

## Chapter 2

# The Prophet’s Spiritual Life and Character

This chapter is from Salih Sayilgan’s book, [\*Following the Prophet: The Life and Spiritual Legacy of Muhammad\*](#) (Fortress Press, 2025).

Perhaps no story better illustrates the spiritual life of the Prophet than the following account. The Prophet’s wife Aisha recounted that one night, as she and the Prophet were lying close together with his body touching hers, the Prophet asked, “Oh, Aisha, would you allow me to worship my Lord tonight?” Aisha replied, “Oh, Messenger of God, I love having you near me, but I also love that you worship your Lord.” The Prophet then got up, performed ablution, and stood for prayer, where he began to weep. He cried until his beard became wet. Then, as he moved into prostration (*sujud*), he continued to cry until the ground beneath him was wet. Later, as he lay down on his side, Bilal, his companion, came to call for the morning prayer (*fajr*).<sup>1</sup> Seeing the Prophet in tears, Bilal asked, “Oh Messenger of God, why do you cry when God has forgiven all your past and future sins?” The Prophet responded, “How could I not cry? Tonight, God revealed the verse of the Qur’an: ‘Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those with understanding.’”<sup>2</sup>

This short account offers insights into the Prophet’s spiritual life and character. He frequently withdrew from society for worship and contemplation, with night prayers serving as an essential part of his daily devotion. These prayers involved the recitation of Qur’anic verses and deep reflection. As part of his practice, the Prophet performed ablution—ritual washing—before prayer to attain a state of ritual purity. His prayer included standing in devotion, a fundamental posture in the Islamic prayer cycle (*salat*), which also incorporates prostration as an expression of humility and submission to God. The exchange between the Prophet and Aisha

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1 The *fajr* prayer is observed from the break of dawn until just before sunrise.

2 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-tafsir, bab qawlihi “Inna fi khalqi samawati wa al-ard” al-ayah*. For the verse cited in this hadith, see Qur’an 3:190.

highlights his gentle nature and the balance between his personal life and his devotion to God. His request for permission to pray demonstrates his thoughtfulness, showing that even in acts of worship, he remained considerate of his loved ones. Aisha's response reflects her understanding of his spiritual priorities, emphasizing the harmony between love for one's spouse and love for God. Once the Prophet begins his prayers, his overwhelming emotion becomes evident. His weeping is not out of fear of God but out of reverence and gratitude. The fact that he cries so intensely—so much that his beard and even the ground beneath him become wet—reveals the depth of his connection with God. His worship is not a mere obligation but an expression of awareness of the divine. His companion Bilal's question, expressing wonder at why the Prophet wept despite being forgiven by God, reveals an important aspect of the Prophet's spirituality: His spirituality is not only about seeking forgiveness but also about maintaining an intimate and conscious relationship with God. The Prophet's response, citing Qur'an 3:190, emphasizes the importance of remembering God by reflecting on God's signs (*ayat*) in creation.

In this chapter, we will focus on the spiritual practices of the Prophet, their meanings, and how they are integrated into Muslim spirituality. Among the most important practices are the five daily prayers (*salat*), the night prayer (*tahajjud*), fasting, pilgrimage, charity, recitation of the Qur'an, the prayer of supplications (*du'a'*), contemplation (*tafakkur*), prayers that he performed during certain occasions, and remembering death and the finite nature of the world. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the character and some of the virtues of Muhammad, as they were integral to his spirituality. The Qur'an mentions that the Prophet had an outstanding character.<sup>3</sup> In a hadith, Muhammad said, "I was sent to perfect good character."<sup>4</sup> The Prophet's life serves as a practical example of virtues such as honesty, compassion, patience, humility, courage, and justice. His spiritual practices and moral conduct are inseparable, making him an ideal model for ethical living.

## The Five Daily Prayers in the Prophet's Spirituality

The five daily prayers are one of the pillars of Islam and were among the most important of

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<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 68:4.

<sup>4</sup> Imam Malik, *al-Muwatta'*, *kitab husn al-khuluq*.

Muhammad's spiritual practices. They are commonly known as *salat* in Islamic literature, which has the connotation of *prayer* or *blessing*. *Salat*'s form and structure are based on the Prophet's practice. According to tradition, the method of performing the *salat* was taught to Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel. The companions around the Prophet and the generations after him have taken his model of establishing the *salat*. Muhammad said in a hadith, "Perform the *salat* the way you see me performing."<sup>5</sup>

*Salat* is performed five times a day: dawn (*fajr*), noon (*dhuhr*), late afternoon (*'asr*), evening (*maghrib*), and late evening (*'isha*). The times of the prayers are determined based on the position of the sun in the sky. The early morning prayer begins with the first light of dawn and ends at sunrise. The noon prayer begins when the sun is at its zenith or reaches the highest point in the sky and ends when the shadow of an object becomes equal to its actual length. The late afternoon prayer begins when the shadow of an object is equal to itself and ends just before sunset. The evening prayer begins right after the sunset when the sun disappears below the horizon and ends when the red twilight in the sky fades. The late evening prayer begins when the red twilight disappears and continues until before dawn.

Each prayer consists of cycles (*rak'at*). The dawn prayer has two required cycles and two recommended cycles. The noon consists of four required cycles. There are also four before and two after the required part. The late afternoon prayer includes four recommended and four required cycles. The evening prayer consists of three required cycles followed by two recommended cycles. In the case of the late evening prayer, the believer offers four cycles of required prayer. Similar to the noon prayer, it also includes four recommended cycles before and two cycles after the required ones. Each cycle consists of the elements of standing, bowing down, standing upright, prostrating, and sitting. During each action, recitations from the Qur'an or certain supplications are recited, which are all in Arabic.

In the standing position, for example, the believer turns to the Kaaba with the intention of the prayer and starts the *salat* by invoking, "God is the greatest." Following an optional supplication, the first chapter of the Qur'an is recited: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

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<sup>5</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-adhan, bab al-adhan lilmusafir idha kanu jama'a wal'iqama wa kadhalika bi'arafa wa jam'in.*

Master of the Day of Judgement. It is You we worship; it is You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path: the path of those You have blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray.”<sup>6</sup> This chapter is believed to be the synthesis of the Qur’an and is one of the passages most recited by Muslims. It emphasizes that God is the Creator and the Most Merciful.

Everything depends on God. Therefore, God is the only One worthy of being worshipped. Many hadiths and Qur’an commentaries highlight the merits of this chapter of the Qur’an. It is often recited at the beginning and end of virtuous activities and on the occasions of funerals, weddings, and the birth of a child. The chapter is also included as part of the invocations of the Sufi orders.

In the state of bowing, the believer recites, “Glory be to my Lord, the Most Great.”<sup>7</sup> The believer then stands up, saying, “God hears those who praise Him” and “Our Lord, to you all the praise.”<sup>8</sup> While in prostration, the worshipper invokes, “Glory is to my Lord, the Most High.”<sup>9</sup> In the full sitting of the second cycle, the following prayer is invoked: “All glorifications, greetings, prayers, and good deeds are for God. Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of God and His blessings. Peace be upon us and upon the righteous servants of God. I bear witness that there is no deity except God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.”<sup>10</sup> It is believed that this prayer is based on the dialogue between Muhammad and God during the night journey (*mi’raj*). In this encounter, the Prophet addressed God by glorifying God, and God responded with words of peace, mercy, and blessing. Witnessing this divine favor, the Prophet expressed the wish for peace on all righteous servants of God. On hearing this dialogue, the angels proclaimed the testimony of faith (*shahada*).<sup>11</sup>

Before starting the prayer, the believer should be in a state of minor ritual purity, which is known as *wudu* in Islamic literature. The practice of *wudu* was taught to the Prophet by the archangel Gabriel during the early days of revelation in Mecca. *Wudu* literally means *ablution* or *cleanliness*. The requirements of the ablution are outlined in the Qur’an: “You who believe,

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6 Qur’an 1:1–7.

7 The phrase in Arabic is *subhana rabbiyal adheem*.

8 The Arabic versions of these phrases are *sami’ allahu liman hamidah* and *rabbana wa laka al-hamd*.

9 The phrase is rendered as *subhana rabbiyal a’la*.

10 This supplication is known as *tahiyyat*. The prayer is recorded in most of the hadith collections with a slight variation.

11 Fahrettin Atar, “Teşehhüd,” in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2011), 40:563–564.

when you are about to pray, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads, wash your feet up to the ankles.”<sup>12</sup> If a worshipper is in a state of major ritual impurity, which can be caused by sexual intercourse, seminal discharge, menstruation, and postnatal bleeding, then they are required to take a full bath (*ghusl*). In this case, all parts of the body are ritually washed. Ablution is a key aspect of Islamic spirituality and piety. It is not only a physical act of cleanliness but also spiritual cleanliness. In the process of the ablution, numerous prayers are invoked. The ritual purity prepares the worshipper for the right state of heart, mind, and body for the divine presence. It is traditionally recommended to be in a state of ritual purity not only for the prayer but also in other situations such as when studying, reciting the Qur’an, reading hadith, feeling angry, entering a mosque, washing and carrying the body of a deceased, and also before and after sleeping, during a pilgrimage, and so on.

## The *Salat* in the Life of the Prophet

We are told in the Qur’an that the *salat* was part of the spiritual practices of previous religious traditions and prophets before Muhammad as a sign of their submission to God. The Qur’an mentions that Abraham performed *salat* solely for God and prayed to keep himself and his descendants among those who establish *salat*.<sup>13</sup> His son Ismail also instructed his people to perform the *salat* and give charity (*zakat*). For remembrance of God, God asked Moses to establish the prayer.<sup>14</sup> When the angels of God approached Zakariyya and gave him the good news of the birth of John (Yahya), he was in the middle of offering *salat* in the temple’s sanctuary. We also know from the Qur’an that Mary’s prayer involved elements of the *salat*, including bowing down and prostrating.<sup>15</sup> When the infant Jesus miraculously spoke supporting his mother, Mary, he made a reference to the *salat*, pointing out that God enjoined on him prayer and charity as long as he remained alive.<sup>16</sup> The Qur’anic account of the companions of the cave (*ashab al-kahf*), who are known as “the seven sleepers of Ephesus,” also mentions the word *masjid* (literally *the place of prostration*), which indicates that the prayers of the Christian

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<sup>12</sup> Qur’an 5:6.

<sup>13</sup> Qur’an 6:162; 14:40.

<sup>14</sup> Qur’an 20:14.

<sup>15</sup> Qur’an 3:43.

<sup>16</sup> Qur’an 19:31.

community at the time involved prostration.<sup>17</sup>

Traces of *salat* could still be observed in Arabia before the advent of Islam, albeit in altered forms. People were somewhat familiar with the practice, which was initially associated with worshipping God. However, in its modified form, it became intertwined with polytheistic practices. Some hadiths mention that a number of people performed *salat* during their visits to the Kaaba, following the tradition of Abrahamic monotheism (*Hanif*), and Muhammad was among them. It is also known that Muhammad frequently secluded himself in the Cave of Hira for worship and contemplation during the month of Ramadan.

The *salat* was part of the Prophet's spiritual practice from the early days of Islam. As mentioned earlier, Gabriel taught him how to perform both *salat* and ablution (*wudu*). The Prophet taught these practices to his wife Khadija and the companions who joined him. Initially, *salat* was performed twice a day—at dawn and in the evening—and in secret, away from the public eye. According to the Prophet's biography, one day Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin who lived with him, saw Khadija and the Prophet performing *salat*. Curious, Ali asked what they were doing. The Prophet's explanation of the new revelation and this spiritual practice eventually led to Ali's conversion.

The Prophet's biography also recounts instances when the Meccans insulted and tortured him while he was offering prayers at the Kaaba. Due to these persecutions, the companions would gather with the Prophet at the house of one of his followers (*dar al-arqam*) to learn about the new religion and perform *salat* together. With the conversion of Umar ibn al-Khattab, Muslims gained more confidence and began publicly performing their *salat*, including at the Kaaba.

The *salat* also played a significant role in one of the most prominent events in the Prophet's life: the night journey and ascension to heaven (*isra and mi'raj*). When the Prophet was taken to Jerusalem during the night journey, he led the prophets who came before him in prayer, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. This moment not only signified that Muhammad was the inheritor of the divine laws revealed to previous messengers but also highlighted the *salat* as a shared spiritual practice among the prophets. The tradition further recounts that the Prophet ascended to heaven immediately after leading the prayer. Following this spiritual ascent,

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<sup>17</sup> Qur'an 18:21.

Muhammad experienced a direct encounter with God—perhaps the most profound moment in his life. This sequence of events underscores the centrality of *salat* in spiritual elevation and progress.

The night journey had several significant outcomes for the Prophet and the early Muslims, one of which was the establishment of the five daily prayers. The initial requirement had been fifty prayers per day. However, during the journey, the Prophet encountered Moses, who, on learning of the number of daily prayers, advised Muhammad to request a reduction from God, as it would be too burdensome for the community. Through a series of back-and-forth requests, the number was eventually reduced to five. This event offers several key insights. First, during a profound spiritual experience in the Prophet’s life, he and his community were gifted the five daily prayers, one of the most spiritually rewarding rituals in Islam. Second, these five prayers, though few in number, are rewarded by God as if they were performed fifty times a day, reflecting both divine mercy and the immense spiritual significance of this practice.

During *salat*, the moment one is closest to God—according to Muhammad—is when the worshipper is in prostration. He encouraged making as many invocations as possible in this state. Prostration is an intense expression of complete submission to God, symbolizing the acknowledgment of our dependence on God. It is a declaration: “I am the servant; God is the Lord. I am weak; God is the Almighty. I am in need; God is the Sustainer.” There is great spiritual power in recognizing and embracing one’s weakness in relation to God.

The Prophet was deeply devoted to prayer and never abandoned it, even during battles, travels, or periods of illness. On the day he passed away, one of the last things he did was to establish his prayers. Because of these attributes, the five daily prayers became one of the most defining marks of a believer. The Prophet emphasized the importance of this ritual in numerous hadiths. In one of them, he stated, “*Salat* is the central pole of Islam,”<sup>18</sup> implying that a Muslim who neglects their prayers risks destabilizing their faith.

*Salat* is also a means of spiritual purification. The Prophet said, “*Prayer is the key to heaven.*”<sup>19</sup> On one occasion, he illustrated the significance of the five daily prayers by asking his companions, “*If one of you had a river flowing by your door and bathed in it five times a day,*

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18 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-’iman, bab ma ja’a fi hurmati al-salat.*

19 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-thaharah, bab ma ja’a la tuqbalu salatu bighayri thuhurin.*

would any dirt remain on your body?” The companions replied, “No dirt would remain on that person.” The Prophet then explained, “The five daily prayers function in the same way. Through them, God removes sins.”<sup>20</sup> The Qur’an also highlights the importance of *salat*, describing it as a key attribute of the believers and stating that it prevents them from indecency and abomination.<sup>21</sup>

## Spiritual Dimensions of *Salat*

Considering the form and content of *salat* based on the Qur’an and the Prophet’s practice, many Muslim scholars have explored its spiritual dimensions. Said Nursi, for example, wrote extensively on *salat*, highlighting its profound spiritual aspects. First, Nursi emphasizes that the purpose of *salat* is to “glorify, exalt, and give thanks to God.” This involves proclaiming “glory be to God” (*subhanallah*) through words and actions to acknowledge God’s majesty and sanctify God. It also includes declaring “God is the greatest” (*Allahu akbar*) to recognize God’s perfection and exalt God and expressing gratitude to God (*alhamdulillah*) with the heart, tongue, and body for God’s beauty and perfection. These three acts—glorification (*tasbih*), exaltation (*takbir*), and praise (*hamd*)—form the foundation of *salat*, which is why they are integrated into every movement and recitation within it.<sup>22</sup>

Second, the Prophet described *salat* as the spiritual ascension (*mi’raj*) of a believer. Through *salat*, the worshipper is graciously received into the presence of God five times a day. Nursi likens this experience to a soldier being granted an audience with a king. In *salat*, the servant transcends the constraints of the physical world, attaining the honor of standing in the divine presence, both spiritually and mentally.<sup>23</sup>

Third, commenting on the Qur’anic phrase that believers are “steadfast in prayer,”<sup>24</sup> Nursi explains that *salat* is the most comprehensive form of worship. He writes, “The specification of *salat* over other acts of worship indicates that it serves as a comprehensive index and exemplar of all virtuous deeds. Just as Surah *Al-Fatiha* [the first chapter of the Qur’an] is an index of the Qur’an and humanity is an index of the universe, *salat* reflects and encompasses all

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20 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab mawaqit al-salah, bab al-salawat al-khamsu kaffara.*

21 Qur’an 2:3; 29:45.

22 Said Nursi, *The Words* (Söz Basım, 2012), 70–71.

23 Nursi, *The Rays* (Söz Basım, 2012), 279.

24 Qur’an 2:3.

forms of worship.” In this sense, *salat* represents the worship, both innate and voluntary, of all creatures. For instance, some angels bow in worship, others prostrate, and yet others stand; likewise, some stones prostrate, some trees stand upright, and some animals bow down in acts resembling worship.<sup>25</sup>

Nursi further emphasizes that *salat* incorporates elements of the core pillars of Islam. During prayer, the believer repeatedly proclaims the oneness of God and affirms Muhammad as God’s messenger, thereby renewing the testimony of faith (*shahada*). Refraining from eating or drinking during *salat* reflects a form of fasting. Facing the Kaaba during prayer symbolically connects the believer to pilgrimage (*hajj*). Moreover, dedicating time to prayer can be likened to an act of charity (*zakat*), as it involves devoting oneself to spiritual well-being and worship.

Additionally, humanity, as stewards of the earth, is seen as representing all creation in worship. Nursi reflects on the Qur’anic verse “Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies God,” noting that all creation—angels, animals, and even inanimate objects—is engaged in glorifying God.<sup>26</sup> During the night journey (*isra and mi’raj*), the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have presented the prayers of all beings to God as their representative. The supplications (*tahiyat*) he recited during this encounter are now included in the sitting position of *salat*, symbolizing this universal act of worship.

## Communal Prayer: Worship in Unity

The Prophet’s *salat* was remarkably communal. He not only strongly encouraged his followers to perform their prayers in congregation but also regularly led them in prayer. His final prayer was the dawn (*fajr*) prayer on the day he passed away, and he performed it with his companions in the mosque. In one hadith, he stated, “*A prayer offered in congregation is twenty-seven times more rewarding than one performed individually.*”<sup>27</sup> In another narration, the Prophet said, “*Whoever performs ablution (wudu) properly and then goes to offer the obligatory prayer, whether joining others in congregation or praying in the mosque, God will forgive their sins.*”<sup>28</sup>

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25 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *İsaratul İ’caz* (Söz Basım, 2012), 70.

26 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası II* (Söz Basım, 2012), 575–576.

27 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-adhan, bab fadl salat al-jama’a.*

28 *Sahih al-Muslim, kitab al-thahara, bab fadl al-wudu’ wassalati ‘aqiba.*

From the early days of revelation, the Prophet prioritized communal prayer. He would initially pray together with his wife Khadija and later with the companions who embraced Islam. During the early period of persecution, the Prophet and his followers prayed communally in a companion's house, known as *Dar al-Arqam*. As Islam became more public, particularly after the conversion of Umar ibn al-Khattab, they began openly praying together, often at the Kaaba.

The mosques built during the Prophet's time are a significant testament to the communal nature of prayer in his spiritual practice. The Arabic word for mosque, *masjid*, literally means *place of prostration*. Before the Prophet's migration (*hijra*) to Medina, the Muslims in Medina designated a prayer space (*masjid*) for communal worship in Quba, a village several miles outside of Medina. When the Prophet arrived in Quba, he stayed there for a few days and, together with his followers, built a mosque known as *Masjid Quba*. The Prophet himself participated in its construction. Due to the sincerity and faith of those who built it solely for the sake of God, the Qur'an refers to this first mosque in Islam as a mosque "founded on piety."<sup>29</sup>

When the Prophet moved to Medina, one of his first actions was to build a mosque, which came to be known as *Masjid al-Nabawi*, or the Prophet's Mosque. This mosque became the center of all Muslim activities in Medina. The Muslim community performed its daily prayers in congregation at the mosque, and the Prophet himself regularly joined them and led the prayers. When the Prophet was not in the city, he would appoint one of his companions to lead the community in his place.

It is reported that even during battles, the Prophet prioritized offering prayers in congregation whenever possible. The Qur'an references the Prophet and his community performing prayers together, even in the midst of battle: "*When you [Prophet] are with the believers, leading them in prayer, let a group of them stand up in prayer with you, taking their weapons with them, and when they have finished their prostration, let them take up their positions at the back. Then let the other group, who have not yet prayed, pray with you, also on their guard and armed with their weapons.*"<sup>30</sup> Commentaries on this verse explain that despite being engaged in combat, the Prophet and his companions offered their prayers in congregation, rotating in groups for safety. While one group performed its prayers, the other stood guard to

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29 Qur'an 9:108. While some scholars interpret this verse as a reference to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, the majority of them maintain that it refers to the first mosque built in Quba.

30 Qur'an 4:102.

protect the members. This practice demonstrates that even in the most challenging circumstances, the Prophet and his followers prioritized communally performing their daily prayers. They placed their spirituality and connection to God above even the most pressing worldly matters in their lives.

One of the most remarkable aspects of communal prayer is its emphasis on equality. During *salat*, Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder, worshipping one God without regard to rank, status, color, race, or ethnicity. United in devotion, they all face the Kaaba, bowing and prostrating together in humility before God. Due to the importance of communal prayers, mosques have become one of the most defining features of Islamic societies. In Muslim-majority countries, nearly every neighborhood has a mosque. Even in countries where Muslims are a minority, one of the first priorities for the community is often to establish a mosque as a center for worship and communal activities.

## The Call to Prayer: The Mark of a Muslim Community

An important aspect of communal prayer is the call to prayer (*adhan*). As the Muslim community grew in Medina, the Prophet consulted with his companions about how to inform believers of the prayer times and invite them to participate in communal prayers. Other religious communities of the time had established methods for announcing prayer times and gatherings. For example, Christians used church bells, and Jews blew a trumpet-like horn.

While the Prophet was considering a suitable way for the call to prayer, one of his companions, Abdullah ibn Zayd, had a vision in which a wise person taught him the words for the call to prayer in Arabic, as follow:

God is the greatest, God is the greatest.

God is the greatest, God is the greatest.

I bear witness that there is no god but God.

I bear witness that there is no god but God.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Hasten to prayer.

Hasten to prayer.

Hasten to success.

Hasten to success.<sup>31</sup>

God is the greatest, God is the greatest.

There is no god but God.<sup>32</sup>

Abdullah shared his experience and what he had learned with the Prophet. The Prophet instructed his companion to deliver the call to prayer (*adhan*) accordingly.

The five daily prayers are performed at designated times, and the *adhan* serves as a notification, letting believers know when to join their fellow Muslims for communal worship. During the Prophet's time, the caller would climb to an elevated place to make the *adhan* audible over a wide area. To enhance the reach of the call, Muslim communities later began constructing minarets—tall towers that became an integral part of mosque architecture. Visible from a distance, minarets not only amplify the call to prayer but also symbolize the presence of Islam in the surrounding area.

For believers, the call to prayer (*adhan*) is a deeply spiritual moment. It reminds them that God is the ultimate source of power, that Muhammad is God's messenger, and that they should hasten to prayer, a means of peace and eternal salvation. When a Muslim hears the *adhan*, they repeat the words of the caller (*muadhdhin*) after them. However, in response to the phrases “hasten to prayer” (*hayya 'ala al-salah*) and “hasten to success” (*hayya 'ala al-falah*), they say instead, “*There is no power or strength except by God*” (*la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*).

After the call to prayer, the Prophet recommended his followers to recite the following invocation: “*O God, Lord of this perfect call and the ritual prayer to be performed, grant Muhammad every means and virtue that draws him closer to You. Elevate him to the Praised Station (Maqam Mahmud) that You have promised him.*”<sup>33</sup> The *adhan* is not only a spiritual reminder to remember God but also an encouragement to lead a worship-centered life, structured around the five daily prayers—performed individually and, if possible, in congregation.

## The Friday Prayers: A Weekly Spiritual Renewal

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31 In the morning call to prayer, for the caller adds the phrase that “prayer is better than sleep” (*al-salatu khayrun min al-nawm*).

32 The call to prayer is in Arabic.

33 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-adhan, bab al-du'a' 'inda al-nida'*.

Although performing the five daily prayers in congregation is strongly recommended by the Prophet, it is not obligatory; a believer may perform them individually as well. However, the weekly Friday congregational prayer (*salat al-jum'a*) is required to be performed in congregation.<sup>34</sup> The two most important elements of the Friday prayer are the sermon (*khutba*) and the two congregational cycles of prayer led by an imam, the person who leads the prayer.

The sermon typically begins with praising and glorifying God, followed by sending peace and blessings on God's messenger, Muhammad. The imam then delivers a sermon centered on a theme relevant to the community, often citing verses from the Qur'an. The sermon concludes with an invocation (*du'a'*). The Friday prayer is usually done around noon. The Prophet performed his first *Friday prayer* after his migration (*hijra*) to Medina and continued to lead this weekly congregational prayer for his community until his death.

Friday is the most sacred day of the week for Muslims, offering a unique spiritual opportunity. The sixty-second chapter of the Qur'an is named after this day. The time of the Friday prayer serves as a moment for Muslims to pause their business and worldly affairs and turn their attention to God, as highlighted in the Qur'an: "*Believers! When you are called to the congregational prayer, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave off trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.*"<sup>35</sup> Leaving business for prayer is not just a physical act but also requires mental and spiritual focus. Unlike in Judaism and Christianity, the sacred day of the week in Islam is not considered a day of rest. Believers may resume their daily activities after completing their prayer. The Qur'an addresses this aspect: "*And when the prayer is completed, disperse in the land and seek out God's bounty. Remember God often so that you may prosper.*"<sup>36</sup> This verse implies that Islam does not draw a strict division between sacred and profane. As long as the believer performs their prayers and remembers God, their other daily activities are also regarded as part of their worship and spirituality.

The Prophet encouraged his community to make the most of Friday due to its spiritual significance. In one narration, he said, "Whoever performs the major ritual purification [*ghusl*], attends the Friday prayer, performs the prescribed prayer, listens attentively and silently to the sermon until it concludes, and then joins the imam in prayer, will have their sins forgiven from

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34 While the Friday prayer is required for all men who have reached puberty, it is not required for women.

35 Qur'an 62:9.

36 Qur'an 62:10.

that Friday to the next.”<sup>37</sup> In another hadith, he stated, “There is a moment on Friday when, if a servant asks God for something, He will surely grant their request.”<sup>38</sup> These examples highlight the importance of Friday in the Prophet’s spirituality. It is a day of both communal and individual spiritual renewal. Many Muslims use this day to recite the Qur’an and give charity as part of their spiritual practices.

## The Night Prayer: “A Thankful Servant”

Besides his five daily prayers and the Friday congregational prayers, a hallmark of the Prophet’s spirituality was his individual night prayers. The Messenger of God devoted much of his nighttime to worship. He would rise during the last third of the night to pray. This spiritual ritual of the Prophet is known as *tahajjud*. In a report, Muhammad’s wife Aisha describes his night routine concerning sleeping and prayer as follows:

After performing the late evening prayer, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) would lie down and sleep for a while. Then, he would wake up and perform the night prayer [*tahajjud*] for as long as he wished. When the time of pre-dawn [*sahar*] arrived, he would perform the *witr* prayer and then return to his bed to rest. Upon hearing the call to prayer [*adhan*], he would immediately rise from his bed. If there was a need for a major ritual purification [*ghusl*], he would perform it; otherwise, he would perform ablution (*wudu*). He would then pray the two cycles of recommended prayer [*sunnah*] for the dawn prayer [*fajr*] and leave his home to perform the dawn prayer in congregation in the mosque.<sup>39</sup>

There are numerous narrations confirming the Prophet Muhammad’s routine during the night. From these accounts, we learn that after the late evening prayer (*isha*), the Prophet would go to bed, then rise from his sleep to perform the night prayer (*tahajjud*). He would return to bed again and later rise for the dawn prayer (*fajr*). One question often asked is how long he would pray during the night. The night prayer consists of at least two cycles, but the Prophet is reported to have performed up to thirteen cycles, including the *witr* prayer, which concludes the night prayer.<sup>40</sup> Compared to his five daily prayers, the Prophet’s night prayer was marked by

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37 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-jum'a, bab la yafarraqu bayna isnayni yawma al-jumu'a.*

38 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-jum'a, bab ma ja'a fi al-sa'ati allati turja fi al-yawm jumu'a.*

39 *Sunan al-Nasa'i, kitab qiyam al-layl, bab waqt al-witr* and *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-tahajjud, bab man nama awwala al-layl wa 'ahya akhirahu.*

40 *Witr* literally means *odd numbers*, such as 1, 3, and 5. Muhammad would conclude his night prayers with an odd number of prayer cycles.

prolonged postures in each cycle—standing, bowing, and prostrating. His recitations from the Qur’an were lengthy, and he frequently invoked God with supplications of praise and glorification.

The Qur’an references the night prayer in several verses, highlighting its significance. In some verses, God instructs Muhammad to rise at night and worship God.<sup>41</sup> For example, the Qur’an addresses the Prophet, “*During the night, wake up and pray, as an extra offering of your own, so that your Lord may raise you to a [highly] praised status.*”<sup>42</sup> The Qur’an also describes night prayer as a key attribute of a faithful servant of God: “*The servants of the Compassionate are those who walk humbly on the earth, and who, when the ignorant address them, reply, ‘Peace’; those who spend the night bowed down or standing, worshipping their Lord.*”<sup>43</sup> In another verse, the Qur’an praises believers who forsake their beds at night to invoke God in fear and hope.<sup>44</sup> The Qur’an not only highlights night prayer as an essential aspect of the spirituality of the Prophet and his community but also acknowledges its significance among some members of the People of the Book (i.e., Jews and Christians): “*There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God’s revelations during the night and prostrating in prayer.*”<sup>45</sup> These verses collectively emphasize the importance of night prayer as a hallmark of devotion and humility, connecting it to a broader tradition of worship shared across faith communities.

The night prayer was the Prophet’s sacred time alone with his Creator, a deep expression of thanks and gratitude to God. According to a hadith narrated by his wife Aisha, the Prophet would pray at night until his feet became swollen. When Aisha asked him, “O Prophet of God, why do you exert yourself in worship so much when God has forgiven your past and future sins?” he replied, “*Should I not be a thankful servant of God?*”<sup>46</sup>

In several narrations, the Prophet emphasizes the importance of the night prayer for one’s spiritual growth. Highlighting its benefits, the Prophet said, “*Every night, during the last third of*

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41 Qur’an 17:79; 20:130; 50:40; 52:49; 73:1–7; 76:25.

42 Qur’an 17:79.

43 Qur’an 25:63–64.

44 Qur’an 32:16.

45 Qur’an 3:113.

46 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-tafsir, bab “liyaghfir laka allahu ma taqaddama...”*

*the night, our Lord descends to the Heaven of this earth and says, 'Who calls upon Me that I might answer them? Who asks of Me that I might grant them? Who seeks My forgiveness that I might forgive them?'*"<sup>47</sup> This narration teaches that during the night, God actively seeks out servants who turn to God, offering them the opportunity to seek God's help, forgiveness, and blessings. In another hadith, the Prophet said, "*Perform the night prayer, for it was the practice of the righteous people who came before you. The night prayer draws you closer to God, serves as an expiation for sins, heals spiritual ailments, and acts as a deterrent against sin.*"<sup>48</sup> This narration links the night prayer to righteousness and obedience, portraying it as a means of purifying the self, strengthening one's connection to God, and avoiding sin.

From the early days of revelation, the night prayer was one of the most integral spiritual practices of the Prophet and his community. Subsequent generations of Muslims have continued to make the night prayer a cornerstone of their spiritual practice. In the stillness of the night, when the world retreats, believers rise to have personal time with their Lord. This practice serves as both a spiritual reset and preparation, helping believers reflect on the past day and spiritually fortify themselves for the day ahead.

Because of the significance of the night prayer in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet, many Muslim scholars have made it a central element of their spirituality and teachings. The prominent Muslim thinker Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111), for example, dedicated significant attention to the night prayer and related devotions in his monumental work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. Alongside highlighting the virtues of the night prayer, al-Ghazali offers practical advice to help believers rise for it. He suggests avoiding overeating and drinking, refraining from exhausting the body with tiresome actions during the day, taking a short midday nap, and abstaining from sins. He also emphasizes preparing the right internal state, as a heart free from hatred toward others and detached from excessive worldly concerns makes it easier to rise for worship. Al-Ghazali notes that a person consumed by worldly matters may struggle to rise for night prayer, and even if they do, their mind may remain preoccupied with worries and anxieties, distracting them from their devotion.

Al-Ghazali further recommends contemplating the realities of the hereafter—heaven,

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47 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-da'wat, bab al-du'a' nisf al-layl.*

48 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-da'wat.*

hell, and the day of judgment. A state of hope and fear about the eternal life can motivate a believer to stay awake for worship. However, for al-Ghazali, the highest and noblest internal state is a heart filled with love for God. He explains that worshippers must firmly believe that every moment of night prayer is an intimate conversation with God, who knows the state of their hearts. When a servant truly loves God, they naturally desire to be alone with God and find joy in this intimate communion. This delight in worship stems from sincere love for God, inspiring a longing for God’s closeness and pleasure.<sup>49</sup> For a believer in such a state of heart, rising for night prayer is not a burden but a cherished opportunity—something they eagerly anticipate, as they yearn for this special moment with their Lord.

## Prayer During the Solar and Lunar Eclipses

In addition to the night prayers, the Prophet turned to God in prayer on various other occasions, including during solar and lunar eclipses (*salat al-kusuf* and *salat al-khusuf*). In pre-Islamic Arabia, certain beliefs were associated with the sun and the moon, which were often considered sacred. Eclipses, in particular, were linked to events such as the birth or death of an important person. For example, the death of the Prophet’s son, Ibrahim, at the age of about two coincided with a solar eclipse, prompting such associations. The Qur’an, however, frequently emphasizes that the sun and the moon are signs (*ayat*) of God’s power and perfection, dismissing any notions of their independent sanctity.<sup>50</sup> One verse states, “*Among His signs are the night and the day, the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon, but prostrate to God who created them, if it is He Whom you worship.*”<sup>51</sup> In another place, the Qur’an points out that the sun’s course and the phases of the moon are determined by God. Each of them floats in its orbit because of their Creator’s power and precise knowledge.<sup>52</sup> The Prophet’s spiritual practices during eclipses reflect the Qur’anic emphasis on these celestial phenomena as reminders of God’s greatness. Many hadith collections include chapters detailing the Prophet’s prayers during solar and lunar eclipses, demonstrating their significance as moments of reflection and worship

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49 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din* (al-Quds, 2012), 1:591–595.

50 Qur’an 6:77–78; 10:5; 36:38–40; 41:37; 74:32; 91:1–2.

51 Qur’an 41:37.

52 Qur’an 36:38–40.

in Islamic spirituality.

It is reported that during an eclipse, the Prophet would lead the community in a special prayer consisting of two cycles, similar to the regular *salat*. Each action within the cycles—standing, bowing, and prostrating—was prolonged, accompanied by invocations of praise and glorification of God. The prayer would continue until the eclipse had passed. Following the prayer, the Prophet would address the community with a short sermon, saying, “*The moon and the sun are among the signs of God’s existence and power. They do not eclipse because of anyone’s death or birth. When you see a lunar or solar eclipse, pray and supplicate until it clears.*”<sup>53</sup> The Prophet encouraged his followers to use the occasion to remember God’s greatness, pray, give charity, and free an enslaved person. Through this practice, the Prophet not only corrected the pre-Islamic misconceptions about eclipses being tied to events like births or deaths but also transformed these celestial occurrences into opportunities for worship, reflection, and good deeds. Today, Muslims around the world continue to observe this spiritual practice. For example, in preparation for the solar eclipse scheduled for Monday, April 8, 2024, many mosques planned congregational eclipse prayers followed by sermons, maintaining the tradition established by the Prophet.

## The Prayer for Rain

Another occasion when the Prophet would pray with the community was during droughts. Through this collective act of worship, they would turn to God to seek mercy and ask for rain. Prayers for rain are an ancient practice observed in many religions, including Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity. The Qur’an frequently references rain as a sign of God’s power and mercy. It emphasizes that God sends rain in measured amounts and, through it, revives the earth: “It is God who sends the winds as glad tidings ahead of His Mercy. When they bear heavy clouds, We drive them to a lifeless land and then cause rain to fall, producing every type of fruit. Similarly, We will bring the dead to life, so perhaps you will be mindful.”<sup>54</sup> This verse draws a parallel between the revival of the earth through rain and the resurrection of the dead in the hereafter. Just as rain gives life to barren land, God will bring the dead back to life. The Qur’an

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53 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-kusuf, bab al-salati fi kusufi al-shams.*

54 Qur’an 7:57.

further points out that if water were to withdraw, only God could restore it.<sup>55</sup> When people are in desperate need of rain and on the verge of losing hope, the Qur'an reminds them of God's mercy: "*It is He who sends down the rain after they have despaired and spreads His Mercy. He is the Protector and the Praised.*"<sup>56</sup> Through these teachings, the Qur'an links rain not only to physical sustenance but also to spiritual lessons about hope, mercy, and the power of God. The prayer for rain (*salat al-istisqa*) reflects this understanding, turning a time of need into an opportunity for collective worship and trust in God's providence.

Considering the Qur'anic references that God has complete control over rain, the Prophet and his community turned to God during droughts to seek God's mercy. Hadith collections often include sections dedicated to the prayer for rain, detailing this practice of the Prophet. He would go out with his community, lead them in two cycles of prayer, raise his hands, and supplicate to God for rain. It is important to note that turning to God on such occasions is not solely for material gain; it is generally understood as an opportunity for spiritual growth, to remember God, and to seek God's forgiveness.<sup>57</sup>

This spiritual practice of the Prophet continues to be widely observed by Muslims. For example, 2014 was one of the driest years on record in California, prompting the state governor to declare a state of emergency. In response, many local Muslim communities performed the prayer for rain, following the Prophet's tradition. One such prayer was led by Hamza Yusuf Hanson, the president of Zaytuna College. This effort was not limited to the Muslim community; the Catholic Bishops' Conference also issued a call for prayers for rain, urging their fellow Christians to join in supplication. This shared act highlights how faith communities turn to divine mercy during times of crisis.<sup>58</sup>

The Prophet would also pray on various other occasions. One of his regular prayers was the *forenoon prayer* (*salat al-duha*), performed about forty minutes after sunrise. When he received good news or blessings from God, he would express his gratitude by offering two cycles of prayer or performing the *prostration of thanks* (*sujud al-shukr*). On entering a mosque, the

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55 Qur'an 18:41.

56 Qur'an 42:28.

57 Nursi, *The Words*, 425.

58 "California Bishops Pray for Rain as State's Drought Continues," CAN, January 12, 2014,

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/28761/california-bishops-pray-for-rain-as-states-drought-continues>.

first thing he would do was perform two cycles of prayer. Similarly, when returning from a journey, he would go to the mosque and perform two cycles of prayer as an act of devotion and gratitude.

## Fasting in the Prophet's Spirituality

The Prophet's spirituality extended beyond prayer. A central element of his spiritual practice was fasting, a ritual that long predates Islam. Abstaining from food and drink is an ancient practice observed in many religious traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Fasting has been practiced for various purposes, such as self-purification, repentance, gratitude, rites of passage, simplicity, protest, or even health and dietary reasons. The Qur'an affirms the universality of fasting, stating that it was prescribed not only for Muslims but also for the communities before them: "*O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become mindful of God.*"<sup>59</sup>

The most significant form of fasting in the Prophet's life was the fast of Ramadan, which became obligatory for the Muslim community in the second year after the migration to Medina. Following the guidance of the Qur'an and the Prophet's example, Muslims around the world today fast during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The daily fast begins at dawn (*fajr*) and concludes at sunset (*maghrib*). During the fast, believers abstain from food, drink (including water), and sexual activity. Muslims typically wake before dawn for a meal called *suhoor* and break their fast at sunset with a meal known as *iftar*, often starting with dates and water, following the tradition of the Prophet. The conclusion of Ramadan is marked by *Eid al-Fitr*, a major holiday in the Islamic calendar. As part of the celebration, the Muslim community gathers to perform two cycles of prayer (*salat al-aid*) in congregation, followed by a sermon delivered by the imam.

In addition to the fast during the month of Ramadan, the Prophet fasted during the preceding month of *Sha'ban*, as well as six days of fasting in *Shawwal* (*the month after Ramadan*). He encouraged his followers to do the same, stating, "*Whoever fasts during Ramadan and follows it with six additional days of fasting in Shawwal, it is as if they have fasted*

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<sup>59</sup> Qur'an 2:183.

for the entire year.”<sup>60</sup> Additionally, the Prophet regularly fasted at least three days each lunar month, with Mondays and Thursdays being his preferred days for fasting. He also observed fasting during the first ten days of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, the twelfth Islamic month, which coincides with the annual pilgrimage (*hajj*).

## The Prophet’s Spirituality in the Month of Fasting

The month of Ramadan was a period of intense devotion in the life of Muhammad. He would get up for the predawn meal (*suhoor*) and break his fast at sunset with dates or water, often doing so in the company of others. In addition to fasting, the Prophet would increase his recitation of the Qur’an. Each night during Ramadan, the archangel Gabriel would visit the Prophet, and together they would recite and review the Qur’anic verses that had been revealed up to that point. It is believed that during the final Ramadan before the Prophet’s death, they conducted this review twice. This practice, known as *muqabala* (*comparative review*), continues to be widely observed among Muslims, especially during Ramadan. As part of this tradition, at least two individuals gather, taking turns to recite the Qur’an. While one recites, the other listens and follows along, ensuring accuracy and fostering a shared spiritual experience.

Another significant spiritual practice of the Prophet during Ramadan was the *Tarawih* prayer, a special prayer unique to this month. The Prophet would perform at least eight cycles of additional prayer following the late evening prayer (*isha*). Unlike the daily prayer, the Prophet prolonged each action of the *Tarawih* with extended recitations from the Qur’an. Following the Prophet’s example, Muslims today widely perform *Tarawih* prayers during Ramadan, often completing twenty cycles in congregation. During these prayers, one-thirtieth (a *juz’*, literally a part) of the Qur’an is recited each night, allowing the entire Qur’an to be completed by the end of the month. The person leading the prayer (*imam*) recites the Qur’an, while the congregation follows along, making it a communal act of devotion. The duration of the *Tarawih* prayer typically ranges from one to two hours, depending on the length of the recitation. In regions where Ramadan overlaps with the long summer days, *Tarawih* prayers may extend until shortly before midnight in some mosques, reflecting the dedication of the community to this special form of worship.

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<sup>60</sup> *Sahih Muslim, kitab al-siyam, bab istihbab sawm sitta ayyamin min shawwal ittiba’an liramadan.*

In addition to his special prayers, the Prophet would observe a spiritual retreat (*i'tikaf*) during the last ten days of Ramadan. In the final Ramadan before his passing, he spent two-thirds of the month in retreat, reflecting his heightened devotion. As part of *i'tikaf*, the Prophet would seclude himself in the mosque, dedicating his days and nights to prayer, worship, and reflection. This practice has its roots in the Qur'an, which traces it back to the traditions of Abraham and his son Ishmael.<sup>61</sup>

The Prophet's wife Aisha reported that the Prophet would intensify his devotion during the last ten days of Ramadan. What made this period particularly special was the belief that the most sacred night in the Islamic calendar, the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*), falls within this time. The Qur'anic chapter named after this night states that the Qur'an was revealed during it and describes it as being better than a thousand months.<sup>62</sup> According to Islamic tradition, righteous deeds and acts of worship performed on this night are considered spiritually equivalent to those performed over a thousand months. The Prophet encouraged his followers to spend this night in prayer and devotion. In one hadith, he said that whoever fasts during Ramadan and stands in prayer on the Night of Power with sincere faith will have all their past sins forgiven.<sup>63</sup> Today, the Prophet's practice of spiritual retreat (*i'tikaf*) continues to be widely observed by Muslims worldwide. Many mosques, including those in the United States, organize retreats during Ramadan to help their congregations focus on worship, prayer, and spiritual reflection.

## Spiritual Dimensions of Ramadan Fasting

Ramadan fasting is a time of spiritual renewal and an opportunity to strengthen one's relationship with God. Through fasting and spending nights in prayer and devotion, the worshipper is reminded that God alone is the ultimate Provider, with no partner or equal. Fasting serves as an act of gratitude, acknowledging the countless blessings one receives. It also humbles the believer, helping them recognize their dependence on God and their own weakness in relation to God's power.

In his treatise on fasting, Said Nursi highlights several of its virtues, emphasizing its

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61 Qur'an 2:125.

62 Qur'an 97:1-5.

63 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab fadl layl al-qadr, bab fadl layl al-qadr.*

profound spiritual and moral benefits:

God Almighty has generously spread countless blessings across the earth for humanity. In return, He wants gratitude as the rightful acknowledgment of these blessings. The apparent causes and intermediaries of these blessings can be likened to tray-bearers; we pay them a price, express gratitude, and sometimes offer undue reverence, even though they do not truly deserve it. However, the True Bestower of Bounties is infinitely more worthy of gratitude than these intermediaries, which are merely means through which His blessings reach us. True gratitude to God lies in recognizing that all blessings originate directly from Him, valuing their significance, and acknowledging our dependence on His mercy.<sup>64</sup>

Nursi highlights that when people receive a blessing or favor, they typically express gratitude by either paying a price or offering thanks. For instance, when purchasing an apple from a person or a grocery store, the payment itself can be seen as a form of gratitude. However, Nursi prompts us to reflect on a deeper question: What acknowledgment is due to God, the ultimate source of the apple? If we express thanks to the intermediary—the one who delivers the blessing—then it is only natural that we should offer even greater gratitude to the One who provides it. According to Nursi, fasting serves as a sincere way to express this gratitude to God:

Fasting during Ramadan serves as a profound means to cultivate genuine, sincere, and all-encompassing gratitude. Throughout the rest of the year, many people, particularly those who live in comfort, often fail to appreciate the value of countless blessings because they rarely experience true hunger. When their stomachs are full—especially among the affluent—they may overlook the significance of even something as simple as a piece of dry bread. However, at the moment of breaking the fast, the act of tasting transforms that humble bread into a precious divine blessing for a believer. During Ramadan, individuals from all walks of life, from rulers to the impoverished, express a shared sense of gratitude by recognizing the true worth of these blessings.<sup>65</sup>

Nursi emphasizes that when people experience deprivation, they better understand the value of even the simplest provisions, such as a piece of bread. The act of breaking the fast becomes a moment of profound gratitude, uniting individuals across all social classes in recognizing and cherishing the divine blessings they often take for granted.

Fasting is also a form of purifying the self. It is a way to discipline oneself against unlimited desires and indulgences with patience. The self has the tendency to be heedless and forget its weakness and dependence. Nursi points to this aspect of the self below:

In its heedlessness, the human soul forgets its true nature. It fails to recognize its profound powerlessness, neediness, and limitations—and even avoids acknowledging them. It does not

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64 Said Nursi, *Mektubat (Söz Basım, 2012)*, 557.

65 Nursi, *Mektubat*, 557–558.

reflect on its fragility, its susceptibility to transience and calamities, or the reality that it is made of perishable flesh and bones, destined to decay and disintegrate. Instead, the soul charges into the world with an illusion of invincibility, as though it possessed a body of steel and were immune to mortality. It pursues the world with insatiable greed, intense attachment, and fervent love, becoming ensnared by anything that brings pleasure or benefit. In doing so, it forgets its Creator, who sustains it with boundless compassion. It neglects to consider the ultimate purpose of its life and the reality of the hereafter, instead indulging in heedlessness, excess, and misconduct.<sup>66</sup>

Fasting serves as a wake-up call, shaking individuals out of their heedlessness to recognize their vulnerability, weakness, and dependence. It becomes a great reminder to seek refuge in divine mercy with a heart full of gratitude.

It is important to note that the experience of fasting extends beyond abstaining from food, drink, and sexual activity: It carries broader implications for one's spirituality. In this context, al-Ghazali identifies three levels of fasting, each reflecting a deeper dimension of spiritual practice. The first one is the fasting of an ordinary person, which involves refraining from eating, drinking, and having sexual relations. The second type of fasting is that, in addition to the first one, the worshipper keeps the ears, eyes, tongue, hands, feet, and other limbs away from sins. For example, fasting through the tongue means guarding the tongue against idle talk, lies, backbiting, gossip, obscene speech, harsh words, arguments, and speaking with ostentation. Fasting with the tongue also involves compelling the tongue to remain silent and engaging it in the remembrance of God and the recitation of the Qur'an. This constitutes the fast of the tongue. Fasting with your eyes constitutes guarding the eyes from looking at undesirable and inappropriate things, as well as avoiding anything that distracts the heart and diverts it from the remembrance of God. Al-Ghazali calls this type of fasting "the fasting of the righteous."<sup>67</sup>

The third type of fasting involves completely purifying the heart from worldly thoughts and distancing it from everything except God. This type is the fasting of those who are very close to God, of the prophets and the most righteous of the righteous. Al-Ghazali points out that this spiritual level in fasting cannot be explained in words; it can only be realized through practice. This state involves directing all of one's inspirations toward God and abandoning everything else for God's sake.<sup>68</sup> The Prophet Muhammad's fasting was the archetype of this spiritual state in

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66 Nursi, *Mektubat*, 569.

67 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 1:388–389.

68 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 1:389.

fasting.

Fasting also carries significant social dimensions, fostering mindfulness of the plight of fellow human beings. It is reported that Muhammad was especially generous during the month of Ramadan and encouraged his followers to do the same.<sup>69</sup> As a result, Ramadan has become a season of sharing and care. Abstaining from food helps believers empathize with those who are poor and in need, inspiring acts of kindness and charity. A special charity (*sadaqa al-fitr*) is given during Ramadan, particularly before the *Eid* celebration, to support those in need and ensure everyone can partake in the holiday festivities. Additionally, if a believer is unable to fast due to old age or illness, they are encouraged to feed those who are poor for each day they cannot fast, further emphasizing the social and communal spirit of Ramadan.<sup>70</sup>

## Giving to Charity

The spiritual practices in the life of the Prophet were not limited to acts of physical worship. Giving to charity was a central aspect of his spirituality and teachings as well. Generosity and care for those in need were among Muhammad's most defining qualities. When the Prophet first received revelation and experienced doubt about his experience, his wife Khadija comforted him by reminding him of his noble character. She highlighted that he was not only kind to his relatives and neighbors but also devoted to helping those who were poor and needy, often opening the door of his home to them. Khadija's reassurance emphasized that God would not abandon or disgrace a person like Muhammad because of his remarkable generosity and compassion.

Generosity is a central theme in the Qur'an and is often described as one of the key attributes of believers.<sup>71</sup> The theological reasoning for giving lies in the understanding that God is the ultimate provider and the true owner of all wealth.<sup>72</sup> What a person possesses is considered a trust from God, and it should be used in accordance with God's will, which includes sharing it with those in need. The Qur'an highlights this attribute, stating that believers are those who

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69 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-manaqib, bab sifat al-nabiyy salla allahu 'alayhi wa sallam.*

70 Qur'an 2:184.

71 The Qur'an employs a number of terms for giving. Among them are *infaq*, *zakat*, and *sadaqa*.

72 Qur'an 24:33; 57:7.

“spend out of what God has provided for them.”<sup>73</sup>

A remarkable feature of the Qur’anic approach is that charitable giving is often mentioned alongside prayer (*salat*) in the same verses, emphasizing its importance. The Qur’an uses various terms for charitable giving (e.g., *infaq* and *sadaqa*). Among these, a specific form of giving, rooted in the Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet, is *zakat*. This obligatory charity requires all Muslims with sufficient financial means to give 2.5 percent of their wealth to those who are poor. The word *zakat* literally means *to purify*, signifying that through this act of giving, believers purify their wealth and themselves.

*Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam and is often discussed as part of Islamic worship and rituals. While the Prophet referred to the five daily prayers (*salat*) as the central pole of Islam, he described *zakat* as the bridge of Islam—a way to help fellow human beings safely and peacefully navigate the bridge of life. It symbolizes solidarity and mutual support between those who are rich and those who are poor, fostering a sense of compassion and social responsibility within the Muslim community.

The Prophet exemplified the Qur’anic teachings on charitable giving throughout his life. His companions often described him as the most generous of people. One report states that the Prophet was “more generous than a strong wind,” meaning nothing could stop him from giving.<sup>74</sup> Whenever someone asked him for something, he would give without hesitation. If he had it, he never refused. He generously shared his food, clothing, and knowledge with others.

In a hadith narrated by his wife Aisha, a female companion once gave the Prophet a cloak she had made. The Prophet graciously accepted the gift and wore it. During a gathering, one of his companions admired the cloak and said, “This is beautiful. Would you give it to me?” The Prophet agreed. Shortly afterward, he went home and sent the cloak to the man.<sup>75</sup>

In another tradition narrated by Aisha, after the Prophet’s family had slaughtered a goat, Aisha distributed most of the meat to those who were poor. When she informed the Prophet that only a small piece from the shoulder was left for them, he replied, “*Everything remains except the shoulder piece.*”<sup>76</sup> This metaphor expressed the idea that what is given in charity is what

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73 Qur’an 2:3.

74 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-manaqib, bab sifat al-nabiyy salla allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

75 *Sunan ibn Majah, kitab al-libas, bab libas rasul allahi, salla allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

76 *Jami ‘ al-Tirmidhi, kitab sifat al-qiyamah wa al-raqa’iq, wa al-wara’.*

truly lasts, as it returns as a spiritual reward. The Prophet embodied the Qur'anic message: *“What is with you will vanish, but what is with God will endure. And He will certainly reward those who patiently persevere according to the best of their actions.”*<sup>77</sup> The Prophet was also known for his generous hospitality, often hosting those in need in his own home. He did not accumulate wealth, choosing instead to immediately distribute whatever he had. This is evident from what he left behind, as he passed away without material wealth, leaving only a legacy of generosity and selflessness.

In his teachings, the Prophet frequently emphasized the importance of giving. In one tradition, he stated, *“One who sleeps with a full stomach while his neighbor is hungry is not one of us.”*<sup>78</sup> He strongly urged his companions to practice generosity, explaining that stinginess and faith cannot coexist in the same heart, implying that a true believer should always be charitable.<sup>79</sup> The Prophet himself would regularly supplicate, seeking refuge in God from stinginess.<sup>80</sup> In another teaching, the Prophet remarked, *“A generous person is close to God, heaven, and people, and far from hell. Conversely, a stingy person is distant from God, heaven, and people but close to hell. In God’s eyes, an ignorant yet generous person is better than a stingy pious one.”*<sup>81</sup> This highlights the idea that giving and caring for others are ways of being mindful of and drawing closer to God. The Qur’an identifies generosity as one of God’s attributes (*al-Kareem*).<sup>82</sup> In a hadith, the Prophet stated that *“God is generous and loves generosity.”*<sup>83</sup> By being generous, believers reflect this divine attribute in their lives, embodying God’s qualities and bringing God’s mercy and kindness into the world.

In the teachings of the Prophet, generosity is not limited to financial giving. One can be generous with time, knowledge, skills, and other resources. In fact, the Prophet said, *“Even a smile is charity.”*<sup>84</sup> Because of the emphasis on giving in the Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet, generosity and refraining from stinginess became central themes in Islamic literature.

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77 Qur’an 16:96.

78 *Sahih al-Bukhari, Al-Adab al-Mufrad, kitab al-jar, bab la yashba' duna jarihi.*

79 *Sunan al-Nasa'i, kitab al-jihad, bab fadl man 'amila fi sabilillahi 'ala qadamih.*

80 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-da'wat, bab al-ta'awwudh min 'adhabi al-qabr.*

81 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-birr, bab ma ja'a fi al-sakha'.*

82 Qur’an 55:27; 96:3; 82:6.

83 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-'adab, bab ma ja'a fi al-nazafa.*

84 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-birr, bab ma ja'a fi sana'i' al-ma'ruf.*

Hadith collections often include chapters not only on *zakat* but also on the importance of supporting those most vulnerable, including those who are poor, orphaned, and elderly. Additionally, a significant portion of jurisprudential works (*fiqh*) is dedicated to the obligations and recommendations surrounding charitable giving, including the eligibility of donors and recipients.

The theme of generous giving is also widely discussed in classical Islamic literature, where it is closely associated with a noble character. For example, one of the books in Imam al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* is devoted to the practice of *zakat*. In this book, al-Ghazali outlines the various types of giving and the requirements for fulfilling this spiritual obligation. This book is included in the section on acts of worship, alongside topics like the five daily prayers and fasting. In another part of his work, al-Ghazali addresses the problem of attachment to wealth and stinginess, offering insights and remedies for overcoming these tendencies.

Al-Ghazali explains that one reason people become overly attached to wealth, to the point of stinginess, is their love for material possessions. One remedy for this “sickness” is to reflect on the inevitability of death and the transient nature of worldly life. If a person knows they might die tomorrow, they are less likely to cling to their wealth. Another reason for attachment to wealth is concern for one's children and loved ones. People often accumulate wealth for their families, but al-Ghazali points to the Qur'anic teaching that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all, including children. He notes that many children who inherit nothing from their parents thrive, while those who inherit great wealth may misuse it, leading to harm for themselves and their parents.

Al-Ghazali concludes that the wise recognize wealth as a means to fulfill basic needs, with the excess meant for charitable giving, which becomes a spiritual investment in the hereafter. Those who understand this know that giving wealth is far more beneficial, both in this world and in the next, than hoarding it. He advises that when one feels inclined toward generosity and good deeds, one should act immediately, as Satan continuously instills fear of poverty to deter people from giving.<sup>85</sup> Through these teachings, al-Ghazali and other scholars emphasize that generosity is not just an act of kindness but also a great spiritual practice that nurtures the soul and brings one closer to God.

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<sup>85</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (al-Quds, 2012), 3:403–408.

In his classic work *Bustan*, the Persian poet Saadi Shirazi (d. 1291) dedicates a chapter to the theme of generous giving. I will conclude this section with a poem from Shirazi's book that beautifully encapsulates the prophetic teachings on giving and benevolence:

If you are wise, focus on the eternal truth,  
For it lasts, while all else fades away.  
A person without knowledge, generosity, or faith  
Is human only in appearance.  
Those who bring peace to others  
Find peace themselves, even in their graves.  
Share your wealth and kindness now,  
For it will soon slip from your hands.  
Unlock your treasures today,  
For tomorrow, you may no longer hold the key.  
If you wish to avoid distress on Judgment Day,  
Remember those in distress today.  
Do not turn the poor away from your door,  
Lest you one day find yourself begging at another's.  
The one who helps those in need  
Understands they may one day need help too.  
Are you not also a seeker of grace?  
Be grateful, and never turn away those who ask for your help.<sup>86</sup>

## Pilgrimage: A Sacred Journey of Spiritual Reset

The Prophet also engaged in a spiritual practice that required dedication through both wealth and physical effort: the pilgrimage (*hajj*), one of the five pillars of Islam. *Hajj* was established as a requirement for the Muslim community during the Prophet's time in Medina. The Qur'an emphasizes its significance, stating that pilgrimage to the Kaaba is an obligation believers owe to God, provided they have the means to undertake it.<sup>87</sup>

Visiting designated sacred spaces has been part of religious rituals across many traditions, and pilgrimage as a spiritual practice is deeply rooted in history. In fact, many of the

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<sup>86</sup> Saadi Shirazi, *The Bustan of Saadi*, trans. A. Hart Edwards (Bibliotech Press, 2018), 34–35.

<sup>87</sup> Qur'an 3:97.

rituals associated with *hajj* predate Islam. Islamic tradition traces the origins of the Kaaba back to the time of Adam and Eve, with its reconstruction attributed to Abraham and his son Ishmael. The Qur'an describes the Kaaba not only as the first house of worship established for humanity but also as a place of blessing and guidance for all the worlds: "*Indeed, the first house established for humanity was the one at Mecca. It is a blessed place; a source of guidance for all people.*"<sup>88</sup>

According to Islamic sources, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were initially childless, with Sarah being beyond childbearing age. She gave Abraham her Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, as a second wife, and Hagar bore a son named Ishmael. Despite her age, Sarah also became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac. Not long after, God instructed Abraham to take Hagar and Ishmael to the valley of Mecca and settle there. Abraham left them in the area and continued on his prophetic journey. In the barren valley, Hagar and baby Ishmael were soon overcome by thirst. Hagar desperately searched for water, running back and forth between locations. God answered their pleas, causing a spring of water to gush forth from the sand at the touch of Ishmael's heel.<sup>89</sup> This water is known to Muslims today as the well of Zamzam. The water is considered sacred by Muslims. It has long been a tradition for Muslim pilgrims performing the annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) or lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*) to drink from the well and take some of the water home, often offering it to those who visit them.<sup>90</sup>

Abraham would occasionally visit his family, and during one of these visits, God commanded him and Ishmael to build a house of worship for God, known as the Kaaba. The Qur'an recounts that as they were constructing it, the father and son prayed as follows: "Our Lord, accept this service from us. You are the All Hearing, the All Knowing. Our Lord, make us submissive to You; make our descendants into a community devoted to You. Show us how to worship and accept our repentance, for You are the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful. Our Lord! Raise from among them a messenger who will recite to them Your revelations, teach them

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88 Qur'an 3:96.

89 Lings, *Muhammad*, 1–3.

90 *Umrah* is a pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken at any time of the year, unlike *hajj*, which has specific dates. Though it is not obligatory like *hajj*, *umrah* holds significant spiritual importance for Muslims and is often referred to as the "lesser pilgrimage."

the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Truly, You are the Mighty, the Wise.”<sup>91</sup> In a report, the Prophet stated, “I am the fulfillment of my ancestor Abraham’s prayer.”<sup>92</sup> His lineage traces back to Abraham through his son Ishmael. Traditional Islamic sources frequently highlight Muhammad’s noble ancestry, often listing his ancestors all the way back to Abraham.<sup>93</sup>

From its inception, the Kaaba has symbolized monotheism. God instructed Abraham to summon people from near and far to the pilgrimage.<sup>94</sup> The Kaaba thus became the focal point for pilgrimage and the worship of the one true God, attracting visitors from around the world. Jews, Abraham’s descendants through Isaac, also visited this sacred site.<sup>95</sup>

However, over time, likely due to the influx of diverse people from across the region, the Kaaba also became a center of polytheism. According to Islamic tradition, this began when a Meccan merchant brought an idol to Mecca, leading to the area around the Kaaba being filled with idols. The Zamzam well eventually silted over and was forgotten, symbolizing a departure from Abraham’s teachings.<sup>96</sup> Many tribes began to have their own idols, which became a unifying element for each tribe. These idols were seen as divine protectors and venerated at local shrines.<sup>97</sup> Among them, three idols—al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat—received special veneration, not only from the tribes in Mecca but also from Arabs in neighboring areas. Offerings to these deities were often made with the expectation of receiving favors in return: “I give you, lord, so you will grant me that favor.”<sup>98</sup> As a result of these developments, those who worshipped only one God ceased visiting the Kaaba.<sup>99</sup>

With the new revelation of the Qur’an, the Prophet reinstated Abrahamic monotheism in Mecca and restored the pilgrimage rituals associated with the Kaaba, the sacred house dedicated

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91 Qur’an 2:127–129.

92 Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, 67–72.

93 Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, 3.

94 Qur’an 22:27.

95 Lings, *Muhammad*, 4.

96 The well of Zamzam was rediscovered by Muhammad’s grandfather Abdulmuttalib through a vision before he was born.

97 Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 30.

98 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Classical Age of Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1977), 156, 159.

99 Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

to the worship of one God. The Prophet performed the annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) only once, following the Muslims' conquest of Mecca. This pilgrimage is famously known as the *Farewell Hajj* (*hajjat al-wada'*). The rituals practiced by Muslims during *hajj* today are based on the Prophet's example and include many reenactments of events from the life of Abraham. In addition to the annual *hajj*, the Prophet performed the lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*) several times. Unlike *hajj*, which is performed specifically during the twelfth month (*Dhu al-Hijjah*) of the Islamic calendar, *umrah* can be performed at any time of the year and is considered a recommended act of worship. In a hadith, the Prophet said that an *umrah* performed during the month of Ramadan is spiritually equivalent to the reward of the annual *hajj*.<sup>100</sup>

The *hajj* pilgrimage is an obligation for all Muslims who have reached puberty and possess the financial and physical means to perform it at least once in their lifetime. The first step of *hajj* is entering the state of *ihram* by donning the prescribed pilgrimage attire. Men wear two unstitched white cloths, while women wear modest clothing that covers their bodies except for the face and hands. In this state of *ihram*, pilgrims recite a supplication (*talbiya*) attributed to the Prophet: "*Here I am, O God, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily, all praise, blessings, and sovereignty belong to You. You have no partner.*"<sup>101</sup> This supplication expresses the pilgrim's total devotion and submission to God in humility, preparing their mind and heart for a spiritually transformative journey.

The rituals of *hajj* are deeply symbolic and involve collective acts of prayer and supplication. Key rituals include walking between the hills of Safa and Marwah (*sa'i*), circling the Kaaba (*tawaf*), symbolically stoning the devil, sacrificing an animal, and, for men, trimming or shaving their hair. Each step of the pilgrimage is designed to draw the pilgrim closer to God and foster a spiritual renewal. The spiritual pinnacle of *hajj* is the gathering of several million pilgrims at Arafat, a plain about twelve miles southeast of Mecca. At this sacred station, pilgrims turn to God in earnest prayer and supplication while listening to a sermon. This moment is followed by spending the night under the stars at Muzdalifah, an open area near Mecca.

This collective act of worship symbolizes the unity and equality of all humanity before God. The core message of the Prophet's sermon during his pilgrimage at Arafat emphasized this

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100 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-hajj, bab ma ja'a fi 'umrati ramadan.*

101 *Sahih al-Muslim, kitab al-hajj, bab al-talbiya wa sifatihā wa waqtiha.*

universal equality: “O people! Know that your Lord is one, and your ancestor is one. All humans are from Adam, and Adam was created from dust. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have superiority over an Arab; a white person has no superiority over a black person, nor does a black person have superiority over a white person. Superiority in the sight of God is only through piety and righteousness [*taqwa*].”<sup>102</sup> This timeless message underscores the spiritual and social dimensions of *hajj*, where pilgrims stand together as equals before their Creator in humility, united by their faith.

Pilgrims from across the Muslim world have long been awed by the sight of the vast multitude at Arafat. Many have documented their observations of the *hajj*. Among them was Ibn Jubayr (d. 1215), who traveled to Mecca for *hajj* from medieval Spain. In his *hajj* account, he reflects on the remarkable gathering at Arafat, capturing the spiritual and communal essence of this overwhelming event:

The morning of this Friday there was at Arafat an assemblage that can only be equaled by the Final Gathering. . . . Some truthful elders among the local population with experience of the Holy House said that they had never seen a more numerous crowd at Arafat, and my own opinion is that not since the time of Harun, who was the last Caliph to make the Hajj, has there been a similar gathering in Islam. After the two prayers of noontime and mid-afternoon had been combined this Friday, the faithful made their “standing” in adoration, in humility and in tears, begging the favor of the Most High. Cries of “God is great!” arose and a tumult of voices went up in invocation of God . . . The crowd remained there, their faces burned by the sun, until its orb had disappeared and the prayer of sunset had arrived.<sup>103</sup>

Ibn Jubayr vividly describes the spiritual and emotional intensity of the gathering of pilgrims at Arafat, comparing it to the assembly of humanity on the day of judgment in the hereafter.

Centuries later, Malcolm X (d. 1965) also found the Islamic *hajj* rituals, particularly the gathering at Arafat, extremely moving. In a letter written from Mecca in 1964 while performing *hajj*, he observed, “I have prayed on Mt. Arafat. There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blonds to black skin Africans. But we were all participating in the same rituals, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had lead me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white. America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its

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102 Erul, “Veda Hutbesi,” 42:592.

103 Ibn Jubayr, qtd in F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and to Holy Places* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 123.

society the race problem.”<sup>104</sup> For Malcolm X, who experienced racial discrimination and segregation in America, the Islamic pilgrimage served as a powerful example of unity transcending racial and cultural divides.

The prophetic practice of pilgrimage is regarded by Muslims as an invitation from God. It is an intense spiritual journey that calls believers to detach themselves from worldly attachments, including home, family, and daily routines. This journey requires a sacrifice of time, wealth, and physical effort. Pilgrims are expected to empty their hearts of all worldly concerns and entirely dedicate themselves to God, joining their fellow pilgrims in collective devotion. The *hajj* journey is often likened to preparing for death and the hereafter. Pilgrims are encouraged to write their wills before departing, seek forgiveness from those they may have wronged, and ensure all debts are paid. These actions reflect the humility and self-reflection inherent in the pilgrimage.

The major Muslim holiday *Eid al-Adha* coincides with the days of *hajj*. Following the example of the Prophet, Muslims begin the celebration with two cycles of prayer (*salat al-eid*) in congregation, followed by a sermon delivered by the imam. They then perform the ritual sacrifice of animals (*qurban*), distributing the meat to those in need. This act of sacrifice not only symbolizes a believer’s piety and gratitude but also serves as a means of drawing closer to God.

## Recitation of the Qur’an in the Prophet’s Spirituality

Daily recitation of the Qur’an was a key aspect of the Prophet’s spiritual practice. This recitation was (and still is) viewed as a form of worship and a great spiritual act. The Prophet frequently recited the Qur’an during prayers (*salat*). In communal prayers, he would typically recite shorter passages, but in his private devotions, especially during the night prayers, he would spend hours reciting the longer chapters of the Qur’an. His supplications, invocations, and remembrance of God often included verses from the Qur’an.

In several hadiths, the Prophet emphasized the benefits of reciting the Qur’an. In one of them, he mentioned, “Whoever recites a letter from the book of God will be credited with a good deed, and a good deed earns a ten-fold reward.”<sup>105</sup> Another hadith states, “The one who recites the Qur’an aloud is like the one who gives charity publicly, and the one who recites it quietly is

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104 Alex Haley, *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Grove Press, 1965), 34–54.

105 Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, *kitab thawab al-qur’an, bab ma ja’a fiman qara’a harfan min al-qur’an ma lahu min al-ajr*.

like the one who gives charity in secret.”<sup>106</sup> The Prophet uses an analogy to underscore the significance of reciting the Qur’an and living according to its teachings: “The example of a believer who recites the Qur’an and acts on it, like a citron which tastes nice and smells nice. And the example of a believer who does not recite the Qur’an but acts on it is like a date which tastes good but has no smell. And the example of a hypocrite who recites the Qur’an is like sweet basil, which smells good but tastes bitter, and the example of a hypocrite who does not recite the Qur’an is like a colocynth which tastes bitter and has a bad smell.”<sup>107</sup>

The recitation of the Qur’an is also regarded as a source of healing for both the body and the soul. This healing power of the divine words is emphasized in several verses of the Qur’an:

People, there has come to you an advice from your Lord, a healing for what is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy for the believers.<sup>108</sup>

We send down the Quran as healing and mercy for the believer.<sup>109</sup>

It [the Qur’an] is guidance and healing for those who have faith.<sup>110</sup>

Because of the healing aspect of the Qur’an, Muhammad consistently encouraged his followers to seek healing through its verses. The Prophet’s wife Aisha reported, “Whenever the Prophet became ill, he would recite Surat al-Falaq and Surat al-Nas [chapters 113–114] and then blow over his body. When he was seriously ill, I would recite these two chapters and rub his hands over his body, hoping for their blessings.”<sup>111</sup> Following the Prophet’s example, Muslims have long used the recitation of Qur’anic verses for both spiritual and physical healing.

It is reported that Muhammad not only recited the newly revealed revelations to his followers but also enjoyed listening to them recite the Qur’an. The Prophet encouraged his companions to both learn and teach the Qur’an, emphasizing its importance in several sayings. In one hadith, he said, “The best among you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach it.”<sup>112</sup> In another hadith, the Prophet stated, “The one who recites the Qur’an beautifully, smoothly, and

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106 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab thawab al-qur’an.*

107 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-amsal, bab ma ja’a fi masal al-mu’min al-qari’ lilqur’an wa khayri al-qari’.*

108 Qur’an 10:57.

109 Qur’an 17:82.

110 Qur’an 41:44.

111 *Sahih al-Bukhari: kitab fadail al-qur’an, bab fadl al-mu’awwidhat.*

112 *Sahih al-Bukhari: kitab fadail al-qur’an, bab khayrukum man ta’allama al-qur’an wa ‘allamahu.*

precisely will be in the company of the noble and obedient angels. As for the one who struggles, stammering or stumbling through its verses, they will receive twice the reward.”<sup>113</sup> Abdullah ibn Masud, a close companion, recounted that the Prophet once asked him to recite the Qur’an for him. Abdullah replied, “Shall I recite the Qur’an to you when it was revealed to you?” The Prophet responded, “I like to hear the Qur’an from others.” Abdullah then began reciting the fourth chapter of the Qur’an, Surat al-Nisa, until he reached the verse that says, “What will they do when We bring a witness from each community, with you [Muhammad] as a witness against these people?”<sup>114</sup> At that point, the Prophet said, “Stop here!” and his eyes were filled with tears.<sup>115</sup>

Due to its central role in the Prophet’s spiritual practice, reciting from the Qur’an is one of the most important elements of Islamic worship and prayers. Qur’anic recitation permeates every aspect of Muslim life, from birth rituals to funerals and from weddings to business gatherings. Engaging with the words of God through recitation provides a direct connection to the divine. It serves as a form of remembrance (*dhikr*), supplication (*du’a*), worship (*‘ibadah*), and blessing (*baraka*). The recitation illuminates the hearts and minds of believers, strengthening their faith.

## Contemplating God’s Creation

The Prophet not only recited the verses of the Qur’an but also regularly contemplated (*tafakkur*) and read the signs (*ayat*) of God in creation. Contemplation was a fundamental part of his spiritual practice. He frequently remembered God by reflecting on the wonders of creation. The Qur’an consistently invites people to contemplate and reflect on their own creation and the universe. Creation is seen as a manifestation of God’s names and signs. It is a way to know God. This knowledge generates love for God.

Indeed, the very first revelation of the Qur’an urges people to ponder God’s creation: “Read! In the name of your Lord who created: He created humans from a blood clot. Read! Your

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113 *Sunan Ibn Majah, kitab al-adab, bab thawab al-qur’an.*

114 Qur’an 4:41.

115 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-tafsir, bab “fakayfa ‘idha ji’na min kulli ummatin bi shahidin wa ji’na bika ‘ala ha’ulai’ shahidan.*

Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught humanity what they did not know.”<sup>116</sup> In this passage, the Qur’an introduces God to humanity through God’s creation and attributes. The concept of reading extends beyond the revealed sacred text, the written Qur’an, to include the book of creation, the cosmic Qur’an. Humans are encouraged to read and reflect on both of these “books.” In doing so, the attributes of God are emphasized.

As a demonstration of God’s creative power, the Qur’an cites the creation of humans from a “blood clot” as an example. In other verses, the Qur’an provides further details about the stages of human creation by God: “Indeed, We created man from an essence of clay, then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a secure place, then We made that drop into a blood clot, and We made that form into a lump of flesh, and We made that lump into bones, and We clothed those bones with flesh, and later We made him into other forms. Glory be to God, the best of creators. After that you will surely die, and then, on the Day of Judgment, you will be resurrected.”<sup>117</sup> The creation of humans is an indication of God’s control as well as God’s boundless generosity in the universe. God teaches humans the meanings of their own creation as part of God’s mercy.

The Qur’anic verses not only point to the creation of humans but also repeatedly bring up God’s creation around us among God’s signs so that people can know their Creator and contemplate God’s creation. Many of the chapters of the Qur’an are named after things God created. For example, chapter 2, which is the longest, is titled “The Cow.” Others are named “The Cattle,” “The Thunder,” “The Bee,” “The Light,” “The Spider,” “The Mountain,” “The Star,” “The Moon,” “The Human Being,” “The Elephant,” “The Ants,” “The Iron,” “The Sun,” “The Night,” “The Fig,” “The Morning Brightness,” “The Earthquake,” and so on. In chapter 16, which is named after the bee, the Qur’an points to blessings from God: “It is God who sends water down from the sky and with it revives the earth when it is dead. Surely in this is a sign for those who listen. And surely in the cattle here is a lesson for you: We give you a drink from that which is in their bellies, between refuse and blood, pure milk, sweet to the drinker. From the fruits of date palms and grapes you take sweet juice and wholesome provisions. Surely in this is a sign for people who use their reason.”<sup>118</sup> The Qur’an then illustrates the bee as the sign of God’s power and knowledge: “And your Lord revealed to the bee, saying, ‘Build yourselves

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116 Qur’an 96:1–5.

117 Qur’an 23:12–14.

118 Qur’an 16:65–67.

houses in the mountains and trees and what people construct. Then feed on all kinds of fruit and follow the ways made easy for you by your Lord.’ From their bellies comes a drink of different colors in which there is healing for people. There truly is a sign in this for those who think.”<sup>119</sup>

The Prophet, often referred to as the “living Qur’an,” fully embodied its teachings on contemplation in his daily life. He would reflect deeply on creation in relation to God, using this practice as a means of remembrance and gratitude. In one account, the Prophet said, “*An hour of contemplation (tafakkur) is better than a year of worship.*”<sup>120</sup> It is reported that the Prophet would frequently gaze at the sky and reflect on God’s power over creation. On such occasions, he would say, “*The stars are the guarantors of the sky, and when the stars disappear, the sky will meet the fate that has been promised [i.e., Judgment Day].*”<sup>121</sup> These reflections illustrate the Prophet’s deep connection with the natural world as a way of recognizing and honoring God’s majesty and wisdom.

Muhammad frequently used examples from creation to illustrate God’s attributes. For instance, speaking of God’s mercy, the Prophet said, “When God created the heavens and the earth, He made one hundred units of mercy. Each unit is vast enough to encompass everything between heaven and earth. Of these, He placed one on earth, through which mothers show compassion for their children, and animals and birds show compassion for each other. On the Day of Resurrection, He will perfect and complete His mercy.”<sup>122</sup> To help people understand God’s mercy and compassion, the Prophet reflected on how these qualities are manifested in creation, particularly through mothers.

In another example, the Prophet compared the attributes of a Muslim to those of a bee: “By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the believer is like a bee which eats that which is pure and wholesome and lays that which is pure and wholesome. When it lands on something, it does not break or ruin it.”<sup>123</sup> Bees are key pollinators and play a fundamental role in biodiversity and ecosystems. They are known for their diligence and hard work, yet their

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119 Qur’an 16:68–69.

120 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayat* (Söz Basım, 2012), 574.

121 *Sahih Muslim, kitab fada’il sahaba, bab bayan anna baqa’a al-nabiyy salla allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam ‘amanu liashabihi wa baqa’a ‘ashabihi ‘aman.*

122 *Riyad al-Salihin, kitab al-muqaddamat, bab al-rija’.*

123 *Musnad Ahmad*, 6872; *Hadislerle İslam* (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2014), 1:611.

efforts do not harm the environment. Reflecting on this aspect of bees, the Prophet Muhammad encourages believers to emulate them: to be productive without causing harm. Bees take nectar only from pure and clean flowers. Similarly, believers should consume what is lawful (*halal*). What bees produce—honey—is pure and beneficial. In the same way, a believer’s contributions to society should be positive and beneficial. When bees collect nectar, they land gently and leave the flower unharmed. Likewise, a believer’s productivity and success should not come at the expense of harming the environment or depleting natural resources. The Prophet’s teaching highlights that believers can learn from God’s creation in nature by reflecting on it.

In another instance, the Prophet highlights the connection between the diversity in creation and humanity: “*God created Adam from a portion of soil gathered from all parts of the earth. For this reason, the children of Adam reflect the diversity of the earth in both color and nature. Some are red, some white, some black, and some are a mix of these. Similarly, their characteristics vary: some are soft, others hard; some are good, while others are less so.*”<sup>124</sup> This hadith echoes the Qur’anic verse that celebrates diversity as a sign of God: “*And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colors. Surely in this are signs for those of sound knowledge.*”<sup>125</sup> Both the hadith and the verse emphasize that the richness of diversity among people and creation is a reflection of God’s wisdom and a sign for those who reflect.

Many Muslim scholars incorporated the virtue of contemplation into their spiritual lives and teachings. Imam al-Ghazali, for instance, dedicates an entire book to the subject of contemplation (*kitab al-tafakkur*) in his monumental *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*. In this work, he explores the virtues of contemplation, its spiritual benefits, and practical methods for engaging in it. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that everything in creation is a manifestation of God’s actions and attributes, reflecting God’s wisdom, power, and majesty. He explains that when believers contemplate creation, they come to realize “*not a single particle among the inanimate objects, plants, animals, celestial spheres, and stars in the heavens and on the earth moves on its own. It can only move with the permission of God. In its movement, there are countless wisdoms. All of these are signs testifying to God’s oneness and indicating His majesty and greatness.*”<sup>126</sup>

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124 Sunan Abi Dawud, *kitab al-sunna, bab fi al-qadar*.

125 Qur’an 30:22.

126 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din (al-Quds, 2012)*, 4:670.

Al-Ghazali also discusses contemplation of the creation of humans and the self. He points out that the creation of humans is one of God's greatest signs, as God formed humans from a drop of sperm, and within their creation lies innumerable wonders that reflect God's greatness—wonders so vast that a lifetime would not suffice to describe them all. Al-Ghazali asserts that reflecting on the self ultimately deepens one's knowledge of God, as self-awareness leads to a greater understanding of the Creator.

Reflecting on Qur'anic verses concerning human creation, al-Ghazali highlights the precision and wisdom with which human faculties and organs are designed. Regarding the ears, the nose, and the mouth, he writes:

*Then He fashioned the ears, placing in them a bitter fluid to preserve their ability to hear and to repel harmful creatures. He surrounded the ears with cartilage to gather sounds and deliver them to the eardrum. He created curves within the ears to detect the movement of harmful creatures attempting to enter. He made the ear canal long and winding so that if any creature tries to enter while the person is asleep, the person would wake up. Then He elevated the nose in the middle of the face and made its shape beautiful. He opened the nostrils and endowed them with the ability to smell so that one could distinguish foods by their scent. He created the nostrils to enable breathing, cooling the body's internal heat, and supplying air to the heart. Then He opened the mouth and placed within it the tongue as a means of speech, the interpreter of the heart, and an indicator of the meanings within. He adorned the mouth with teeth, which serve as tools for grinding, breaking, and cutting. He made their roots strong, their tips sharp, and their color white. He arranged them in neat rows, aligning them like pearls strung on a thread, equal and orderly in appearance.<sup>127</sup>*

Al-Ghazali emphasizes that when believers closely observe the grace, generosity, power, and wisdom of God in creation, they will be filled with awe and amazement. He compares the spiritual practice of contemplation to admiring a beautiful piece of art. While observing the art, a person naturally admires the artist's skill and creativity. Similarly, when believers reflect on the wonders of creation, they are reminded of God's infinite power, wisdom, and compassion, deepening their gratitude and connection to the Creator.

Said Nursi also regards contemplation as a key aspect of spirituality and includes it among the four essential elements of spiritual formation. He points out that "believers should carefully read and study the lines of the book of the universe because they are letters to them from God."<sup>128</sup> This phrase from Nursi is a metaphorical expression emphasizing that the universe, with its intricate design and order, is a source of divine wisdom and guidance. By

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127 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 4:673–674.

128 Nursi, *Mesnevi-i Nuriye*, 165.

observing and reflecting on the “lines” or aspects of creation, one can perceive messages or lessons from the divine realm. In this regard, every entity in creation is a form of divine communication. Nursi explains that humans are endowed with the ability for both inward and outward contemplation. Through this practice, believers come to view all beings not as acting independently but as manifestations of God, their Creator. This reflective process leads them from observing creation to recognizing the Creator, safeguarding them from heedlessness and fostering an awareness of God’s presence.<sup>129</sup>

One of Nursi’s major treatises, *The Supreme Sign (Ayat al-Kubra)*, within his *Risale-i Nur* collection, illustrates the power of contemplation through the journey of an imaginary traveler who finds himself in the world. Nursi guides the traveler through and among different aspects of the universe—such as the heavens, atmosphere, earth, seas, rivers, mountains, plains, trees, plants, and animals—answering the traveler’s questions about their Creator. Nursi describes the traveler’s initial impressions and observations: “*Every traveler who enters this world opens their eyes and wonders: Who is the master of this magnificent place? It appears to be a most generous banquet, a masterful exhibition, an impressive camp and training ground, an awe-inspiring realm of recreation, and a profound center of wisdom and instruction. They also ask: Who is the author of this great book and the sovereign of this majestic realm?*”<sup>130</sup>

Through this narrative, Nursi highlights contemplation as a journey from the marvels of creation to the recognition of the Creator’s majesty and wisdom.

For Nursi, a reflective person would be struck with awe and amazement by the beauty and generosity present in the world. This sense of wonder naturally sparks curiosity and prompts questions about the Creator, God. Take, for instance, the air. The reflective traveler observes,

*The air is employed with such wise and generous purposes in countless tasks that it seems as though each particle of that seemingly lifeless and unconscious air listens to, understands, and flawlessly executes the commands of the Sovereign of the Universe. Without neglecting a single duty, it fulfills its responsibilities with the power of that Commander, maintaining perfect order. It provides breath to all living beings on earth, transmits essential elements such as heat, light, electricity, and sound, and serves as a medium for plant pollination. In all these comprehensive functions and services, it is guided by an unseen hand imbued with extraordinary wisdom, knowledge, and a profound love for life.*<sup>131</sup>

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129 Nursi, *Sözler* (Söz Basım, 2012), 645.

130 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Şualar* (Söz Basım, 2012), 147.

131 Nursi, *Şualar*, 149.

Through these observations, the traveler concludes that the marvelous artistry evident in creation cannot be the product of random coincidence. The precise balance, meticulous order, and profound wisdom all unmistakably point to the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator, God.<sup>132</sup>

## Be like a Traveler: Remembering Death and the Hereafter

While contemplating the creation of God, the Prophet also often remembered the finite nature of the world. Reflecting on death and the hereafter was among his common spiritual practices. Human mortality and ultimate destiny are central themes in the Qur'an, which repeatedly reminds humanity that every soul will taste death, and none can escape it.<sup>133</sup> However, life extends beyond this world into the hereafter, where individuals will be held accountable for their deeds. Belief in the hereafter is a fundamental article of faith in Islam.

We have already discussed that the recitation of the Qur'an was an integral part of the Prophet's daily spiritual practice, forming a significant component of both his day and night prayers. Given that nearly one-third of the Qur'an addresses themes of death and the hereafter, its recitation served as a profound reminder of human mortality and the transient nature of this world.<sup>134</sup> The Prophet's daily supplications often referenced death and the hereafter. One of his most frequently recited prayers was *"O God, grant us goodness in this world and goodness in the Hereafter, and protect us from the torment of the Fire."*<sup>135</sup> Another supplication he frequently invoked was *"O God, I seek refuge in You from weakness and laziness, from cowardice and the burdens of old age. I seek Your protection from the torment of the grave and the afflictions of life and death."*<sup>136</sup> These prayers reflect the Prophet's balanced focus on life and death, as well as the interconnection between this world and the hereafter.

The Prophet's mindfulness of death extended to his prayers for specific occasions. For instance, before going to bed, he would say, *"O God, in Your name I die and I live"* and on

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132 Nursi, *Şualar*, 160.

133 Qur'an 62:8; 4:78; 3:185; 29:57; 21:35.

134 Nursi, *Şualar*, 246.

135 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-da'wat, bab qawl al-nabiyy salla allahu 'alayhi wa sallam, "rabbana atina fi dunya hasana."* This prayer remains widely recited by Muslims during their daily prayers.

136 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-da'wat, bab al-ta'awwudh min fitnati al-mahya walmamat.*

waking, he would recite, “Praise be to God, who gave us life after causing us to die, and to Him is the resurrection.”<sup>137</sup> Through these prayers, the Prophet transformed the act of sleeping into an opportunity to express gratitude to God, reflect on death, and remember the ultimate return to God. In a hadith, the Prophet remarked, “Sleep is the brother of death.”<sup>138</sup> This connection between sleep and death is also highlighted in the Qur’an, which states, “He it is Who takes your souls by night, and He knows what you commit by day. Then by day He resurrects you, that a term appointed may be fulfilled. Then unto Him shall be your return, and He shall inform you of that which you used to do.”<sup>139</sup> Here, sleep is likened to death and waking to resurrection. A similar analogy appears in the story of the People of the Cave. The Qur’anic message emphasizes that just as God withholds ordinary consciousness during sleep and restores it daily, God has the power to withhold it permanently through death and restore it through resurrection in the hereafter.<sup>140</sup>

It is reported that when the Prophet rode his camel, he would say, “Glory be to Him who has given us control over this; we could not have done it by ourselves. And indeed, to our Lord do we return.”<sup>141</sup> Through this invocation, the Prophet transformed the simple act of riding into an opportunity to glorify God, acknowledge human dependence on God’s power, and reflect on the ultimate return to God through death. This practice elevated a mundane daily activity into a spiritual act, serving as a reminder of the transient nature of this world and the ultimate reality of the hereafter.

The Prophet’s remembrance of death and the hereafter was not limited to supplications and invocations. He would often attend community funerals and visit those who were sick, both serving as poignant reminders of the finite nature of life in this world. Additionally, the Prophet frequently visited the local cemetery, where he would greet its inhabitants with the following words: “Peace be upon you, O believing and Muslim inhabitants of this abode. If God wills, we

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137 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-da’wat, bab wad’ al-yad al-yumna tahta al-khaddi al-’ayman.*

138 *Khatib al-Tabrizi, kitab ahwal al-qiyama wa bad’ al-khalq.*

139 Qur’an 6:60.

140 Maria Massi Dakake, *Commentary on Surat al-An’am*, in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, eds. Nasr et al. (HarperOne, 2015), 460.

141 This supplication of the Prophet is based on the Qur’an 43:13–14. Also see *Sunan Abi Dawud, kitab al-jihad, bab ma yaqul al-rajul idha safar.*

*shall join you. I ask God for peace and well-being for us and for you.*”<sup>142</sup> Through these actions, the Prophet exemplified a deep awareness of human mortality and the inevitable return to God.

Following the Qur’anic injunctions, the Prophet frequently reminded his followers to reflect on death and the transient nature of this world. In one hadith, he said, *“Remember death often, for it shatters the pleasures of worldly life.”*<sup>143</sup> When asked who the wisest person is, the Prophet replied, *“The wisest person is the one who remembers death the most and prepares themselves for what comes after it.”*<sup>144</sup> In another report, he warned, *“The unfortunate person is the one who forgets the reality that one day they will lie in a grave and face what comes after it.”*<sup>145</sup> The Prophet cautioned his followers about the dangers of becoming overly attached to the finite world at the expense of their relationship with God. He highlighted humanity’s insatiable greed in a poignant metaphor: *“If a human being were to possess two valleys filled with riches, they would still desire a third. The only thing that truly fills the stomach of the human being is soil.”*<sup>146</sup> He acknowledged that his community would also face tests related to wealth and worldly attachments, expressing concern that this would be a major challenge for them after his death.<sup>147</sup>

The Prophet used a vivid analogy to underscore the insignificance of this world compared to the hereafter: *“This world compared to the Hereafter is like one of you dipping their index finger into the ocean and observing how little water clings to it.”*<sup>148</sup> This metaphor emphasizes the fleeting and limited nature of worldly life, represented by the drop of water, in contrast to the vast and eternal reality of the hereafter, symbolized by the ocean. It serves as a powerful reminder to prioritize eternal life over temporary pleasures and to focus on one’s relationship with God rather than worldly attachments. The Qur’an also praises those who maintain this balance: *“They are not distracted—either by buying or selling—from the remembrance of God,*

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142 *Sahih Muslim, kitab al-jana’iz, bab ma yuqal ‘inda dukhul al-qubur wa du’a’i li’ahliha.*

143 *Sunan al-Nasa’i, kitab al-jana’iz, bab kathrati dhikr al-mawt.*

144 *Sunan ibn Majah, kitab al-zuhd, bab dhikr al-mawt wa al-isti’dad lahu.*

145 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab sifat al-qiyama.*

146 *Sahih Muslim, kitab al-zakat, bab law anna liibn adam wadiyayn liabtagha thalithan.*

147 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-zuhd, bab ma ja’a ‘anna fitnata hadhihi al-’umma fi al-mal.*

148 *Sahih al-Muslim, kitab al-jannah wa sifat na’imiha wa ahluha.*

*the performance of prayer, and the giving of alms.*”<sup>149</sup> This verse encourages believers to integrate their worldly responsibilities with their spiritual obligations. It reminds them that no matter how busy their lives may be, their connection to God should remain at the center of their priorities.

The Prophet strongly encouraged his followers to attend the funerals of fellow believers and actively participate in all aspects of the process. While this practice provides support to the community during a time of grief, it is also regarded as a spiritual act. In one report, the Prophet said, “*Whoever washes a deceased person, shrouds them, embalms them, carries them, offers the funeral prayer for them, and does not reveal what they have seen, will be cleansed of their sins, as pure as the day they were born.*”<sup>150</sup> Due to the Prophet’s emphasis on the importance of funerals, attending them is considered a religious duty in Islamic jurisprudence. Funerals are communal events in Muslim communities, serving not only as a means of collective support but also as an opportunity to reflect on death and the transient nature of worldly life.

Remembering death and the hereafter is a prominent theme in Islamic literature on spirituality. Many Muslim theologians have regarded death as a key means of cultivating spiritual character. Nursi, for instance, wrote, “*If you seek advice, death is sufficient. Indeed, one who reflects on death is freed from the love of the world and works earnestly for their Hereafter.*”<sup>151</sup> Nursi saw death not only as a powerful reminder to detach oneself from worldly attachments but also as a means to achieve sincerity in faith. He explained, “*One of the most effective ways to attain and preserve sincerity is through contemplation of death (rabita-i mevt). Just as worldly ambitions undermine sincerity and lead a person toward hypocrisy and attachment to the world, contemplation of death fosters a disdain for hypocrisy and cultivates sincerity. This involves reflecting on death, recognizing the fleeting nature of this world, and thereby freeing oneself from the deceptions of the soul.*”<sup>152</sup> Sincerity (*ikhlas*) in this context refers to performing actions purely for the sake of God without being driven by worldly desires or the approval of others. To Nursi, contemplating death was an impactful way to attain this state of sincerity.

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149 Qur’an 24:37.

150 Sunan ibn Majah, *kitab al-jana’iz, bab ma ja’a fi ghusl al-mayyit.*

151 Nursi, *Mektubat*, 399.

152 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Lem’alar* (Söz Basım, 2012), 272.

In Sufism, contemplation of death is an integral part of the spiritual journey. As part of this practice, disciples often imagine themselves as deceased, envisioning their bodies being washed and placed in the grave.<sup>153</sup> This exercise is intended to transform the self, shifting its focus away from the love of the material world and toward the eternal realities of the hereafter.

Death is also viewed in Islamic tradition as a gateway to eternal life and a means of union with God. The Prophet's final words before his passing were "*O God, pardon me and let me be united with You as the highest companion.*" For him, death was not an end but a transition to be united with *the Highest Companion*, God. For those in the right spiritual state, death is not a source of fear but an anticipated meeting with their Creator.

Al-Ghazali, in his writings on death and the hereafter, draws a connection between people's attitudes toward death and their spiritual state. He identifies three groups in this context: sinners, the repentant, and Gnostics (*'arifs*):

1. Sinners: These individuals are deeply attached to the world and detest the thought of death because it interrupts their pursuit of worldly pleasures and disrupts their comfort. They hate the reality of death, seeing it as an unwelcome intrusion.
2. Repentant: This group remembers death but does not wish for it. They view their remaining time in life as an opportunity to perform more acts of worship and good deeds to attain a higher spiritual rank before meeting their Lord.
3. Gnostics (*'arifs*): These individuals constantly reflect on death, seeing it as the means to meet their Beloved, God. For them, death is not a source of dread but an eagerly awaited moment of reunion with their Highest Friend, God. They are indifferent to when death comes, as they perceive it as the ultimate union with their Creator.<sup>154</sup>

Among those who embraced this last approach to death was Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi. In his poetry, Rumi referred to the day of his death as the moment of union and meeting with God.<sup>155</sup> He called it his "*Wedding Night*" (*Seb-i Arus*), and each anniversary of his passing continues to be commemorated under this name.

Al-Ghazali also mentions a fourth group whose spiritual rank surpasses even the Gnostics. These individuals have no desire for either life or death. They accept God's decree with complete contentment and submission, leaving the matter entirely to God's will. For them,

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153 Nursi, *Lem'alar*, 273.

154 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 4:693.

155 Jalaluddin Rumi, "On the Day of My Death," in *Diwan-e Kabir*, trans. Ibrahim Gamard, Dar al-Masnavi, <https://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/gh-0911.html>.

the essence of devotion lies in completely surrendering to God's plan, trusting in God's wisdom and timing.<sup>156</sup>

## Invocations in the Prophet's Spirituality

No discussion of the Prophet's spirituality would be complete without mentioning his supplications (*du'a's*). Muhammad was constantly mindful of God in every aspect of his life, offering daily invocations for nearly every good deed. He would express words of repentance (*tawba*) and seek refuge in God (*istighfar*) as many as seventy times a day. One of his frequent prayers was "O God, You are my Lord. There is none to be worshiped besides You. You have created me, and I am Your servant. I strive to abide by Your covenant and pledge as best I can. I seek refuge in You from the evil that I committed. I fully acknowledge Your favor upon me, and I fully confess my sin. So [please] forgive me, for there is none to forgive sins except You."<sup>157</sup>

Another common supplication of the Prophet was:

O God, forgive my mistakes, my ignorance, my extravagance in my affairs, and that which You are better aware of than I. O God, forgive the sins which I have done in seriousness and in jest, inadvertently and advertently; for I am indeed guilty of all that. O Allah, forgive that which I have committed in the past and that which I will commit in the future, that which I have done in secrecy and that which I have done openly and that which You are better aware of than I. You are the One Who brings matters forth and You are the One Who delays them, and You have Absolute Power over all things.<sup>158</sup>

Muhammad also frequently prayed, "O God, I ask You for Your love, the love of those who love You, and the deeds that will cause me to attain Your love. O Allah, make Your love more beloved to me than my own self, my family and cold [thirst-quenching] water."<sup>159</sup>

Muhammad offered supplications to God in all aspects of his daily life: when he ate and drank, when he went to sleep and woke up, when he entered and left his house, and when he got dressed. After eating, he would pray, "Praise be to God who feeds us, gives us drink, and has

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<sup>156</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 4:693.

<sup>157</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, kitab al-da'wat, bab ma yaqul idha asbaha.

<sup>158</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, kitab al-da'wat, bab qawl al-nabiyy, salla 'allahu alayhi wa sallam, "Allahummaghfir li ma qaddamtu wa ma akhkhartu."

<sup>159</sup> *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, kitab al-da'wat, 'an rasul salla allahu 'alayhi wa sallam.

made us among those who submit to Him.”<sup>160</sup> Before going to bed, his prayer was “In Your Name, my Lord, I lay myself down; and in Your Name, I rise. If You take my soul, have mercy on it, and if You return it to me, protect it as You protect Your righteous servants.”<sup>161</sup> In times of distress, he would often pray, “O Ever Living and Self-Sustaining Sustainer, I seek relief in Your mercy.”<sup>162</sup>

## Moderation in Spirituality

While remembering God and being mindful of Him were central to the Prophet’s spirituality, he also practiced moderation in his spiritual practices. He encouraged his companions to be balanced in their worship and prayer, cautioning them against neglecting their familial responsibilities. Muhammad discouraged them from devoting all their time to worship and prayer, advising them to remain attentive to the needs of their family and fellow humans.

For instance, when the Prophet learned that Abdullah ibn Amr, one of his companions, had decided to spend his nights in prayer and his days in fasting, Muhammad advised him against such extreme devotion. He reminded Abdullah that his body, wife, and children also had rights over him, suggesting that excessive worship could negatively affect their well-being.<sup>163</sup> On another occasion, a group of men visited the Prophet’s house, eager to learn more about spiritual practices. They felt their own efforts were insufficient and wanted to exceed even the Prophet’s devotion. One of them declared, “I will pray throughout the night for the rest of my life.” Another said, “I will fast every day of the year without breaking it.” The third vowed, “I will avoid women and never marry.” The Prophet responded, “I am more mindful of God than any of you. I fast and break my fast, I pray and I sleep, and I marry women.”<sup>164</sup> He advised them to follow his example of balanced devotion.

Due to the Prophet’s example, neither complete asceticism nor celibacy has ever been required for spiritual progress in Islam. In fact, many Muslim sages renowned for their piety and

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160 *Sunan Abu Dawud, kitab al-ad'ama, bab ma yaqul al-rajul 'idha da'ima.*

161 *Sahih Muslim, kitab al-dhikr wa al-du'a' wa al-tawba al-istighfar, bab yaqul 'inda al-nawm wa 'akhdh al-madja'.*

162 *Jami' al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-da'wat 'an rasul salla allahu 'alayhi wa sallam.*

163 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-sawm, bab haqq al-ahl fi al-sawm.*

164 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-nikaah, bab al-targhib fi al-nikah.*

devotion were married and held professions, fully participating in everyday life. Ideal spirituality does not require a complete separation from the world. The Prophet not only advocated for moderation in spiritual practices but also stressed the importance of engaging in practices that align with human nature and can be maintained consistently. He advised, “Take up good deeds only as much as you are able, for the best deeds are those done regularly, even if they are few.”<sup>165</sup> This teaching is reflected in several Qur’anic verses: “God wants ease for you, not hardship” and “God does not burden any soul with more than it can bear.”<sup>166</sup>

## Muhammad’s Simplicity and Humility

As emphasized in the Introduction, good character is regarded as an integral aspect of a believer’s piety. The Prophet’s spirituality was closely intertwined with his moral character, which was evident in his exemplary personality. Muhammad lived a life of humility, residing in a simple clay house until his death. He would sleep on a straw mat, which would leave marks on his body. On one occasion, his close companion Umar saw the marks on his body and became emotional, shedding tears as he said, “O Messenger of God, the emperors of Byzantium and Persia enjoy luxurious lives, yet you, the Messenger of God, live like this.” Umar implied that the Prophet deserved a more comfortable life. The Prophet replied, “Wouldn’t you prefer that this world be theirs and the hereafter ours?”<sup>167</sup>

Muhammad ate very little, often having just dates and water for his meals. At home, he took part in household chores, including cleaning and sewing his own clothes. When a companion asked the Prophet’s wife Aisha about his activities at home, she responded, “He did what any of you would do in your home. He mended sandals, patched garments, and sewed.”<sup>168</sup> He hardly had two pairs of clothes, which he would wash himself.

Despite being the Messenger of God and the leader of his community, Muhammad remained profoundly humble in all aspects of his life. As both the Prophet and the leader of his society, he was accessible to everyone, including children, women, the elderly, and people with

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165 *Sunan Ibn Majah, kitab al-zuhd, bab al-mudawama 'ala al-'amal.*

166 Qur’an 2:186.

167 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-tafsir, bab tabtaghi mardata azwajik.*

168 *Al-Adab al-Mufrad, kitab al-tasarruf al-'am, bab ma ya'mal al-rajul fi baytihi.*

disabilities. Anas ibn Malik, a companion who served the Prophet for many years, narrated, “Even a little girl could take the Prophet’s hand and lead him wherever she wished.”<sup>169</sup> The Prophet was so accessible to his community that, at times, people unintentionally violated the proper etiquette in their interactions with him. Some would enter his home without permission and linger longer than was appropriate, while others would address him without the proper respect. In response, the Qur’an provided guidance to the believers on maintaining appropriate manners when interacting with the Prophet. For example, it states, “O believers! Do not enter the Prophet’s dwellings for a meal unless you are invited. Do not come too early and wait for the meal to be prepared. But if you are invited, then enter at the proper time. Once you have eaten, disperse and do not stay for casual conversation. Such behavior offends the Prophet, though he is too shy to ask you to leave. But God is not shy of the truth.”<sup>170</sup> Another verse advises believers on how to conduct themselves in the Prophet’s presence: “O believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly to him as you do to one another, lest your deeds become void while you are unaware.”<sup>171</sup> These verses emphasize the importance of showing respect and maintaining proper decorum in the Prophet’s presence, highlighting the need for reverence and etiquette in interactions with him.

Muhammad consistently cared for the most vulnerable in the community and accepted invitations from people regardless of their status, whether they were free or enslaved. On one occasion, the Prophet was walking with a nobleman who was considering becoming Muslim but was still uncertain. As they walked to the Prophet’s house, an elderly woman stopped Muhammad, and he took the time to attentively listen to her and offer his help. When they arrived at the Prophet’s home, the nobleman observed the simplicity of the surroundings. There was only a cushion, and the Prophet invited his guest to sit on the floor. The man’s admiration for Muhammad’s compassion and humility grew, and he ultimately embraced Islam.<sup>172</sup>

The Prophet would visit sick people in his community and attend funerals. When someone addressed him with grand titles like “our master” or “the best of us,” he would respond, “O people, be mindful of God. Let not Satan deceive you. I am Muhammad, the son of Abdullah,

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169 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-adab, bab al-kibr.*

170 Qur’an 33:53.

171 Qur’an 49:2.

172 This was the story of Adiy ibn Hatim. See Suruç, *Kainatın Efendisi*, 145–146.

the servant and messenger of God. I do not want to be placed in any position higher than what God has assigned to me.”<sup>173</sup> He was also adamant about ensuring that he was not regarded as a divine figure. He instructed his companions, “Do not exaggerate in praising me as Christians do with Jesus, the son of Mary. I am merely the servant of God. Therefore, call me the servant of God and His messenger.”<sup>174</sup> On one occasion, while leading a daily prayer, he inadvertently performed five cycles instead of the usual four. When his followers asked if he had added to the prayer, he replied, “I am a human being like you. Like you, I remember and forget.”<sup>175</sup> This was a clear acknowledgment from the Prophet that making mistakes, even during rituals, is part of human nature, and he was no exception.

Due to his simplicity and humility, it was often difficult for strangers to distinguish Muhammad from his companions in a gathering. On one occasion, a man came to visit the Prophet while he was sitting among his companions in the mosque in Medina. The visitor couldn't recognize the Prophet and asked, “Who among you is Muhammad?”<sup>176</sup> Muhammad did not want to be treated like a king. On another occasion, a man who came to see the Messenger of God was so nervous in his presence that he began to shiver. The Prophet comforted him, saying, “Calm down! I am not a king. I am just the son of a woman from the tribe of Quraish who used to eat dried meat.”<sup>177</sup> Muhammad also discouraged his companions from showing him excessive reverence. In one case, while he was leaning on his staff and speaking to them, they stood up out of respect. The Prophet then said, “Do not stand up for people as foreigners do to venerate one another.”<sup>178</sup> Another striking example of the Prophet's humility was reported by his companion Abdullah ibn Masud. During the first major battle with the Meccans, the Battle of Badr, the Muslim community had limited resources, including transportation. Three men would share a single camel, taking turns to ride while the others walked. On the day of the battle, the Prophet was sharing a camel with two companions. When it was their turn to ride and his turn to walk, they offered to let him continue riding, saying, “We will walk and let you ride.” The Prophet

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173 *Musnad Ahmad*, 12579.

174 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, kitab 'ahadith al-anbiya', bab khalq adam salawat allahi wa dhurriyyatihi.

175 *Sahih Muslim*, kitab al-masajid, bab al-sahw fi salat wa al-sujud lahu.

176 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, kitab al-'ilm, bab ma ja'a fi al-'ilm.

177 *Sunan Ibn Majah*, kitab al-ad'amah, bab al-qadid.

178 *Sunan Abi Dawud*, kitab al-adab, bab fi qiyam al-rajul lirrajul.

responded, “You are not stronger than me, and I am not less in need of reward than you.”<sup>179</sup>

Here, the Messenger of God emphasized that he was fully capable of walking, and though he was the Prophet, he still sought spiritual rewards from God for his good deeds.

The Prophet lived a life much like any other member of his community. He experienced moments of joy and sadness, and there were times when he felt upset or angry. He was engaged in the everyday matters of life, had friends, was married, and had children and grandchildren. Like many people, he sometimes not only had conflicts with his spouses but also found joy and peace with them.<sup>180</sup> Still, despite his simplicity and humility, no leader was obeyed the way the followers of the Prophet obeyed him.

## Muhammad’s Mercy and Compassion

The Qur’an repeatedly refers to God as the Most Compassionate (*al-Rahman*) and the Most Merciful (*al-Rahim*). God says in the Qur’an, “My mercy encompasses my wrath.”<sup>181</sup> God’s mercy infuses the world,<sup>182</sup> and Muhammad is a central manifestation of this mercy. Muhammad exemplified the virtues of mercy and compassion in the highest form, with the Qur’an referencing him as a “mercy to the world.”<sup>183</sup> His firm commitment to his mission stemmed from his deep compassion for people. At a time when humanity was shrouded in darkness, his teachings became a beacon of light, bringing hope and peace to many.

Muhammad emphasized God’s compassion and forgiveness toward God’s servants. He viewed the compassion in creation as the manifestation of God’s mercy. In one narrative, the Prophet observed a woman who had been separated from her child. She was embracing and feeding every child she encountered on the street. The Prophet asked his companions, “Would this woman ever throw her child into the fire?” They replied that she would never do so. The Prophet then said, “Understand that God’s mercy and compassion for His servants are far greater than this woman’s compassion for her child.”<sup>184</sup>

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179 *Musnad Ahmad*, 3901.

180 *Hadislerle İslam*, 6:279.

181 Qur’an 7:156.

182 Qur’an 30:50.

183 Qur’an 21:107.

184 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, kitab al-’adab, bab rahmah al-walad wa taqbilihi wa mu’anaqatihi.

In several hadiths, the Prophet encouraged his followers to show compassion toward all creation, saying, “If you are merciful, God will be merciful to you. Show mercy to the creatures on earth, and those in heaven will show mercy to you.”<sup>185</sup> On one occasion, a Bedouin saw the Prophet kissing his grandsons and remarked, “We don’t kiss or hug our children.” The Prophet responded, “What can I do if God has removed mercy from your heart?”<sup>186</sup> Even during prayers, Muhammad urged his followers to consider the most vulnerable people among them. He advised those leading the five daily prayers to keep them brief, noting that in the congregation, there might be weak, elderly, and sick people. However, when believers pray on their own, they are free to extend their prayers as long as they wish.<sup>187</sup> If the Prophet heard a child crying while leading the prayer, he would shorten it out of consideration.

The Prophet’s mercy extended not only to humans but also to all living creatures, including animals. In a hadith, he stated, “Whoever shows mercy even to a sparrow, God will be merciful to him on the Day of Judgment.” Another hadith reads, “A good deed done to an animal is like a good deed done to a human being, and an act of cruelty to an animal is as bad as cruelty to a human being.” When one of the Prophet’s companions asked if there would be any reward for caring for animals, Muhammad replied, “There is a reward for serving any living being.”<sup>188</sup> On one occasion, the Prophet observed a woman who, despite having committed many sins, showed mercy to a thirsty dog by giving it water. He said that this act of kindness would lead her to paradise. In another instance, he warned that someone who killed a cat would face punishment in hell.

## Muhammad’s Patience and Forgiveness

Muhammad not only exemplified mercy and compassion but also embodied the virtue of patience throughout his life. Raised as an orphan, he knew the struggles of poverty and endured the loss of most of his children. After receiving revelation, he faced isolation, insults, attacks, and persecution. He was even expelled from his homeland. Despite these hardships, he

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185 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-birr wa al-salah, bab ma ja’a fi rahma al-muslimin.*

186 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-adab, bab rahmah al-walad wa taqbilihi wa mu’anaqatihi.*

187 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-adhan, bab idha salla linafsihi fayudawwil ma shaa.*

188 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-masaqah, bab fadl saqi al-ma’.*

responded with firm patience. He also encouraged his companions to practice patience, living out the Qur’anic teaching to “endure patiently whatever befalls you.”<sup>189</sup>

Muhammad’s virtue of patience was paired with forgiveness. He was known as the most forgiving among his followers. The Qur’an encourages those who have been wronged to forgive, saying, “But if you overlook their offenses, forgive them, and pardon them, then truly God is Forgiving, Merciful.”<sup>190</sup> The Qur’an also teaches that “the recompense for an evil act is an evil like it. But whoever forgives and seeks reconciliation, his reward is with God. Indeed, He does not love the wrongdoers.”<sup>191</sup> Muhammad lived by this principle throughout his life. His wife Aisha reported that Muhammad never responded to evil with evil; he was forgiving and did not dwell on people’s shortcomings.<sup>192</sup> In another hadith, she mentioned that the Prophet never punished anyone over personal grievances.<sup>193</sup> Even when he triumphed over his opponents, he forgave those who had persecuted him and forced him from his homeland, praying to God to guide his enemies rather than seeking their destruction.

## Muhammad’s Courage

For Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad is considered the ultimate embodiment of courage. Courage is a fundamental virtue emphasized across various religious traditions and philosophies. It is often defined as mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. Aristotle described courage as the marker of moral excellence, a balance between recklessness and cowardice. In Islam, courage is seen as a reflection of integrity and a commitment to standing for justice. The Qur’an highlights courage as a key characteristic of believers. For example, one verse states, “Those whose faith only increased when people said, ‘Fear your enemy: they have gathered a great army against you,’ and who replied, ‘God is sufficient for us: He is the best protector.’”<sup>194</sup> This verse implies that the believers were not intimidated by their enemy’s great army due to their courage and unwavering faith in God.

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189 Qur’an 31:17.

190 Qur’an 64:14.

191 Qur’an 42:40.

192 *Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, kitab al-birr wa al-silah, bab ma ja’a fi khuluqi nabiyi salla allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam.*

193 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-hudud, bab kam al-ta’zir wa al-’adab.*

194 Qur’an 3: 173.

Despite facing marginalization, persecution, attacks, and intimidation, the Prophet remained steadfast in his mission. Rather than staying in the safety of the rear, he fought alongside his companions, risking his life and sustaining injuries in battle. His cousin and companion Ali reported, “When the danger intensified and the battle raged, we would seek protection by the Messenger of God. None of us would be closer to the enemy than him.”<sup>195</sup>

One notable instance of the Prophet’s courage occurred during his journey to Mecca when he and Abu Bakr were hiding from their pursuers in a cave. As the enemy approached the cave entrance, Abu Bakr became anxious, fearing they would be discovered. The Prophet reassured him, saying, “Do not worry, God is with us.” The Qur’an mentions this occasion: “Even if you do not help the Prophet, God helped him when the disbelievers drove him out: when the two of them were in the cave, he [Muhammad] said to his companion, ‘Do not worry, indeed God is with us,’ and then God sent down His tranquility upon him, supported him with forces invisible to you, and thwarted the disbelievers’ plans. God’s plan is higher: God is Mighty and Wise.”<sup>196</sup>

Another example of his courage was when he was resting under a tree and awoke to find one of his fierce enemies standing over him with a drawn sword. The enemy asked, “Who will save you from me now?” The Prophet calmly responded, “God.” His firm faith and composure intimidated the enemy, causing him to drop his sword. The Prophet then took the sword, asked him the same question, and when the man pleaded for forgiveness, the Prophet graciously forgave him and let him go.<sup>197</sup>

## Muhammad, the Model of Justice and Equality

Embodying the Qur’anic teaching that piety is the standard for “being superior in the eyes of God,”<sup>198</sup> Muhammad discouraged his followers from discriminating against anyone based on race, rank, or gender. In pre-Islamic Arabian society, people were often judged by their physical strength, and women were considered weaker and therefore inferior to men. Forced marriages were common, polygamy was widespread, female infanticide was prevalent, and women had no

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<sup>195</sup> *Musnad Ahmad*, 1347.

<sup>196</sup> Qur’an 9:40.

<sup>197</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, kitab al-jihad, bab man ‘allaqa sayfahu bilshajari fi al-safar ‘inda al-qa’ilah.

<sup>198</sup> Qur’an 49:13.

rights to own property or receive an education. Muhammad transformed society, elevating the status of women and challenging these norms. Despite slavery being deeply entrenched during his time, Muhammad urged his followers to “dress their slaves in the same clothing they wear and feed them the same food they eat.”<sup>199</sup> He also emphasized that slaves should be treated as equals before God, standing shoulder to shoulder in the same prayer line. When a prominent companion discriminated against a Black Ethiopian follower, Muhammad rebuked him for exhibiting the attitudes of *jahiliyya*, or the ignorance of the pre-Islamic period.<sup>200</sup>

In a short period, Muhammad succeeded in reforming Arabian society in many ways. Before his time, Arabs strictly adhered to tribal norms. Muhammad introduced laws and justice that applied to everyone. He emphasized that even if an injustice went unnoticed by others, accountability still exists, as God always knows what is in a person’s heart.<sup>201</sup>

## Conclusion

The Prophet was a living embodiment of the Qur’an, with a spiritual life deeply rooted in its teachings. He modeled a life of piety that is pleasing to God. Key aspects of his spirituality included the five daily prayers, night prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, contemplating God’s creation, reciting the Qur’an, offering supplications, remembering death and the afterlife, and reflecting on the transient nature of the world. While Muhammad had his personal religious practices, his spiritual life was communal. His spirituality was closely linked to his noble personality, characterized by simplicity, humility, generosity, forgiveness, justice, and patience. Muhammad’s spiritual example also helped form a devout community of companions, which will be the focus of our next chapter.

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199 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-iman, bab al-ma’asi min ’amr al-jahiliyya.*

200 *Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-iman, bab al-ma’asi min ’amr al-jahiliyya.*

201 Qur’an 3:29.