

Adhan (part 1 of 2): The Call to Prayer

Description: History, virtue, and method.

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Category: Lessons > [Acts of Worship](#) > [Prayers](#)

Prerequisites

- Prayer for Beginners (2 parts).

Objectives

- To appreciate that the *adhan* covers all the essentials of faith.
- To learn the history of the *adhan*.
- To learn 6 virtues of *adhan*.
- To learn the wordings of the *adhan*.

Arabic Terms

- *Adhan* - an Islamic way of calling Muslims to the five obligatory prayers.
- *Iqamah* - This word refers to the second call to prayer that is given immediately before the prayer begins.
- *Shirk* - a word that implies ascribing partners to Allah, or ascribing divine attributes to other than Allah, or believing that the source of power, harm and blessings comes from another besides Allah.
- *Salah* - the Arabic word to denote a direct connection between the believer and Allah. More specifically, in Islam it refers to the formal five daily prayers and is the most important form of worship.
- *Tawheed* - The Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah with respect to His Lordship, His Names and Attributes and in His right to be worshipped.
- *Hadith* - (plural - *ahadith*) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Fajr* - the morning prayer.

Introduction

Linguistically, the term *Adhan* means “a proclamation”, and this is what is meant in the verse of the Quran:



**“And a proclamation (adhan) from Allah and His messenger to all people on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage that Allah is free from (all) obligations to the polytheists, and so is His messenger.”
(Quran 9:3)**

In religious context, the *adhan* is that proclamation made, consisting of specific “words of remembrance”, the time for an obligatory *salah* has begun. Throughout the Muslim world and in some places in the West, the caller to prayer announces five times a day from every mosque that it is time for prayer, to remember Allah, and to put aside all the cares of life to prepare for the worship of the Giver of Life. The prayer “God is the Greatest” resonates through all semblances of civilization, through small towns to metropolises.

The *adhan* covers all the essentials of the Islamic faith in a few words:

1. It begins by proclaiming the greatness of Allah.
2. It testifies to Allah’s *tawheed* and His exclusive right to worship.
3. It denies *shirk* - the worship of everything besides Allah.
4. The *adhan* testifies that Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, is the Messenger of Allah.
5. It mentions belief in one of the greatest pillars of Islam: the *salah* (ritual prayer).
6. Invites to the prayer and equates it with prosperity, salvation and success (in the hereafter)
7. It affirms the reward for *salah*: prosperity for one who singles out Allah in *tawheed*, follows His Messenger, establishes the *salah* and other pillars of Islam.
8. It implies the loss of one who does not respond to the *adhan* and does not pray.

History of Adhan

The *adhan* was prescribed during the first year after the Prophet migration to Medina. It was taught in true visions to two companions and made part of Muslim life by the Prophet himself. Abdullah ibn Zaid, a companion of the Prophet, reported:

“When the Prophet was to order the use of a bell to call the people to prayer, he disliked it because it resembled the Christian practice. While I was sleeping, a man came to me carrying a bell. I said to him, ‘O slave of Allah, will you sell me that bell?’

He said, ‘What would you do with it?’

I replied, ‘I would call the people to prayer with it.’

He responded, ‘Shall I not guide you to something better than that?’

I said, ‘Certainly.’

He said, ‘You should say:

Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar

Ashhadu alla ilaha illal-lah, ashhadu alla ilaha illal-lah

Ashhadu anna Muhammad ar-Rasool-lal-lah,

ashhadu anna Muhammadar-Rasool-lal-lah

Hayya ‘alas-salah, hayyah ‘alas-salah

Hayya ‘alal-falah, hayya ‘alal-falah

Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar. La ilaha illal-lah.’

Then he went a short distance away and said, ‘When you stand for the prayer, say:

Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar

Ashhadu alla ilaha illal-lah

Ashhadu anna Muhammad ar-Rasool-lal-lah

Hayya ‘alas-salah, hayya ‘alal-falah

Qad qaamatis-salah, qad qaamatis-salah

Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar. La ilaha illal-lah.’

When the morning came, I went to the Messenger of Allah to tell him what I had seen. He said, ‘Your dream is true, Allah willing. Go to Bilal, tell him what you have seen, and tell him to make the call to prayer, for he has the best voice among you.’ I went to Bilal and told him what to do,

and he made the call to prayer. ‘Umar was in his house when he heard it. He came out with his cloak, saying ‘By the One who has raised you with the truth, I saw similar to what he saw.’ The Prophet said, ‘All praise is to Allah.’”[\[1\]](#)

The Prophet appointed two companions to call the *adhan* in Medina in his mosque: Bilal, a former African slave whose freedom was bought by Abu Bakr, and Ibn Umm Maktum for the *adhan* of *Fajr*. He also appointed Abu Mah-zura in Mecca and Sa’ad al-Qaraz in Quba’.

The Virtues of *Adhan*

Many *ahadith* of our Prophet Muhammad describe the virtues of the *adhan* and the one who calls it:

- (1) “If the people knew what was in the *adhan* and the first row (of the prayer in virtue), and that they could not get it save by drawing lots, they would draw lots.”[\[2\]](#)

The meaning of this *hadith* is that if the people knew the abundant reward in calling the *adhan*, and could not find any way to call the *adhan* except by drawing lots, then they would do that to attain its virtue.

- (2) “The callers to prayer will have the longest necks of all people on the Day of Resurrection.”[\[3\]](#)

This meaning of this *hadith* is explained to be that they will be masters and leaders, as the Arabs describe leaders as having long necks, or it means they will have the most good deeds to their credit.

- (3) “Allah and His angels send blessings upon the front row, and the caller to prayer is forgiven as far as his voice reaches, and whatever hears him, animate or inanimate, confirms what he says, and he will have a reward like that of those who pray with him.”[\[4\]](#)
- (4) “Your Lord, the Exalted, is amazed (and pleased) by one who is watching sheep in his pasture, then goes to the mountain to make the call to prayer and pray. Allah, the Exalted, says, ‘Look at my slave there who makes the call to prayer and establishes the prayer out of fear of Me. I have forgiven my slave and have allowed him to enter Paradise.’”[\[5\]](#)
- (5) “The imam is a guarantor, and the caller to prayer is one who is given the trust. O Allah, guide the imam and forgive the caller to prayer.”[\[6\]](#)
- (6) “Whoever gives the call to prayer for twelve years will be guaranteed Paradise, and for each day sixty good deeds will be recorded for him by virtue of his *adhan*, and thirty good deeds by virtue of his *iqama*.”[\[7\]](#)

How is the *Adhan* Called?

Here are the wordings of the *adhan*.

Allahu akbar

Allah is the Greatest

Allahu akbar
Allah is the Greatest

Allahu akbar
Allah is the Greatest

Allahu akbar
Allah is the Greatest

Ashhadu alla ilaha illal-lah
I testify there is no true god but Allah

Ashhadu alla ilaha illal-lah
I testify there is no true god but Allah

Ashhadu anna Muhammad ar-Rasool-lal-lah
I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

Ashhadu anna Muhammad ar-Rasool-lal-lah
I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

Hayya 'alas-salah
Come to prayer

Hayya 'alas-salah
Come to prayer

Hayya 'alal-falah
Come to success

Hayya 'alal-falah
Come to success

Allahu akbar
God is the Greatest

Allahu akbar
God is the Greatest

La ilaha illal-lah[\[8\]](#)
There is no true god but Allah

Endnotes:

[\[1\]](#) Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Al-Tirmidhi

[\[2\]](#) Saheeh Al-Bukhari and others

[3] Ahmad, Saheeh Muslim, Ibn Majah

[4] Nasai

[5] Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Nasai

[6] Al-Tirmidhi

[7] Ibn Majah

[8] Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Al-Tirmidhi

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