

12. The Virtues of Praying and Charity

Ibn al-Jawzī and Abū Bakr al-Wāsītī stated that many scholars of Islam believe that it is not only the reward for prayers in al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (al-Aqṣā Sanctuary) that are multiplied as compared to prayers elsewhere, but the reward for all good deeds are multiplied. Similarly, the punishments for bad deeds in this Holy area are also believed to be multiplied.

The rationale behind increasing the virtues is clearly to imbibe within the believers a sense of love, affection and a need to incline towards these Holy sites. The increased merits in praying at al-Aqṣā Sanctuary are a clear signal for the believers to frequent al-Aqṣā Sanctuary and ensure its well-being.

A. Virtues of praying

Abū Dardā' رضي الله عنه relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "A prayer in Makkah is worth 100,000 times, a prayer in my Mosque (Madinah) is worth 1,000 times, and a prayer in al-Aqṣā Sanctuary is worth 500 times, more than anywhere else".

[Al-Ṭabarānī, al-Bayhaqī and al-Suyūṭī]

'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه relates, I asked the Prophet ﷺ, "Apostle of Allah, tell us the legal injunction about (visiting) Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)." The Apostle of Allah ﷺ said, "Go and pray there. If you cannot visit it and pray there, then send some oil to be used in the lamps".

[Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī]

Anas ibn Mālik ؓ relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “The prayer of a person in his house is a single prayer; his prayer in the Masjid of his tribe has the reward of twenty-five prayers; his prayer in the Masjid in which the Friday prayer is observed has the reward of five hundred; his prayer in the Masjid al-Aqṣā (i.e. al-Aqṣā Sanctuary) has a reward of five thousand prayers; his prayer in my Masjid (the Prophet’s Masjid in Madinah) has a reward of fifty thousand prayers; and the prayer in the Sacred Masjid (Ka’bah) at Makkah has a reward of one hundred thousand prayers”.

[Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah]

Abū Dharr ؓ reported that he asked the Prophet ﷺ, “O Prophet of Allah, which Masjid was built first on earth?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “The Sacred Masjid of Makkah”. Abū Dharr again asked, “Which was next?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “The Masjid al-Aqṣā”. “How long was the period between them?” Abū Dharr asked. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Forty years”. Apart from these, offer your prayers anywhere when it is time to pray, although excellence is in praying in these Masajids”.

[Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī]

B. Virtues of performing I’tikāf

If a person makes a vow to perform i’tikāf (seclusion for worship) in the Masjid al-Ḥaram (in Makkah), the Prophet’s Masjid (in Madinah), or in the Masjid al-Aqṣā (in Jerusalem), they should fulfil their vow, as the Prophet ﷺ said: “One should not undertake journeys except to three mosques: the Masjid al-Ḥaram, the Masjid al-Aqṣā, or this Masjid (the Prophet’s Masjid)”.

If someone vows to perform i’tikāf in another Masjid, it is not obligatory on him to fulfil it in that Masjid and he may perform that i’tikāf in any Masjid, for Allah ﷻ did not specify any particular place for His worship, and there is no superiority of one Masjid over another (with the exception of the three Masajids mentioned earlier). It has been confirmed that the Prophet ﷺ said: “A prayer in my Masjid is superior to one thousand prayers in any other Masjid but the Masjid al-Ḥaram (in Makkah), and a prayer in that Masjid is superior to a prayer in my Masjid by one hundred prayers”.

Thus, if someone makes a vow to perform i'tikāf in the Prophet's Masjid, he may fulfil it in the Masjid al-Ḥaram since that one is superior to the Prophet's Masjid.

[Fiqh al-Sunnah]

C. Virtues of charity

This ḥadīth narrated by, Maymūnah bint Sa'd ؓ is exceptional, as it is the only ḥadīth that draws a parallel between charity and performing ṣalāh. This should encourage the believers to donate towards al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (al-Aqṣā Sanctuary). No other similar recommendation has been made for any of the other masajid. The Muslims are directly requested to oversee the welfare of the Masjid al-Aqṣā and make this a duty of each and everyone. The Prophet's pronouncement that assisting Masjid al-Aqṣā comes next to performing ṣalāh there, should not be underestimated and is a clear indication for the believers to engage in the welfare of the al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (al-Aqṣā Sanctuary).

Maymūnah bint Sa'd ؓ relates that she asked the Prophet ﷺ, "O Prophet ﷺ! Inform us about Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)". He said, "Visit it for prayer". She further asked, "If one of us cannot visit it, what should we do?" He said, "If you cannot go for prayer then send some oil to be used in its lamps; whosoever gives oil for its lamps, will be as if he has prayed in it".

[Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah, Sunan Abū Dāwūd and al-Ṭabarānī]

(Reported also by Abū Ya'lā; all of its narrators were classified as reliable.)

This ḥadīth is a clear indication of the high regard the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ wished to emphasise upon the Muslims regarding Masjid al-Aqṣā.