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### I. Establishing Prayers

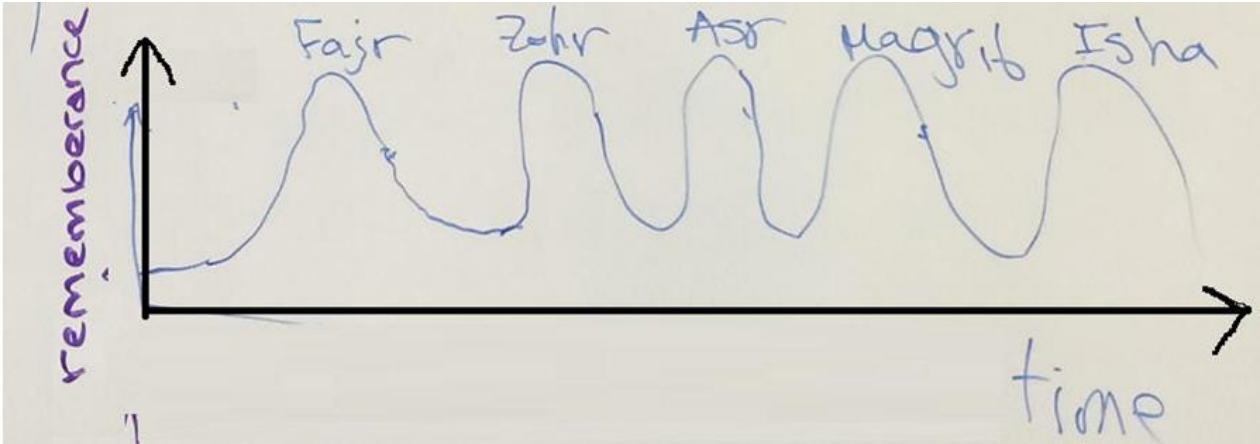
#### A. The Tests of Submission

The most important tests of free will are the tests of submission. Submission means to surrender to the will of Allah and follow His commands. It means to accept what Allah has decreed for us and be content with it. It means to love Allah more than anything else and seek His pleasure in everything we do. The tests of submission are when Allah wants to see if we are submissive to our temptations or to Him. For instance, if we get up early in the morning to pray Fajr (the dawn prayer) or if we sleep through it. If we are nice or mean to our siblings. If we share or hoard our wealth. If we forgive or hold grudges against others. If we fast during Ramadan or not. If we pray five times every day or not. The evil motives are our enemies pulling us in the wrong direction. The good motives are pulling us to the right direction. We chose to either be submissive (Muslim) to the evil motives or submissive to Allah.

Ramadan is a test to us because it is a month of fasting, self-restraint, charity, and spiritual purification. Fasting from dawn to sunset teaches us to control our desires and impulses, and to seek Allah’s pleasure above all else. Self-restraint from eating, drinking, smoking, sexual activity, and other sins teaches us to discipline ourselves and avoid what displeases Allah.

**B. The Remembrance of Allah Curve.**

The remembrance of Allah changes during the day. It can be represented by a curve that shows the relationship between prayers and the remembrance of Allah during the day. The curve starts when you wake up from sleep in a state of low remembrance of Allah. Once you say the Dua’a of waking up, make Wudu and pray Fajr, the remembrance of Allah increases to a high level. Then you get busy during the day with life matters, it goes down. Then it goes up again when you pray Zohr, and so forth.



**C. Focusing In Prayers**

One of the challenges that many people face in their prayers is the lack of focus. This means that they are not fully aware of what they are reciting or doing in their prayers, and their minds wander to other thoughts or distractions. This can

happen for various reasons, such as stress, boredom, fatigue, or external noise. There is also a specific devil named Khinzim who is assigned to tempt people to lose focus in their prayers by bringing up troubling matters to their minds. Losing focus in the prayer can have different consequences depending on whether it is intentional or unintentional. If someone loses focus unintentionally, meaning that they try to resist the distractions and return to the prayer as soon as they realize their mistake, then they are forgiven by Allah and their prayer is still valid. However, if someone loses focus intentionally, meaning that they deliberately think about something else or ignore the prayer, then they are sinning and their prayer is reduced in value. Depending on how much they lose focus, they may end up with only half, a third, a quarter, or none of the reward of the prayer.

#### D. Analogy to Thank You Phone Calls

Imagine you have a son who is studying in a college in another city. You mail him a check every month to cover his entire expenses. You send him the check for September, but he does not call you to thank you. You send him the check for October, and he still does not call. You get annoyed and send him the check for November, but he still does not call you to say thank you father. You get angry and call him yourself. You ask him why he does not appreciate the checks that you send him every month. He says that he thanks the mailman who brings him the checks, and he even kisses his hand. You get outraged and say that the money is yours, not the mailman's. The mailman is just a messenger who delivers the checks to him, not the giver of the money. You ask him how he can thank the messenger and not his father who provides him the money. He says that he only sees the mailman bringing the check to him and he never sees you. This is similar to what happens when we do not pray. Prayer is like a phone call to Allah five times a day to thank Him for

everything that He has given us. We can think of the number we call as 24434, which is the number of Rakas (units of prayer) of each of the five prayers.

This analogy also illustrates that Allah is hidden and He sends us the money through our employers or businesses. But He is the source of the income we receive. We cannot see Him and we only see the courier.

In another scenario, imagine you call your son to ask him why he does not call you to thank you for the check and he says that he does not know you. He says that he does not have a father, and that he was a monkey before he became a human. This is similar to what we say in the theory of evolution. We deny the existence of Allah who created us and gave us everything, and we say that we came from monkeys.

#### E. Illustrative Joke

A man was praying behind an Imam in a congregational prayer. It was the Zohr prayer and the Imam prayed only two Rakas instead of four. After the prayer was over, the man approached the Imam and told him that we prayed only two Rakas. The Imam said no, we prayed four Rakas. The man said no, we prayed only two Rakas. The Imam asked him how come he was so sure that he prayed only two. The man said that he had four shops and he usually does the bookkeeping of each shop in each Raka in his head. He only managed to do the bookkeeping for two shops only and because the Imam missed the other two Rakas, he missed the bookkeeping for the other two shops.