

'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar narrated that



God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: Congregational prayer is twenty-seven degrees better than that of a person praying alone.⁽¹⁾

From the Qur'an

﴿In houses which God has sanctioned to be raised so that His name be remembered in them, there are [such as] extol His limitless glory, morning and evening (36) – people whom neither commerce nor profit can divert from the remembrance of God, and from attending regularly to prayer, and from paying their zakat; who are filled with fear of the day when all hearts and eyes will be convulsed; (37) who [only hope] that God may reward them in accordance with the best that they ever did, and lavish His grace upon them. God gives to whom He wills beyond all reckoning.﴾ (24: 36-38)

The Narrator

Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ibn Nufayl belonged to the 'Adiy branch of the Quraysh. He embraced Islam when he was young. He migrated to Madinah with his father when he was still a child below the age of puberty. At the time of the Battle of Uḥud, he was too young to fight. His first military effort was the Encounter of the Moat, i.e. al-Khandaq. He also participated in the pledge under the tree. Zaynab bint Maz'ūn, who was 'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn's sister, was his mother and the mother of his sister, Ḥafṣah the Mother of Believers. He narrated much useful information from the Prophet, and also from his father 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abu Bakr, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Bilāl, Ṣuhayb and other companions of the Prophet. He issued many fatwas and narrated a large number of hadiths. He died in Year 74 AH 694 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) states in this hadith that offering an obligatory prayer with a congregation is twenty-seven times better than offering it alone.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 645; Muslim, 650.



Message and Meaning

1

The hadith speaks about the greater merit of offering prayer in congregation and the much greater reward it earns the worshipper, as it states that it is twenty-seven degrees better.

2

There are other hadiths that mention different numbers, as the following hadith: 'A person's prayer with the congregation is twenty-five times better than his prayer at home or at his place of work. That is, when a person performs the ablution well and goes to the mosque, having no motive other than the prayer, then for every step he takes, God gives him a degree higher and removes a sin from him, until he enters the mosque. When he prays the angels pray for him, as long as he remains in the position where he prayed. They say: 'Our Lord, bestow peace on him. Our Lord, bestow mercy on him'. Anyone of you is actually in prayer as long as you await the [congregational] prayer'.⁽¹⁾

3

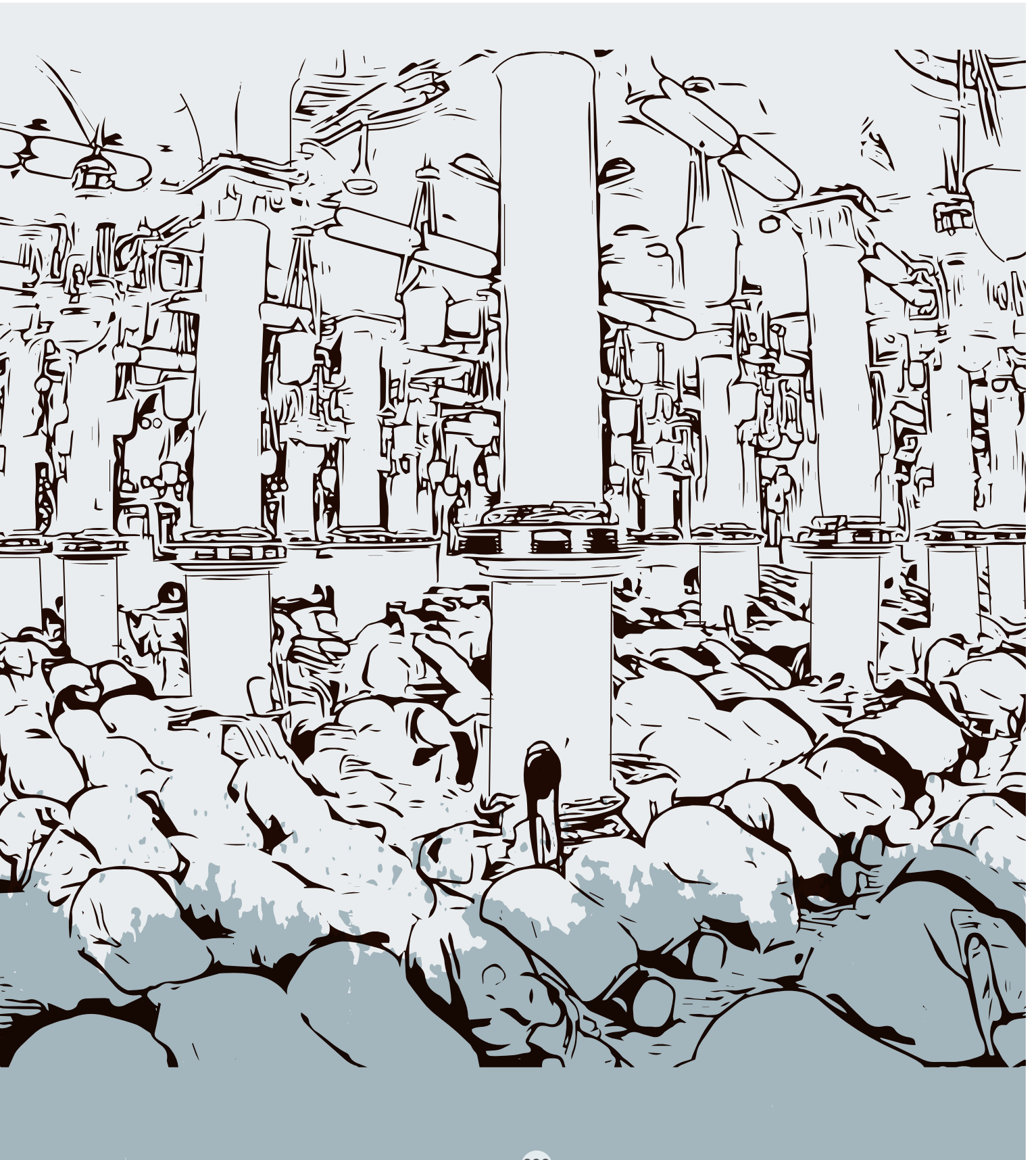
There is no contradiction between the two figures: the lower number does not contradict the higher one. It is explained as the small number was given first, then God increased His bounty, raising the figure from twenty-five to twenty-seven. Alternatively, the difference of two grades may be due to the perfection of prayer, keeping its form, showing humility, the size of the congregation, the importance of the place where it is offered, etc.



4

Scholars have looked at the reasons why congregational prayer is considered better than another form. Some have been mentioned above. We may also include responding to the call of prayer, i.e. *adhān*, by repeating its phrases, going early to the mosque at the beginning of the prayer's time, walking calmly when going to the mosque, supplicating as one enters the mosque, offering the prayer of greeting the mosque on entry, waiting for the congregation to start, the angels' prayer and testimony for the worshippers, responding to the announcement of the prayer i.e. its *iqāmah*, safety from Satan as he runs away when the announcement is made, standing in wait for the imam to begin the prayer or joining the imam at whatever position he may be, being in attendance at the start of the congregational prayer, and keeping the rows straight and leaving no gaps in them.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 647; Muslim, 649.



Implementation

1

Every Muslim should be very keen to attend congregational prayers. Praying with the congregation is much better than praying alone. It is wrong to miss out on its much greater reward.

2

It is right that we should give a clear priority to praying in congregation, so that we may gain what God has prepared for such people. Abu Hurayrah narrated a hadith in which the Prophet says: 'For whoever goes frequently, morning and evening, to the mosque, God will prepare a home in Heaven, whenever he goes morning or evening'.⁽¹⁾

3

Whoever loves that his sins are erased and his grade in Heaven is made higher should be keen to attend congregational prayers. The Prophet said: 'Shall I tell what ensures that God will wipe away [people's] sins and raise their grades?' People said: 'Yes, please, Messenger of God'. He said: 'Doing the ablution full well despite difficulty, walking longer to mosques and waiting for one prayer after another. That is [equal to] standing guard'.⁽²⁾



4

Happy is the one who ensures to join the congregational prayer in a mosque. One of the rewards God has prepared for it is that prayer with the congregation earns you a reward equal to that of performing pilgrimage. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever having performed the ablution leaves his home to join an obligatory prayer earns a reward similar to that of a pilgrim in consecration, and whoever goes out to the mid-morning prayer, with nothing else bringing him out, earns a reward equal to that of one who performs the 'umrah. One prayer after another, with no idle talk in between, earns enrolment among those in the high position'.⁽³⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 662; Muslim, 669.

2 Related by Muslim, 251.

3 Related by Ahmad, 22304; Abu Dāwūd, 558.

5

Angels attend congregational prayer. Who does not wish to be among the ones praised by angels and testified for in front of God, the Lord of all the worlds? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘Angels take turns in attending you through the night and through the day. They meet together during the Fajr and ‘Aṣr Prayers. Then those who were with you during the night ascend. Their Lord will ask them, yet He knows better than them: How did you leave My servants? They will say: “We left them praying, as we joined them when they were praying”’.⁽¹⁾

6

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd narrated: ‘Whoever is pleased to know that he will be meeting God as a Muslim should make sure to offer these prayers where they are called. God has ordained for your Prophet the practices of divine guidance and these prayers are practices of divine guidance. If you pray in your homes like the person who so stays at home, you will have abandoned the practice of your Prophet, and if you abandon your Prophet’s practice, you will go astray. When a person performs the ablution well, then goes to one of these mosques, then for every step he makes, God will credit him with a good deed and promotes him a step and removes a bad deed from him. There was a time when none stayed away from it [i.e. congregational prayer] except one whose hypocrisy was confirmed. A man might be brought to the mosque, leaning on two men, until he was stood in the row’.⁽²⁾

7

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar al-Qawārīrī said: ‘I was extremely keen to offer the ‘Ishā Prayer with a congregation. One day I had a guest and I was busy with him. Therefore, I went out seeking to join a congregation with any of the Basrah tribes, but all had already offered their prayers and there was none. I thought that it was reported that the Prophet said that a congregational prayer is twenty-five grades better than praying alone, and another report puts the figure at twenty-seven. I went home and offered the ‘Ishā Prayer twenty-seven times, then went to bed. I saw a dream in which I was competing with people riding horses, with my horse similar to theirs. One of them turned to me and said: “Do not try too hard. You cannot catch up with us”. I said: “Why is that?” He said: “Because we prayed ‘Ishā with a congregation”’.⁽³⁾

8

The hadith indicates that delaying a prayer, hoping to join a congregation, is better than offering it early but alone. The only exception is that when a person fears that the time range for that prayer may be over. In this case, he should pray alone.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 555; Muslim, 632.

2 Related by Muslim, 654.

3 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Tabṣīrah*, Vol. 2, p. 221.

