees no mark of semen on either the body or clothing.

Ghusl is not necessary if the emission of *mazi* (a clear, sticky prostatic fluid) occurs; this is emission from the sexual organ which is not due to sexual lust. However, this kind of emission does invalidate ablution. This may be because of the cold, an illness, or even lifting something heavy. On some occasions, a thick white cloudy substance known as *wadi* can sometimes be emitted from the sexual organ after urinating. This invalidates ablution, but does not invalidate *ghusl*. *Ghusl* is also obligatory for any man or woman following sexual intercourse.

2. The second case in which *ghusl* is necessary is due to bleeding after childbirth. This is called *nifas*. Performing *ghusl* is necessary for a woman whose bleeding ceases after the birth of a child.

3. The third case in which *ghusl* is obligatory is following the menstruation of women. *Ghusl* is necessary when the monthly menstrual bleeding of the woman ends. Non-menstrual vaginal bleeding after the completion of the monthly cycle is not, however, considered impure and thus does not necessitate repeating the *ghusl*.

In addition to the situations stated above, performing *ghusl* is necessary for every person who embraces Islam. A woman who embraces Islam during her menstrual period must perform *ghusl* immediately after her monthly cycle ends.

What are the fard (obligatory) acts of performing ghusl?

There are three obligatory acts of performing *ghusl*:

1. Filling and gargling the mouth with water once.
2. Breathing water up into the nostrils once.
3. Washing the entire body so that no area of the body remains dry.

and they were therefore unable to reach the mosque in time for prayer. Gathering the believers for the congregational prayers was a very difficult task, so they had to find a solution.

One day the Prophet called his Companions, and after explaining the difficulties they faced, he asked for their suggestions regarding a solution to the problem. The Companions presented many suggestions; some proposed ringing a bell like the Christians while others suggested blowing a horn like the Jews or lighting a fire like the Zoroastrians. But the Prophet disapproved of all of the ideas. That night ‘Abdullâh ibn Zayd, one of the devoted Companions, had a dream. This is how he explained the dream:

A man wearing a green gown came to me while I was between sleep and wakefulness; he was standing on a wall. The man was holding a bell in his hand so I asked him, “Can I buy that bell?”. The man asked, “What do you want it for?” I replied, “I will use it to call the people to the prayer.” The man replied, “What if I teach you something better?” I agreed, and then the man turned towards the qiblah and recited the entire adhân. Then he repeated every word of the adhân again, but this time towards the end he added “Qad qâmatîs-Salâh” (“Now the fard prayer is about to be performed”), proclaiming the iqâmah (i.e., the second call after the adhân announcing that the fard prayer is about to begin).

Early the next morning, ‘Abdullâh ibn Zayd went to the Prophet and explained his dream. The Prophet replied, “By God, this was a true dream,” approving the *adhân* as the call for the prayer. Then he told ‘Abdullâh to teach Bilal the exact words he heard in his dream. At prayer time, the whole of Medina echoed with the sound of Bilal’s voice spreading over the horizon. ‘Umar ran from his house to the Prophet as quickly as possible and in a state of excitement when he heard the call to prayer. When he heard about ‘Abdullâh’s dream, ‘Umar said: “O Messenger of God! I swear by the One who sent you with the religion of truth, I saw exactly the same dream too.”

The Prophet praised the Lord for blessing these two people with an identical dream, and the call to prayer was thereby established by the order of the Prophet. There are reports that some of the other Companions also experienced the same dream that night.

The Words and Meaning of the Adhân

The words and meaning of the *adhân* are:

Allâhu akbar (God is the All-Great): four times

Asbhadu an lâ ilâha illallâh (I bear witness that there is no deity but God): twice

Asbhadu anna Muhammadan Rasûlullâh (I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God): twice

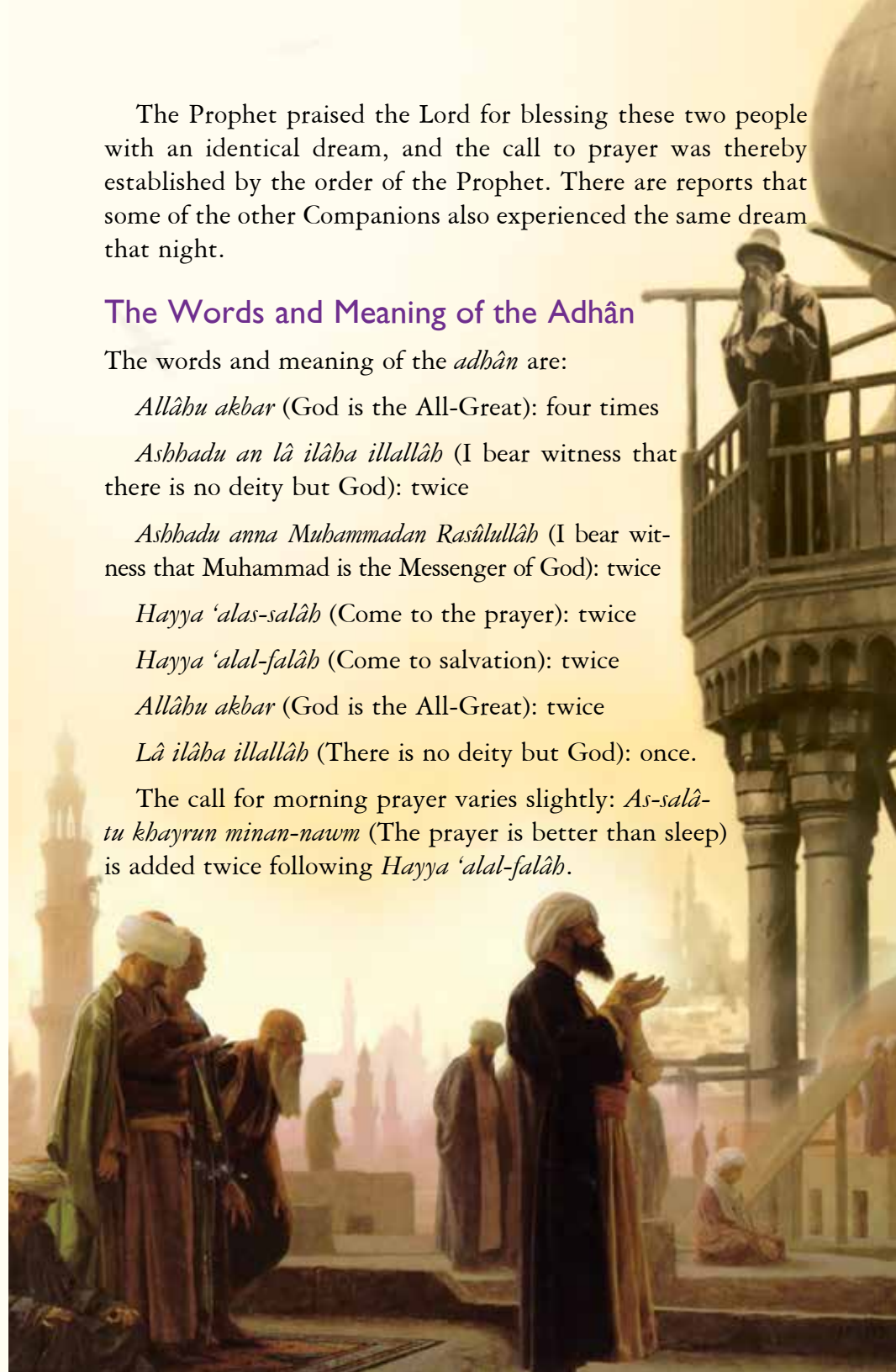
Hayya ‘alas-salâh (Come to the prayer): twice

Hayya ‘alal-falâh (Come to salvation): twice

Allâhu akbar (God is the All-Great): twice

Lâ ilâha illallâh (There is no deity but God): once.

The call for morning prayer varies slightly: *As-salâtu khayrun minan-nawm* (The prayer is better than sleep) is added twice following *Hayya ‘alal-falâh*.



one hadith, the Prophet stressed the importance of not speaking during the Friday sermon: “If a person tells somebody next to him to ‘Be quiet and listen’ while the imam is giving the sermon, he too would have spoken.” The sermon is one of the conditions which validates the Friday prayer. The *iqâmah* is recited after the sermon, and two *fard* units of the prayer are performed with the congregation. Prayers of those who arrive in time for the *fard* prayers are also valid. Even if a person reaches the last sitting of the Friday prayer, he rises to the standing position as the imam gives *salâm* at the end of the prayer and performs two units of prayer, thereby validating the Friday prayer.

The two-unit *fard* of the Friday prayer is performed in the same way as the *fard* units of the morning prayer.

As in the case of all the *fard* prayers performed in congregation, when performing the *fard* of the Friday prayer, those complying with the imam do not recite *Al-Fâtiḥah* or any other verse of the Qur’ân, but while in the standing position following the opening *takbîr*, they only recite *Subhânaka* and *A’ûdhū-Basmala*. They continue to recite the necessary supplications during the bowing, prostrating, and sitting positions as in all the other prayers.

After the *fard* prayer, the four-unit last Sunnah of the Friday prayer is performed in the same way as the first Sunnah of the Friday prayer. Following the last Sunnah of the Friday prayer, there is a prayer consisting of four units called the *Salâtuz-Zubr*. This is performed in the same way as the *fard* of noon prayer. This is followed by two more units of prayer performed in the same manner as the last Sunnah units of the noon prayer with the intention completing the Sunnah units of the prescribed noon prayer.

Tarâwih Prayer

Tarâwih is a prayer performed during the nights of the month of Ramadan. The Prophet attended to the *tarâwih* prayer with-

out fail, and said: “Whoever spends the night in prayer in Ramadan believing in God and seeking His reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.” It is Sunnah to perform the *tarâwih* prayer even for those who are unable to fast during Ramadan due to illness, journeying, or any other valid reason for which a person is excused from fasting. This prayer can be performed alone or in congregation; however, the reward is much greater for performing the *tarâwih* as a congregational prayer.

How is the tarâwih prayer performed?

The *tarâwih* prayer is performed after the night prayer but before the *witr* prayer. It is not permissible to perform the *tarâwih* before the night prayers are completed.

The *tarâwih* consists of a total of twenty units, and *salâm* may be given at the end of every two or four units. In either case, the units of prayer are continued until all the twenty units are complete.

How to Perform Tarâwih in Congregation

As in the case of praying *tarâwih* alone, if *tarâwih* is to be established as a congregational prayer, it begins after the night prayer.

