

PART 2

***On the Linkings of Prayer and their
Correspondences***



On the Mysteries of the Calls to Prayer

The call to prayer (*adhān*), according to the folk of gnosis, is the proclamation of the virtues of the material and angelic realms in the greater and lesser man (*al-insān al-kabīr wa al-ṣaghīr*),¹ in preparation for being present in the court of God the High. The second call to prayer (*iqāmah*) is performed in order to make these forces present, and by means of them to step into the presence of the Holy, the Magnificent, may He be glorified and exalted. So, through the opening magnifications offered up to God (*takbīrāt*) is proclaimed the weakness of the existents in rising to the praise of God, and their shortcomings in terms of their suitability for His presence is announced, and it prepares them to be awakened through their own humility, obedience, fear, dread, and submission so that perhaps attention will be paid to them. Through the negation of essential divinity (*al-ulūhiyyah al-dhātīyyah*) and the negation of active divinity (*al-ulūhiyyah al-fi'līyyah*) from all other, the confinement of this to the holy essence negates any other from being worthy of praise and confines it to God. Through the testimony of the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets, regarding the hidden and the witnessed, by petitioning (*tawassul*) the holy degree of the absolute advocate (*al-shafī' al-muṭlaq*), and through being in the company of this holy being, which is the degree of absolute nearmostness (*al-walāyah al-muṭlaqah*), this divine wayfaring reaches an end and the ascension of arrival is attained.

Our shaykh, the perfect gnostic, may my soul be a ransom for him, said: 'The testimony about the nearmostness (*walāyah*) of the ones nearmost to God is included in the testimony concerning prophethood because nearmostness is the inwardness (*bāṭin*) of prophethood'. Therefore, the holy degree of nearmostness is also a companion during this wayfaring. It is reported in a *ḥadīth*, 'Through 'Alī prayer is established'.² Moreover, it is reported in another *ḥadīth* that Imām 'Alī, peace be upon him, said: 'I am the prayer of the believers and their fast'.³

So, when the wayfarer to God announces that praise will be confined to

1 The idea of the greater and lesser man evokes that of the human as macrocosm and as microcosm, that is to say that within the perfect man is contained the whole of creation. For a detailed exposition of this concept see al-Fanārī, *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, p. 667; Khomeini, *Ta'liqāt 'alā sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam wa miṣbāḥ al-uns*, p. 71.

2 * Qummī, *Asrār al-'ibādāt wa ḥaqīqat al-ṣalāt*, p. 23.

3 See Qummī, *Rūḥ al-ṣalāt*, in *al-Arba'īniyyāt li kashf arwār al-qudsīyyāt*, p. 38. * Qummī, *Asrār al-'ibādāt wa ḥaqīqat al-ṣalāt*, p. 23.

God the High and chooses a friend and companion—as it is said: ‘First the friend then the way’⁴—he announces readiness for prayer by saying, ‘Come to prayer’, and he recites it with the virtues of the material and angelic realms. After this, the mystery of prayer is generally announced by him saying ‘Come towards salvation’ and ‘Come towards the best of deeds’.⁵ This in turn makes man and his material and angelic forces aware that his nature (*fiṭrah*) is inclined to seek freedom and perfection, both of which are of divine nature, and all of mankind is born with this natural disposition. After the awakening of his innate nature (*fiṭrah*) and the readying of the virtues, he offers up magnification to God (*takbīr*) and repeats the acclamation (*tahlīl*) ‘There is no god but God’ (*lā ilāh illā Allāh*), so that weakness and shortcomings are acknowledged and established in the hearts and the mystery of firstness and lastness becomes clear.

During the second call to prayer (*iqāmah*), the ranks and forces of the angelic and material realm are straightened and mobilised, and by the repetition of its phrases the aforementioned realities are confirmed, intercession (*istishfāʾ*) and petition are affirmed, and the nature (*fiṭrah*) of man is awakened. When the servant reaches this point he announces his presence ‘and so prayer is established’ (*fa qad qāmat al-ṣalāt*).⁶

Thus, the wayfarer to God and the striver in the way of God makes the heart, which is one of the chosen forces of God, the imām in this domain, and gathers the remaining virtues which have been dispersed in various directions and makes them follow the imām (*maʾmūm*). He brings together the different virtues in his inward and outward climes, which have been conquered by the heart, and the angels who reside in the angelic realm are turned by him and assemble and follow him in prayer.

Since the wayfarer sees himself followed by the divine forces of the angels and the virtues of the angelic realm itself, and sees himself as a leader in this divine traversing and as present in the presence of lordship, he must protect and safeguard his prayer and must not be neglectful and forgetful of the fact that the responsibility for the prayer of those who follow him is in his trust, ‘And so the believer is a congregation unto himself.’⁷ If he safeguards this congregation, the excellence of his prayer will be increased according to the number of those who follow him, and perhaps through the success granted by God some of the mysteries of ‘Thee only we worship and to Thee alone we pray for succour’,⁸ which is stated using the plural pronoun, will be unveiled

4 * Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. VIII, p. 299.

5 These three formulae are from the call to prayer (*adhān*).

6 This is a formula repeated in the second call to prayer (*iqāmah*).

7 * Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. V, p. 379.

8 Q.1:5.

to him. If he does not protect and safeguard this, he will be lying during these sayings and acts of prayer and he will be included in the company of the hypocrites. Furthermore, he will have wasted his prayer and the prayer of the angels of God because the leader of prayer (*imām*) is the guarantor of the Qur'ānic recitation during the prayer of those who follow him in prayer. Indeed, he also bears responsibility for whatever remains of the elements and prerequisites of this prayer.

The safest and closest way to salvation is that the one who prays, in everything he says and does, surrenders himself to the spirituality of the Envoy of God, may the blessings of God be upon him and his descendants, or to the degree of the treasury of nearmostness,⁹ or the Imām of the Age, peace be upon them, and through their tongue he praises God. Also, as regards deeds, he holds fast to their deeds. He who leads (*imām*) the angels and the divine forces in prayer in turn becomes the follower (*ma'mūm*) of the degree of prophethood and nearmostness, and he traverses this spiritual wayfaring and ascends to the divine ascension through the guidance of these aforementioned great ones by sincerely following them and surrendering to them alone, because 'Alī, peace be upon him, is the straight path (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*),¹⁰ the prayer of the believers, and the Khidr of the path of wayfaring; 'Do not traverse these stages without being led by Khidr.'¹¹

Summary

It is reported in *al-Ṭal*, with a chain of transmission from Abū 'Abd Allāh, peace be upon him, in a lengthy *ḥadīth*, in which he describes the prayer of the Prophet during his ascension to heaven:

He said: 'God, the Mighty, the Omnipotent, sent down to him a carriage of light within which there were forty kinds of lights from the kind of light which surrounds the throne, and His throne, may He be blessed and exalted, overwhelms the eyes of the onlookers. Yet, one of them was yellow and, as a result of that yellowness, glistened, and one of them was red and, as a result of that redness, glowed... he sat in it and by that he ascended to the heaven above the world, and the angels scattered to the corners of the heavens and cast themselves down in prostration and said, "All glory and holiness be to our Lord and the lord of the angels and the spirit. How like this light is to the light of our Lord!" Gabriel cried out,

9 This refers to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

10 * Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. xxxv, pp. 363–75.

11 * This is from a poem by Ḥāfiẓ.

"God is the greatest, God is the greatest." And so, the angels fell silent and heaven opened, and the angels gathered and came in groups and greeted the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants. Then they said, "O Muḥammad! How is your brother?" He replied, "He is well." They said, "When you see him deliver our greetings to him." The Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, said, "Do you know him?" They replied, "How could we not know him when God, the mighty and exalted, has taken from us a covenant for you and for him..."¹²

So, he said that he ascended to the second heaven and when the angels saw him they scattered to the corners of the heavens and cast themselves down in prostration and cried out, 'How like this light is to the light of our Lord!' Then Gabriel cried out twice, 'I bear witness that there is no god but God.' Then they gathered and said similar things to the Most Noble Envoy. Thus, forty kinds of light were added, just as it was increased in the first heaven. Then, he ascended to the third heaven and in a similar fashion the angels scattered and prostrated and glorified God and Gabriel, peace be upon him, bore witness to his prophethood. They gathered and said similar things until he ascended to the fourth heaven where the angels fell silent. Then, the doors of heaven were opened and the angels gathered and Gabriel, peace be upon him, recited the remainder of the second call to prayer (*iqāmah*).¹³

In this noble tradition there are mysteries and realities which we fall short of comprehending, and if I were to mention that which I understand in my limited way the discussion would become lengthy and would be beyond the scope of these pages. The aim in mentioning some of this is to bring as a testimony the point that when the second call to prayer was recited the angels of God assembled.

It is reported in the authentic tradition of Muḥammad b. Muslim¹⁴ that he said:

Abū 'Abd Allāh said to me: 'When you have recited the second call to prayer and begin to perform the prayer, two rows of angels pray behind you. And if you recite the second call to prayer without the first call to prayer only one row of angels will pray behind you.'¹⁵

In some of the traditions he has limited the two rows to the East and West and

12 Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿIlal al-sharāʿi*, pp. 312–3.

13 * Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿIlal al-sharāʿi*.

14 Muḥammad b. Muslim al-Thaqafi was a Kūfan and an important follower of the imāms al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq.

15 * Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah*, vol. IV, p. 620.

expanded them to being between the heavens and the earth.¹⁶ This difference is according to the difference in the degrees and levels of the ones who pray and their prayer.

16 * Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'ah*; Ibn Bābawayh, *Thawāb al-a'māl*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1391 AH/1971, p. 54.