

Fast 15: Prayer — The Call to prayer

“O you who believe, when the call is sounded for prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business. That is better for you, if you know.” (62:9)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ
يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا
الْبَيْعَ ذِكْرٌ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

- The word *adhān* means an ‘announcement’, or an announcement of prayer and of its time — the call to prayer. In Makkah before the *Hijrah*, Muslims could not say their prayers with freedom because of the violent opposition of the Quraish. Regarding the origin of the *adhān*, Bukhari tells us that when Muslims came to Madinah, they used, at first, to have a time appointed for prayer, at which they all gathered together. This arrangement was unsatisfactory, so a consultation of the Muslim community was held by the Holy Prophet. Suggestions were made for ringing a bell as the Christians did, blowing a horn as the Jews did, or lighting a fire at the time of prayer. Hazrat Umar proposed that a man should be appointed who should call out for prayer. Then the Holy Prophet ordered Bilal to call out for prayers in the words of *adhān* as we now have it.
- As to the events leading up to how the *Adhān* came to be instituted, what we can gather from the different reports about them is that several days before this consultation was held, Hazrat Umar had seen in a dream a man who was reciting the words of the *Adhān*. But at the consultation he did not relate the dream to the Holy Prophet out of humility and respect for his status as Prophet, but he merely suggested that a man should be appointed to call for prayer. Then after the consultation, a companion of the Holy Prophet, Abdullah ibn Zaid saw a dream similar to that of Hazrat Umar, which he told to the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet confirmed that the dream was true. The Holy Prophet himself had already received the same words in revelation. So he ordered Bilal to give the call to prayer. When Umar heard the call, he came to the Holy Prophet and said that he had seen the same dream. The Holy Prophet said to him: “Revelation from Allāh has preceded this (dream) of yours”, meaning that the revelation had come to the Holy Prophet before Hazrat Umar related his dream to him.
- The *adhān* is not only an announcement of the time of prayer, but also of the great principles of Islam and of the significance underlying them. It is an announcement, made five times daily, of the unity of God and of the prophethood of Muhammad, which are the two fundamental principles of Islam. But it goes further and carries also the real significance of the Unity of God which is contained in the words *Allāhu Akbar*

or Allah is the Greatest, so that man must bow only before Him, and before none else. And the real message of religion — to develop within man the attributes of God which have been placed in his nature — is declared with equal force by announcing: “Come to prayer”, and immediately thereafter, “Come to success”. Coming to prayer is the attainment of success in life because it is only through bringing out God’s attributes in man that complete self-development (*falāh*) is attained. The meaningless ringing of a bell or blowing of a trumpet is replaced by an announcement of the principles of Islam and a declaration that anyone may attain to success in life through prayer.

- When the *adhān* is being called out, it is allowed to converse with someone in case of need. The Holy Prophet said: “When you hear the *adhān*, say what the caller to prayer (*mu’adhdhin*) says.” The Holy Prophet himself used to repeat each sentence of the *adhān* after it was called out, but when the words “Come to prayer” were called out he used to say: *Lā ḥaul wa lā quwwata illā billāh*, meaning: “There is no power or strength except with Allah”. This indicates that one’s act of coming to prayer is only possible by the help of Allah.
- There is a prayer to be recited after the *adhān* has ended (Bukhari, hadith 614):

“O Allah, the Lord of this perfect call and everlasting prayer! grant to Muhammad nearness and excellence and raise him to the position of glory which You have promised him.”

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ وَالصَّلَاةِ
الْقَائِمَةِ آتِ مُحَمَّدًا الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ
وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا الَّذِي وَعَدْتَهُ

- The Holy Prophet said: “When you are in the mosque and a call for prayers is sounded, let not one of you go out until he has said his prayers” (*Musnad Ahmad*).
- In the *adhān* for the morning prayer, after saying “come to success, come to success”, the words “prayer is better than sleep, prayer is better than sleep” are added. It is reported in Hadith that once Bilal came to the Holy Prophet to call for *Fajr* prayer and was told that the Holy Prophet was asleep. So Bilal uttered these words. The Holy Prophet approved of it and this was added to the *adhān* for the morning prayers.
- According to Islam, in whichever locality *adhān* is heard there are Muslims present. When Muslims were fighting their enemies in self-defence, and they had to undertake an attack against a town, if they heard the sound of *adhān* coming from it they would desist from the attack, as friendly people were present there (Bukhari, hadith 610). This is why Ahmadis were forbidden by law in Pakistan to call out the *adhān*, because it is a characteristic which identifies Muslims, and Ahmadis are prohibited from doing anything which identifies them as Muslims!