33694 - Status of Prayer in Islam

the question

I hope that you can explain to us the status of prayer in Islam.

Summary of answer

The status of prayer in Islam is indicated by the following: 1- Prayer is the pillar of the religion, which cannot stand without it; 2- Prayer is second in status to the Shahadatayn; 3- Prayer occupies a special position because of the way in which it was enjoined; 4- Allah erases sins by means of prayer; 5- Prayer is the last part of religion to be lost, and if it is lost, the whole religion is lost; and 6- Prayer is the first thing for which a person will be brought to account on the Day of Resurrection.

Detailed answer

Prayer occupies a great status in Islam that is not shared by any other act of worship. This is indicated by the following:

- Prayer is the pillar of the religion , which cannot stand without it.

According to a Hadith narrated by Mu'adh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Shall I not tell you of the head of the whole matter and its pillar and top?" I [Mu'adh] said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is prayer and its top is Jihad." (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, 2616; classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Sahih At-Tirmidhi, 2110)

- Prayer is second in status to the Shahadatayn (the Two Testimonies of Faith) as further proof of the soundness of a person's belief and as visible evidence of the beliefs that reside in the heart.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Islam is built on five [pillars]: the testimony that there is none worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is

His slave and Messenger, establishing prayer, paying Zakah, performing pilgrimage to the House, and fasting Ramadan." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 8; Muslim, 16)

Establishing prayer means performing prayer in full with all its words and actions, at the appointed times, as it says in the Quran (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, As-Salah (the prayer) is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours" [An-Nisa' 4:103] i.e., at defined times.

- Prayer occupies a special position among other acts of worship because of the way in which it was enjoined.

It was not brought down to earth by an angel, rather Allah wanted to bless His Messenger Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) by taking him up to heaven and addressing him directly concerning the obligation of prayer. This is something that is unique to prayer among all the rituals of Islam.

Prayer was enjoined on the night of the Mi`raj [Prophet's ascent to heaven], approximately three years before the Hijrah.

Fifty prayers (per day) were enjoined at first, then the number was reduced to five, but the reward of fifty remains. This is indicative of Allah's love of prayer and its great status.

- Allah erases sins by means of prayer.

Al-Bukhari (528) and Muslim (667) narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said – and in the Hadith of Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) it is narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say – "What do you think if there was a river by the door of any one of you and he bathed in it five times a day, would there be any trace of dirt left on him?" They said, "No trace of dirt would be left on him." He said, "That is like the five daily prayers, by means of which Allah erases sin."

- Prayer is the last part of religion to be lost, and if it is lost the whole religion is lost.

It was narrated that Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Between a man and Shirk [associating others with Allah] and Kufr [disbelief] there stands his giving up prayer.” (Narrated by Muslim, 82)

Hence the Muslim should be keen to perform the prayers on time, and not be lazy or take the matter lightly. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So woe unto those performers of Salah (prayers) (hypocrites), Those who delay their Salah (prayer from their stated fixed times)” [Al-Ma’un 107:4-5]

And Allah warns those who cause their prayers to be lost by saying (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then, there has succeeded them a posterity who have given up As-Salah (the prayers) [i.e. made their Salah (prayers) to be lost, either by not offering them or by not offering them perfectly or by not offering them in their proper fixed times] and have followed lusts. So they will be thrown in Hell” [Maryam 19:59]

- Prayer is the first thing for which a person will be brought to account on the Day of Resurrection.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: “The first deed for which a person will be brought to account on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayer. If it is good then he will have prospered and succeeded, but if it is bad then he will be doomed and have lost. If anything is lacking from his obligatory prayers, the Lord will say, ‘Look and see whether My slave did any voluntary prayers, and make up the shortfall in his obligatory prayers from that.’ Then all his deeds will be dealt with likewise.” (Narrated by An-Nasa’i, 465; At-Tirmidhi, 413. Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Sahih Al-Jami`, 2573)

We ask Allah to help us to remember Him, give thanks to Him and to worship Him properly.

References:

1. Al-Salah by Dr. At-Tayyar, p. 16;

2. Tawdih Al-Ahkam by Al-Bassam, 1/371;

3. Tarikh Mashru’iyyat As-Salah by Al-Balushi, p. 31.