3749 - Ways to Help Oneself Pray Qiyam al-Layl

the question

What are some ways that help to pray Qiyam Allayl or tahajjud (late night voluntary prayers)?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There are many things that one can do to help oneself pray qiyam al-layl, among which are the following:

1 Being sincere towards Allah, as He has commanded us to be sincere towards Him and none other in our deeds. He tells us (interpretation of the meaning): And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone [al-Bayyinah 98:5]. The more sincere a person is towards Allah, the more he will be guided and helped to obey Allah and draw closer to Him. Ubayy ibn Kab (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Give glad tidings to this ummah (nation/community)of splendour, religion, high rank, victory and prevalence on earth. Whoever does the deeds of the Hereafter to gain some worldly benefit, will have no share of the Hereafter. (Reported by Ahmad. Saheeh al-Jaami, 2825). Mutarraf ibn Abd-Allah ibn al-Shakheer said: The goodness of a deed is related to the goodness of the heart, and the goodness of the heart is related to the goodness of the intention. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The degree to which a person is helped and aided by Allah depends on the degree of his intention, drive, aim and hopes. Help from Allah comes to people in proportion to their drive, intention, hopes and fears, and failure comes to them in like manner.

Therefore the salaf (pious predecessors) were very keen to conceal their acts of worship such as qiyam al-layl. A man asked Tameem ibn Aws al-Daari (may Allah be pleased with him), How do you

pray at night? He got very angry and said, By Allah, one rakah that I pray in secret in the small hours of the night is more beloved to me than praying the whole night long and then telling people about it. Ayyoob al-Sakhtiyaani used to spend the entire night in prayer, then when dawn approached, he would go back to bed and lie down, and when dawn came, he would raise his voice as if he had just woken up.

2 The person who wants to pray qiyam al-layl should realize that Allah is calling him to qiyam. When the slave realizes that his Master, Who has no need of peoples worship, is calling him to do this, he will respond. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): O you wrapped in your garments (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)! Stand (to pray) all night, except a little. Half of it, or a little less than that, or a little more; and recite the Quraan (aloud) in a slow, (pleasant tone and) style. [al-Muzzammil 73:1-4].

Sad ibn Hishaam ibn Aamir said to Aaishah (may Allah be pleased with her): Tell me about how the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed qiyam. She said: Have you not read Yaa ayyuhal-muzzammil (O you wrapped in your garments!)? He said, Of course. She said: Allah, may He be exalted and glorified, made qiyaam obligatory at the beginning of this soorah, so the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions prayed qiyaam for a year, and Allah withheld the end of this soorah for twelve months, until He revealed something at the end of this soorah to make things easier, so qiyaam al-layl became voluntary after it had been obligatory. (Reported by Muslim).

3 Knowing the virtues of qiyam al-layl. Whoever knows the virtues of this act of worship will be keen to talk to Allah, may He be exalted, and to stand before Him at that time. Among the reports that describe the virtues of this act of worship is the hadeeth (narration)of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The best of prayers after the prescribed prayers is prayer in the depths of the night, and the best of fasting after the month of Ramadaan is fasting the month of Allah, Muharram. (reported by Muslim).

Abd-Allah ibn Amr (may Allah be pleased with them both) reported that the Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The most beloved of prayer to Allah is the prayer of Dawood, and the most beloved of fasts to Allah is the fast of Dawood. He used to sleep for half of the night, then get up and pray for a third of the night, then sleep for a sixth of the night, and he used to fast every other day. (Agreed upon).

Amr ibn Absah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The closest that the Lord is to His slave is in the later part of the night, so if you can be one of those who remember Allah at that time, then do so. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi and An-Nasa'i).

According to a hadeeth narrated by Ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Our Lord admires two men: a man who leaves his mattress and cover, and slips away from his wife and lover, to go and pray. Allah says, O My angels, look at My slave. He has left his mattress and cover and slipped away from his lover and wife to pray, out of hope for what is with Me and out of fear of what is with Me. (Reported by Ahmad. It is a hasan (sound) report. Saheeh al-Targheeb, 258).

Qiyam al-Layl expels forgetfulness from the heart, as is stated in the hadeeth narrated by Abd-Allah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas (may Allah be pleased with them both), in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Whoever recites ten aayaat (verses)in qiyaam will not be recorded as one of the forgetful. Whoever recites a hundred aayaat in qiyaam will be recorded as one of the devout , and whoever prays a thousand aayaat in qiyaam will be recorded as one of the muqantareen (those who pile up good deeds). (Reported by Abu Dawood and Ibn Hibbaan. It is a hasan report. Saheeh al-Targheeb, 635).

Yahyaa ibn Muaadh said: The medicine of the heart is five things: reading Quraan and pondering the meaning, having an empty stomach, praying at night (qiyam al-layl), beseeching Allah at the time of suhoor, and keeping company with righteous people.

4 Studying how the salaf and righteous people practised qiyam al-layl and adhered to it. The salaf used to enjoy qiyam al-layl and rejoice greatly in doing it. Abd-Allah ibn Wahb said: Every type of pleasure is enjoyed only once, except for acts of worship, which are enjoyed three times: when

you do it, when you remember it, and when you are given the reward for it.

Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir said: There is nothing left of the joys of this life except three: qiyam al-layl, meeting ones brothers in faith, and praying in congregation.

Thaabit al-Banaani said: There is nothing I enjoy more than qiyam al-layl.

Yazeed al-Riqaashi said: A lot of tahajjud brings delight to the worshippers, and a lot of thirst (i.e., fasting), brings joy when they meet Allah.

Mukhallad ibn Husayn said: I never woke up at night except I saw Ibraaheem ibn Adham remembering Allah and praying, and this made me depressed, so I consoled myself with this aayah (interpretation of the meaning): That is the Grace of Allah which He bestows on whom He pleases. And Allah is the Owner of Great Bounty [al-Hadeed 57:21].

Abu Aasim al-Nabeel said: Abu Haneefah used to be called al-Watad (pole or pillar) because he prayed so much.

Al-Qaasim ibn Maeen said: Abu Haneefah spent an entire night in qiyam reciting this aayah (interpretation of the meaning): Nay, but the Hour is their appointed time (for their full recompense), and the Hour will be more grievous and more bitter [al-Qamar 54:46], repeating it and weeping, beseeching Allah until morning came.

Ibraaheem ibn Shammaas said: I used to see Ahmad ibn Hanbal staying up at night to pray when he was a young man.

Abu Bakr al-Marwadhi said: I was with Imaam Ahmad for nearly four months in the army, and he never stopped praying qiyam at night or reading Quraan during the day, and I never knew when he completed the Quraan, because he kept that secret.

Imaam al-Bukhaari used to pray qiyam and tahajjud at night until the time of suhoor, and he would read between a half and a third of the Quraan, and complete it at suhoor every third night.

Al-Allaamah Ibn Abd al-Haadi said, describing the qiyam of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah: At night

he would keep away from people, and spend that time only with his Lord, beseeching Him continually and reciting Quraan, repeating different kinds of acts of worship by night and by day. When he began to pray, his body would start to tremble, leaning to the left and right.

Ibn Rajab said concerning his shaykh Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim: He was a man of worship, tahajjud and lengthy prayers. I have never seen his equal in worship and knowledge of the Quraan, hadeeth and principles of faith.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said, describing his shaykh al-Haafiz al-Iraaqi: I stayed with him, and I never saw him forsake qiyam al-layl: it was like a habit for him.

5 Sleeping on ones right side. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught his ummah (followers)to sleep on their right sides, as is reported in the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you goes to bed, let him clear his bed by hitting it with his garment, for he does not know what may have come onto it. Then let him lie down on his right side, then let him say, Bismika Rabbi wadatu janbi wa bika arfauhu. In amsakta nafsi farhamhaa wa in arsaltahaa fahfazhaa bimaa tahfazu bihi ibaadaka al-saaliheen (In Your Name, my Lord, I lay myself down and I get up again. If You take my soul, then have mercy on it, and if You send it back to me, then protect it with that with which You protect Your righteous slaves). (Agreed upon).

Al-Baraa ibn Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When you want to go to bed, do wudoo as for prayer, then lie down on your right side. (Agreed upon)

Hafsah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to bed, he would put his right hand under his right cheek. (Reported by al-Tabaraani, Saheeh al-Jaami, 4523).

Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: There is a reason for his lying on his right side, which is that the heart is located on the left, so if a person lays on his left side, he will sleep too deeply, because the hearts position will be too comfortable, but if he sleeps on his right

side, he will not be too settled, so he wont sleep deeply.

6 Sleeping in a state of tahaarah (purity). We have already quoted the hadeeth of al-Baraa ibn Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him), in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, When you go to bed, do wudoo as if for prayer. (Agreed upon).

Muaad ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: There is no Muslim who goes to sleep remembering Allah and in a state of purity, and when he turns over he asks Allah for good in this world and the next, but it will be given to him. (Reported by Abu Dawood and Ahmad. Saheeh al-Jaami, 5754).

Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with them both) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Purify these bodies and Allah will purify you, for there is no slave who goes to sleep in a state of purity but an angel spends the night with him, and every time he turns over, [the angel] says, O Allah, forgive Your slave, for he went to bed in a state of purity. (Reported by al-Tabaraani. Al-Mundhiri said, its isnaad is jaayid. Saheeh al-Jaami, 3831).

7 Going to sleep early. Sleeping straight after Ishaa is the advice of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and a good and healthy habit. One of the ahaadeeth that describe its virtues was narrated by Abu Barzah al-Aslami (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to prefer to delay Ishaa, and he did not like to sleep before it or talk after it. (Reported by al-Bukhaari).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar reported that al-Qaadi Ayaad said, concerning the phrase He did not like to sleep before it: Because that could lead to one praying it too late, or delaying it until after the preferred time, and talking after it could lead to one sleeping before Fajr and missing it, or missing qiyam al-layl.

Ibn Raafi said: Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with him) used to wave his stick at the people when darkness fell, and would say, Get up and go, may Allah help you to pray qiyam at night!

Another matter that has to do with sleep is choosing a suitable bed, not one that is excessively luxurious or soft, because that makes a person sleep too much and become negligent, and causes laziness and carelessness. Aaishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The pillow of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on which he slept at night was made of leather stuffed with palm fibres. (Reported by Abu Dawood and Ahmad. Saheeh al-Jaami, 4714).

Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Umar ibn al-Khattaab entered upon the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he was lying on a mat of palm fibres that had left marks on his side. Umar said, O Messenger of Allah, why do you not get something more comfortable than this? He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: What do I have to do with this world? My relationship with this world is like that of a traveller on a hot summers day, who seeks shade under a tree for an hour, then moves on. (Reported by Ahmad and al-Haakim. Saheeh al-Jaami, 5545).

Ali ibn Bakkaar (may Allah have mercy on him) used to have a slave-woman who would spread out his bed for him, and he would touch it with his hand and say: By Allah, you are good, and by Allah you are cool, but by Allah I will not rest on you tonight. Then he would get up and pray qiyam until Fajr.

Also, one should not sleep too much or too deeply. Ibraaheem ibn Adham said: If you are sleeping at night, and running about during the day, and always committing sin, how can you earn the pleasure of the One Who is directing your affairs?

8 Having the habit of reciting adhkaar (words of remembrance of Allah) prescribed by shareeah (Islamic law) before going to sleep, because these adhkaar are like a fortress which protects a person from the Shaytaan, by the permission of Allah, and helps him to get up for qiyam. Among these adhkaar is that mentioned in the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you goes to bed, let him clear his bed by hitting it with his garment, for he does not know what may have come onto it. Then let him lie down on his right side, then let him say, Bismika Rabbi wadatu janbi wa bika arfauhu. In amsakta nafsi farhamhaa wa in arsaltahaa fahfazhaa bimaa tahfazu bihi

ibaadaka al-saaliheen (In Your Name, my Lord, I lay myself down and I get up again. If You take my soul, then have mercy on it, and if You send it back to me, then protect it with that with which You protect Your righteous slaves). (Agreed upon).

Aaishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to bed each night, he would put his palms together, blow in them, and recite Qul huwa Allahu ahad, Qul aoodhu bi Rabbil-Falaq and Qul aoodhu bi Rabbil-Naas, then he would wipe as much of his body as he could with his hands, starting with his head and face, and the front of his body, doing this three times. (Agreed upon).

Ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Whoever recites the last two aayahs of Soorat al-Baqarah, this will take care of him. (Agreed upon).

Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to bed, he would say: Al-hamdu Lillaah illadhi atamanaa wa saqaanaa, wa kafaanaa fa kam mimman laa kaafeeya lahu wa laa muweeya lahu (Praise be to Allah Who has fed us and given us to drink, and Who has given us enough, for how many are there who have no-one to suffice them or give them refuge). (Reported by Muslim).

According to the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah in which he tells the story of how he captured the Shaytaan, the Shaytaan said to him: When you go to bed, recite Aayat al-Kursi, Allah! None has the right to be worshipped but He, the Ever-Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists [al-Baqarah 2:255 interpretation of the meaning] until the end of it, because it will bring Allahs protection for you, and no shaytaan (devil) will approach you until morning comes. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) mentioned this to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and he said, He spoke the truth even though he is a liar. (Agreed upon).

Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that when the Prophets daughter Faatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) came to him and asked him for a servant, he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to her and Ali: Shall I not teach you something that will be

better for you than a servant? When you go to bed, say Subhaan Allah thirty-three times, al-hamdu Lillaah thirty-three times, and Allahu akbar thirty-four times. This is better for you than a servant. (Agreed upon).

Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Recite Qul yaa ayyuhal-kaafiroon when you go to sleep, for it is a renunciation of shirk. (polytheism) (Reported by al-Bayhaqi. Saheeh al-Jaami, 1172).

Hafsah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went to bed, he would put his right hand under his right cheek and say: Rabbi qinee adhaabaka yawma tabathu ibaadaka (My Lord, save me from Your punishment on the Day when You resurrect Your slaves). (Reported by Abu Dawood, Saheeh al-Jaami, 4532).

Al-Baraa ibn Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When you go to bed, do wudoo as if for prayer, then lie down on your right side, then say: Allahummah aslamtu nafsi ilayk, wa wajahtu wajhi ilayk, wa fawwadtu amri ilayk, wa aljatu zahri ilayk, raghbatan wa rahbatan ilayk, laa maljaa wa laa manjaa minka illa ilayk. Aamantu bi kitaabik alladhi anzalt, wa bi nabiyyik alladhi arsalt (O Allah, I submit myself to You, I turn my face to You, I delegate my affairs to You and I rely totally on You, out of fear and hope of You. There is no refuge or sanctuary from You except in You. I believe in Your Book which You have revealed and in Your Prophet whom You have sent). Then if you die, you will have died on the fitrah, (natural state) , so make these the last words you speak." (Agreed upon).

Similarly, the Muslim should have the habit of reciting adhkaar prescribed by shareeah when waking up, such as that reported by Abu Hurayrah, who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you wakes up, he should say: Al-hamdu Lillaah illadhi radda alayya roohi, wa aafaani fi jasadi wa adhina li bi dhikrihi (Praise be to Allah Who has restored my soul, given health to my body, and allowed me to remember Him). (Reported by al-Tirmidhi and An-Nasa'i, Saheeh al-Jaami, 326).

Ubaadah ibn al-Saamit (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Whoever turns over at night and says Laa ilaaha ill-Allah wahdahu laa shareeka lah, lahul-mulk wa lahul-hamd wa huwa al kulli shayin qadeer. Al-hamdulillahi, subhaan Allah wa laa illaaha ill-Allah wa Allahu akbar wa laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah (There is no god but Allah Alone, with no partner or associate. His is the Dominion and the Praise, and He is Able to do all things. Praise be to Allah, glory be to Allah. There is no god except Allah, Allah is Most Great and there is no strength and no power except in Allah), then says, Allahumma ghfir li (O Allah, forgive me), or some other duaa, it will be answered, and if he does wudoo and then prays, his prayer will be accepted. (Reported by al-Bukhaari)

Imaam Ibn Battaal said: Allah has promised through His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that whoever wakes up from his sleep pronouncing words of Tawheed, submitting to His sovereignty, recognizing His blessings by praising Him, exalting Him above that which does not befit Him by glorifying Him (saying Subhaan Allah), submitting to Him by magnifying Him (saying Allahu akbar) and admitting ones utter dependence upon His help, then if he makes duaa it will be answered, and if he prays his prayer will be accepted. Everyone who hears this hadeeth should apply it and make the most of it, and make his intention sincerely for his Lord, may He be glorified and exalted.

Al-Baraa ibn Aazib (may Allah be pleased with them both) said: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) woke up, he would say: Al-hamdu Lillaah illadhi ahyaanaa bada maa amaatanaa wa ilayhi al-nushoor (Praise be to Allah Who has brought us back to life after having caused us to die, and unto Him is the resurrection). (Reported by Muslim).

Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with them both) reported that when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) woke up he would wipe the sleep from his face with his hand, then look at the sky and recite the final ten aayaat of Soorat Aal Imran: Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth [Aal Imraan 3:190 interpretation of the meaning]. (Reported by Muslim)

Imaam al-Nawawi said: This indicates that it is mustahabb (recommended) to wipe away the traces of sleep from ones face, and to recite these aayaat when getting up from sleep.

9 Being keen to take a nap or siesta during the day, whether before zuhr or after. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Take a nap, for the shayaateen do not take naps. (Reported by al-Tabaraani. Al-Saheehah, 2647).

Ishaaq ibn Abd-Allah said: Taking a nap is one of the deeds of good people. It revitalizes the heart and helps one to pray qiyam al-layl.

Al-Hasan al-Basri passed by a group of people in the marketplace in the middle of the day, and heard the racket they were making. He said, Do these people take a nap? It was said to him, No. He said, I think their nights must be bad.

10 Avoiding eating or drinking too much. Eating and drinking too much are two of the main obstacles that prevent people from praying qiyam al-layl. Al-Miqdaam ibn Mad Yakrib (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Man fills no vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to have a few mouthfuls to give him the strength he needs. If he has to fill his stomach, then let him leave one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for air. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah. Saheeh al-Jaami, 5674).

Abu Juhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to a man who burped in his presence: Stop your burping, for the people who eat the most in this life will be the most hungry on the Day of Resurrection. (Reported by al-Haakim. Saheeh al-Jaami, 1190).

Sufyaan al-Thawri said: You should eat little, so that you will be able to pray qiyam al-layl.

Maqal ibn Habeeb saw some people eating a lot, and said, I do not think that our companions want to pray qiyam al-layl.

Wahb ibn Munabbih said: There is no son of Adam dearer to his shaytaan than the one who eats and sleeps a lot.

11 Striving against oneself to pray qiyam al-layl. This is one of the best means of helping oneself

to pray qiyam, because human nature is inclined towards wrongdoing, so the one who follows his own inclinations will be led to doom and destruction. Allah has commanded us to strive against our own selves, as He says (interpretation of the meanings):

And strive hard in Allahs Cause as you ought to strive [al-Hajj 22:78]

And as for those who strive hard in Our Cause, We will surely guide them to Our Paths. And verily, Allah is with the muhsinoon (good-doers). [al-Ankaboot 29:69]

Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend (charity in Allahs Cause) out of what We have bestowed on them [al-Sajdah 32:16]

Fadaalah ibn Ubayd (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The mujaahid (warrior) is the one who strives against his own self for the sake of Allah. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibbaan. Al-Saheehah, 549).

According to the hadeeth of Uqbah ibn Aamir (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When a man from my ummah gets up to pray at night, striving against his own self to get up and purify himself, there are knots on him. When he washes his hands in wudoo, one knot is undone. When he washes his face, another knot is undone. When he wipes his head another knot is undone. When he washes his feet, another knot is undone. Then Allah says to those who are veiled (in the Unseen): Look at this slave of Mine, he is striving against his own self and asking of Me. Whatever My slave asks of Me shall be his. (Reported by Ahmad and Ibn Hibaan. Saheeh al-Targheeb, 627).

Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir said: I struggled against my own self for forty years until it became right. Thaabit al-Banaani said: I struggled for twenty years to make myself pray qiyam al-layl, and I enjoyed it (qiyam al-layl) for twenty years. Umar ibn Abd al-Azeez said: The best of deeds are those which we force ourselves to do. Abd-Allah ibn al-Mubaarak said: The souls of righteous people in the past used to push them to do good deeds, but our souls do not do what we want them to do except by force, so we have to force them. Qutaadah said: O son of Adam, if you do not want to do any good except when you have the energy for it, then your nature is more inclined

towards boredom and laziness. The true believer is the one who pushes himself.

12 Avoiding sin. If the Muslim wants to be one of those who earn the honour of speaking to Allah in the depths of the night, let him beware of sin, for the one who is contaminated with the stain of sin will not be helped to pray qiyaam al-layl. A man said to Ibraaheem ibn Adham, I cannot pray qiyam al-layl, so tell me the cure for this. He said, Do not commit sin during the day, and He will help you to stand before Him at night, for your standing before Him at night is one of the greatest honours, and the sinner does not deserve that honour.

A man said to al-Hasan al-Basri: O Abu Saeed, I sleep in good health, and I love to pray qiyam al-layl, and I prepare water with which to purify myself, so why can I not get up? Al-Hasan said: Your sins are restricting you. He said, may Allah have mercy on him, The slave who commits a sin will be denied the opportunity to pray qiyam at night and to fast during the day.

Al-Fudayl ibn Ayaad said: If you cannot pray qiyam al-layl, or fast during the day, know that you are indeed deprived and restricted, chained by your sins.

13 Checking oneself and rebuking oneself for not praying qiyam al-layl. Checking oneself is one of the signs of the righteous and truthful. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): O you who believe! Fear Allah and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for the morrow, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what you do. [al-Hashr 59:18].

Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim said: If the slave is responsible and accountable for everything, even his hearing, sight and innermost thoughts, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning), Verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart of each of you will be questioned by Allah [al-Isra 17:36], then he should check on himself before he is brought to account.

Qiyam al-layl is an act of worship that connects the heart to Allah, may He be exalted, and enables it to overcome the temptations of life and to strive against ones own self, at the time when voices are stilled, eyes are closed in sleep, and sleepers are tossing and turning in their beds. Therefore qiyam al-layl is one of the measures of sincere determination and one of the qualities of those who have great ambitions. Allah has praised them and distinguished them from others in the Quraan,

where He says (interpretation of the meaning): Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing (in prayer) during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord (like one who disbelieves)? Say: Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is only men of understanding who will remember. [al-Zumar 39:9]

Qiyam al-layl is sunnah muakkadah (confirmed Sunnah), which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) urged us to do when he said, You should pray qiyam al-layl, for it is the habit of the righteous people who came before you, and it will bring you closer to your Lord, expiate for bad deeds, prevent sin, and expel disease from the body. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi and Ahmad).

According to a hadeeth, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The best of prayers after the prescribed prayers is qiyam al-layl. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) always had the habit of praying qiyam al-layl, and never gave it up, whether he was travelling or staying at home. Even though he, among all the sons of Adam, would be the one to have all his past and future sins forgiven, he prayed qiyaam al-layl until his feet became swollen, and when he was asked about that, he said, Should I not be a grateful slave? (Agreed upon).

This is how the noble salaf were, may Allah have mercy upon them. Abul-Darda (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Pray two rakahs in the darkness of the night for the darkness of the grave. Ahmad ibn Harb said: I am astonished at people who know that the delights of Paradise lie above them and the horrors of Hell lie beneath them. How can they sleep in between them?

When Umar ibn Dharr saw that night had come, he would say: Night has come, and night has dignity, and Allah is most deserving of reverence.

For this reason, al-Fudayl ibn Ayaad said: I met some people who feel ashamed before Allah to sleep for too long in the depths of the night. Such a person may be resting on his side, and when he moves, he says to himself, This is not your right. Get up and take your share of the Hereafter.

Al-Hasan said: We do not know of any deed more difficult than the struggle to stay up at night or to spend money. It was said to him, Why do the mutahajjadeen (those who pray Tahajjud at night) have the most beautiful faces? He said, Because they spend time alone with the Most Merciful, so

He adorns them with some of His light.

The women of the salaf also used to strive to pray qiyam al-layl with energy and determination. Where are the women of our own age when it comes to such great deeds? Urwah ibn al-Zubayr said: I came to Aaishah (may Allah be pleased with her) one day to greet her, and I found her praying and reciting the aayah (interpretation of the meaning), But Allah has been gracious to us, and has saved us from the torment of the Fire [al-Toor 52:27], repeating it and weeping. I waited for her, but I got bored of waiting, so I went to the market for some things I needed, then I came back to Aaishah, and she was still praying and reciting this aayah and weeping.

Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Jibreel said to me, Go back to Hafsah, for she fasts a lot and prays a lot at night (qiyam al-layl). (Reported by al-Haakim, Saheeh al-Jaami, 4227).

Muaadhah al-Adawiyyah, one of the righteous Taabiaat (successors of the companions of the Prophet) spent her wedding night, along with her husband Silah ibn Ashyam, praying until Fajr. When her husband and son were killed in the land of jihaad (battle), she would spend the whole night in prayer, worshipping and beseeching Allah, and she would sleep during the day. If she felt sleepy whilst she was praying at night, she would tell herself: O soul, there is plenty of sleep ahead of you.

When Habeebah al-Adawiyyah prayed Ishaa, she would stand on the roof of her house, wearing her chemise and khimaar (i.e., covered in proper Islamic dress), then she would say, O my God, the stars have come out, people have gone to sleep, and kings have closed their doors, but Your door is open. Every lover is alone with his lover, but here I am standing before You. Then she would start to pray and talk to her Lord until the time of suhoor. When the time of suhoor came, she would say, O Allah, this night is ending, the day is coming, and I wish I knew whether you have accepted this night (of worship) from me, so that I could congratulate myself, or if it has been rejected, so that I might console myself.

Amrah, the wife of Habeeb al-Ajami, prayed qiyam al-layl one night whilst her husband was asleep.

When the time for suhoor came, and her husband was still asleep, she woke him up and said to him, Get up, my master, for the night has gone, the day has come and ahead of you lies a long road with little provision, and a small group of righteous people who have gone before us, and we are still here.

We ask Allah to help us to remember Him, to thank Him and to worship Him properly. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.