



Your Prayer

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The prayer (*salaat*) is the very foundation of religion and a 'link' between a servant and his Lord, hence its exalted position as the greatest act of worship in Islam. Almighty Allah commands Muslims to observe it under all circumstances—whether they are residents or travellers, sick or in good health.

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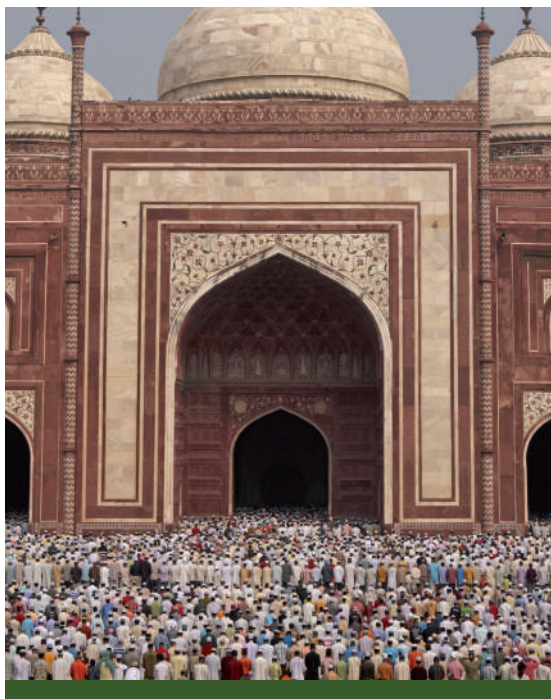
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The Prayer

The Arabic word *salaat* (commonly translated prayer) literally means supplication. It is the connection a Muslim establishes with his Lord and Creator and comprises the loftiest manifestations of total submissiveness to Allah, turning to Him and seeking His assistance and support. When a Muslim stands in prayer before his Lord, invokes and remembers Him, his mind becomes serene. He realises his true and deep sense of nothingness, the worthlessness and transitory nature of this life, and recognises the greatness of his Lord and the immense mercy He has shown him. This prayer then prompts him to adhere to the principles of the divine law and to shun injustice, indecency and wrongdoing, as the Qur'an states, "The prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." (*Soorat Al- 'Ankaboot*, 29:45)



>Position and Virtues of Salaat in Islam

The prayer (*salaat*) is undeniably the greatest and most exalted act of worship. It is an act of worship which engages not only the body but also the heart, the mind and the tongue. Its immeasurable significance can be perceived in a number of aspects including the following:

It Occupies the Loftiest Position in Islam

- 1 It is the second pillar of Islam, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Islam has been built on five [pillars]: Testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the messenger of Allah, performing the prayers, paying the *zakaat*, making the pilgrimage to the House, and fasting in Ramadaan." (*Saḥeeḥ Al-Bukhaaree*: 8; *Saḥeeḥ Muslim*: 16) These pillars are the foundations upon which Islam is firmly established, and a pillar is a post that is used to support a building, without which it will certainly collapse.

2 Textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions considers performance of the prayer to be the act which distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims. The Prophet ﷺ said, "What makes a person become an unbeliever or a polytheist is his abandonment of the prayer." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 8; *Saheeh Muslim*: 16) He also said, "The criterion between us and the polytheists is performance of the prayer. Thus, whoever abandons it is an unbeliever." (*Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 2621; *Sunan An-Nasaa'ee*: 463)

3 Allah ﷻ commands the believers to perform it under all circumstances—whether travelling or residing, in times of war and peace, and whether they are sick or in good health, according to their ability. The Qur'an says, "Strictly observe the prayers." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:238). Almighty Allah describes His faithful servants as those "who consistently observe the prayers." (*Soorat Al-Mu'minoon*, 23:9)

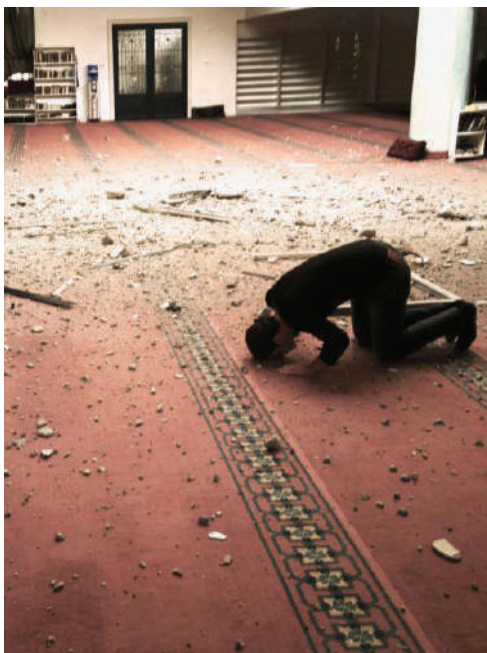
It Has Numerous Virtues

Textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions attests to the numerous virtues of the prayer. The following are some of them:

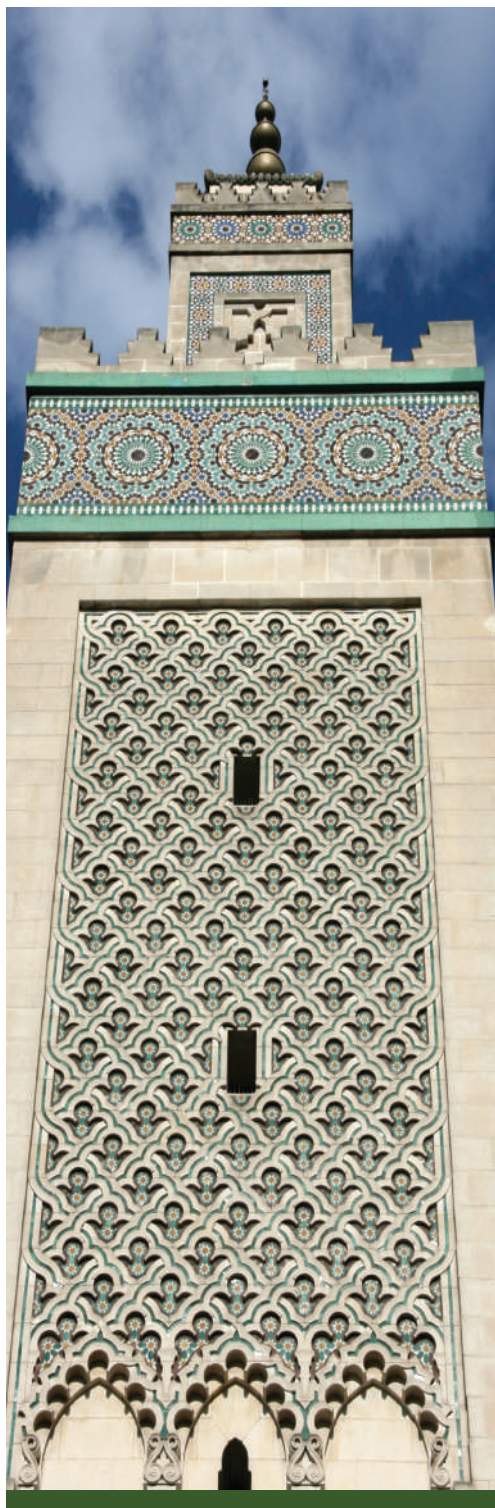
1 It wipes off the minor sins, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "The five daily prayers and the Friday prayer to the next Friday prayer wipe off whatever minor sins may be committed in between, so long as the major sins are avoided." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 233; *Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 214)

2 It is a light that enlightens a Muslim's life, guides him to all that is good and keeps him away from evil, as the Qur'an states, "The prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." (*Soorat Al-'Ankaboot*, 29:45) The Prophet ﷺ also said, "The prayer is a light." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 223)

3 It will be the first act people will be questioned about on the Day of Judgement: If it is accepted, the rest of their acts will be accepted; if, however, it is not accepted, none of the other acts will be accepted, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "The first act that the servant of Allah will be accountable for on the Day of Judgement will be his prayers. If they are good, the rest of his acts will be good. But if they are bad, the rest of his acts will be bad." (*At-Tabaraanee's Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat*: 1859)



> Allah ﷻ commands the believers to observe the prayers under all circumstances, even in times of war and disasters.



The sweetest moments a believer experiences is during the prayer, for when he engages in making humble and devout supplication to his Lord, he experiences peace and tranquillity in His presence.

Indeed, it was the greatest joy for the Prophet ﷺ who once observed, “The prayer is the source of my greatest joy.” (*Sunan An-Nasaa’ee*: 3940)

He would even ask Bilaal ؓ, his caller to the prayer, to call the prayer so he would experience spiritual peace and tranquillity. “Call [the people] to prayer, Bilaal,” he would say to him. “Let us be comforted by it.” (*Sunan Abu Daawood*: 4985)

Also, whenever something distressed him, he would turn to prayer. (*Sunan Abu Daawood*: 1319)

For Whom Is It Obligatory?

It is obligatory for every adult, sane and responsible Muslim, male or female to offer the prayer. However, menstruating women or women in their post-natal bleeding are exempt from offering the prayers and are not required to make up for the prayers they have missed after their bleeding ceases and they have purified themselves. (See page 98)

Maturity or puberty can be determined by the following indicators:

Turning fifteen

Appearance of pubic hair

Seminal discharge while sleeping or when awake

Menstruation and conception (for women)

>What Are the Conditions that Must Be Met before Engaging in Prayer?

1 Removing physical impurity and ritual impurity (See page 93)

2 Covering the intimate parts of the body (*'awrah*)

The *'awrah* must be covered with clothing that is neither skin-tight, nor skimpy, nor see-through.

The *'awrah* during the prayer is of three types:

For an adult woman: All her body is considered *'awrah* except for the face and hands.

For a small child: His *'awrah* includes his private parts and the buttocks.

For a man: His *'awrah* is from the navel to the knees.

As Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an, "Children of Adam! Wear fine clothing for every prayer." (Soorat Al-A'raaf, 7:31) In fact, covering the intimate parts of the body is the minimum amount of clothing.



> When a Muslim woman offers the prayer, she must cover her entire body except for the face and hands.

3 Facing the *qiblah*

Allah ﷻ says, “Wherever you come from, turn your face to the Holy Mosque [in Makkah].” (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:149)

- The direction Muslims face in prayer (*qiblah*) is the Ka’bah, a cube-shaped building located inside the Holy Mosque in Makkah, which was originally constructed by Abraham ؑ and to which the prophets had made a pilgrimage. It is true that it is a stone structure which can do neither harm nor good, but Allah ﷻ commands the Muslims to face it during the prayer to serve as a focal and unifying point among them.
- A Muslim is required to face the Ka’bah if he can see it in front of him. However, if he is far away from it and cannot see it, being in a different country, for instance, he can only face Makkah. The prayer is still considered valid with slight deviation from the direction of the *qiblah*, for the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whatever is between the east and the west is the *qiblah*.” (*Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 342)

- If he cannot possibly face it due to illness, for instance, then he does not have to do so, for all obligatory acts are normally dropped in case of inability, as the Qur’an states, “Therefore, do your duty towards Allah to the best of your ability.” (*Soorat At-Taghaabun*, 64:16)

4 When its Appointed time Becomes Due

The prayer will not be valid if it is offered before its time has started, and delaying it beyond its designated time is strictly forbidden, as the Qur’an states, “The prayers are enjoined on the believers at stated times.” (*Soorat An-Nisaa*’4:103)

The following facts must be stressed regarding this point:

- It is better to offer the prayer as soon as its actual time becomes due.
- It must be offered at its stated times
- If a prayer is missed due to sleep or forgetfulness, it must be made up for as soon as it is remembered.



> “The prayers are enjoined on the believers at stated times.” (4:103)

> *The Five Obligatory Prayers and Their Times*

Allah ﷻ has enjoined upon Muslims five prayers throughout the day and night and has specified the following times for them:

The Dawn Prayer (*Salaat-ul-Fajr*): It consists of two units (*rak'aat*, singular: *rak'ah*); it begins at daybreak, the time of day when light first appears, and lasts until sunrise.



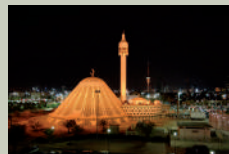
The Afternoon Prayer (*Salaat-udh-Dhuhr*): It consists of four units; its time begins when the sun declines westward from the middle of the sky and ends when the shadow of an object becomes equal in length to the object itself plus the length of its shadow when the sun was at its zenith.

The Late Afternoon Prayer (*Salaat-ul-'Asr*): It consists of four units; its time begins after the time of *Dhuhr* ends and ends with the setting of the sun. Hence, if the shadow of an object becomes equal to the length of that object plus its length when the sun was at its zenith, then the time of *Dhuhr* ends and the *'Asr* time begins. A Muslim must perform it before the sun loses some of its intensity and turns yellow.



The Sunset Prayer (*Salaat-ul-Maghrib*): It consists of three units; its time begins with sunset, that is, when the sun disappears below the horizon and finishes with the disappearance of the red glow (evening twilight) in the western horizon.

The Late Evening Prayer (*Salaat-ul-'Ishaa'*): It consists of four units; its time begins when the twilight has completely faded away and lasts until midnight. It could be offered, however, a little before dawn, if need be, and the reason is acceptable in Islam.



A Muslim may use prayer timetables and does not have to find out if the prayer appointed time has become due by himself.

> The Place of Prayer



Islam commands men to perform congregational prayers and encourages them to do so in the mosque, which provides a social forum for Muslims. Congregational prayers help increase and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, unity and togetherness between them. In fact, Islam promises greater rewards for those who join the congregational prayers, as the Prophet ﷺ said, “The reward for a prayer a man offers in congregation is twenty-seven times greater than that for a prayer he offers by himself.” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 619, *Saheeh Muslim*: 650, and *Musnad Ahmad*: 5921)

The prayer can, however, be performed anywhere. This reflects one of the favours Allah ﷻ has bestowed upon us, making this religion easy and practical. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The earth has been made a place of prayer for me, and it is pure (i.e. suitable

for performing *tayammum* when there is no water available or when one is unable to use it). Therefore, anyone from my community who is overtaken by the time of prayer can pray wherever they may be.” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 328; *Saheeh Muslim*: 521)

Criteria That Must Be Met Regarding the Place of Prayer

Islam stipulates that the place where we intend to offer the prayer must be pure and clean, as the Qur’an states, “We commanded Abraham and Ishmael: ‘Purify My House for those who walk round it, those who stay there, and those who bow and prostrate themselves in worship.’” (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:125) As a general rule, wherever we intend to pray must be clean and pure unless it is clear beyond any doubt that it has been smeared by some impurity. Therefore, if

there is nothing that might otherwise render a place impure, it must be considered clean, and we are allowed to offer our prayer on it without the need of using a prayer mat.

There are a number of criteria and conditions that must be met regarding the place where we intend to pray. These include the following:

- 1 One must not pray in a place where one may disturb people, such as busy public areas, passageways and places where one is not allowed to stand or sit, as this can lead to crowdedness and cause a great deal of inconvenience. The Prophet ﷺ said, “There should be neither harming, nor reciprocating harm.” (*Sunan Ibn Maajah*: 2340, *Musnad Ahmad*: 2865)
- 2 The place must be free from things which may otherwise cause distraction, such as pictures (like the ones found on some prayer mats), loud noises and music.
- 3 One must not pray in a place where worship is ridiculed, such as a place where there are drunken people or fanatics. Almighty Allah forbids Muslims to abuse the false deities of non-Muslims so that they may not in revenge abuse Allah ﷻ in their ignorance: “Do not insult those they call upon besides Allah in case that makes them insult Allah in animosity, without knowledge .” (*Soorat Al-An’aam*, 6:108)
- 4 One must not pray in a place specifically designed for committing sinful acts, such as ballrooms and nightclubs.



> *The Place of Prayer*

Offering the prayer anywhere in the world is absolutely valid. This is one of Allah's gifts to the Muslims and one of the favours He has bestowed upon them.

Can you offer the congregational prayer in the mosque?

No

Yes

A man must offer the congregational prayer in the mosque, for doing so is one of the virtuous acts that are dearest to Allah. Women are also allowed to join the congregational prayer in the mosque.

If you cannot possibly offer it in the mosque, is the place where you want to pray pure and clean?

No

Yes

Offering the prayer in a place that is not clean and pure is strictly forbidden, for Allah commands us to choose a clean spot for our prayer.

If the place where you want to pray is clean, will your prayer in it inconvenience people, being a passageway, for instance?

No

Yes

Offering the prayer in a place where you are bound to inconvenience and disturb people is forbidden, and so you must find a more suitable place.

Is there anything in the place where you want to pray that is bound to distract your attention, such as pictures and loud noises?

No

Yes

you must avoid places where your prayer may be distracted.

> Performing the Prayer

1 The Intention

The intention (*niyyah*) is one of the conditions of the prayer, without which the prayer will not be valid. The intention is the object for which the prayer is offered. Before offering the prayer, one must have in mind the intention to offer the specified prayer, as being the sunset prayer or the late evening prayer, for instance, for the purpose of worshipping Allah ﷻ. A Muslim must not announce the intention, and doing so is a mistake, for neither the Prophet ﷺ, nor his noble companions ever declared it.

2 He then stands in reverence and humility, raising his hands up to the level of the shoulders or a little above them, with the palms of his hands facing the *qiblah*, and says, as he does so, *Allaahu akbar* (Allah is Most Great).

The *takbeer* (that is, the Arabic phrase *Allaahu akbar*) is a way of extolling and glorifying Allah ﷻ. Indeed, Allah is greater than everyone



and everything else. He is greater than the life of this world and all its transitory desires. When we declare the *takbeer*, we leave the worldly concerns and earthly desires behind us and turn towards Allah, Most High, the All-Exalted, in great reverence and utmost humility.

3 Then he places his right hand on the left hand, having both of them on his chest. He maintains this whenever he is in a standing position.

4 Then He recites the opening supplication: *Subhaanak-Allaahumma wa bi hamdika, wa tabaarak-asmuka, wa ta'alaalaa jadduka, wa laa ilaaha ghayruka* (Glory be to You, Allah; Yours is the praise, blessed is Your name, exalted is Your majesty, and there is no god besides You). This supplication is recommended but not obligatory.

5 Then he says: *A'oodhu billaahi min-ash-shaytaan-ir-rajeem* (I seek Allah's protection from Satan, who has been expelled from His mercy).

6 Then he says: *Bismillaah-ir-rahmaan-ir-raheem* (In the name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful).

What Should a Person Who Does not Know *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* and the Post-Obligatory Prayer Supplications by Heart Do?

A new Muslim who does not know *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* and the post-obligatory prayer supplications by heart must do the following:

- He must do his best to memorise the obligatory supplications in the prayer, for the prayer will not be valid except by reciting these supplications in the Arabic language. These supplications are:

Soorat Al-Faatiḥah, *Allaahu akbar* (Allah is Most Great), *Subhaana rabbiy-al-‘adheem* (Glory be to my Lord, the Almighty), *Sami‘allaahu li man ḥamidah* (Allah listens to him who praises Him), *Rabbanaa wa lakal-ḥamd* (Our Lord, to You is due all praise), *Subhaana rabbiyal-‘laa* (Glory be to my Lord, Most High), *Rabbighfir lee*, (O Lord, forgive me), the first *tashahhud*, the final *tashahhud*, and *Assalaamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullaah* (Peace and mercy of Allah be on you).

- He must, before completing memorisation of these utterances, repeat, to the best of his ability, whatever of them he has committed to memory during the prayer and repeat whatever part of *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* he has memorised, which is normally recited in the standing posture, for the Qur’an states, “Keep your duty to Allah as best you can.” (*Soorat At-Taghaabun*, 64:16)
- It is recommended that he attends the congregational prayers during this period so he can perfect his prayers and because the prayer leader (*imaam*) covers part of the shortcomings in the prayer of those praying behind him.

7 Then he recites *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah*, the greatest soorah in the Qur’an.

- Allah ﷻ reminds the Prophet ﷺ of His favour upon him by revealing it to him: “We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the Magnificent Qur’an.” (*Soorat Al-Hijr*, 15:87)
- A Muslim must learn it by heart, for reciting it in prayer constitutes one of the pillars of the prayer for those who pray alone or behind the *imaam* in prayers during which Qur’anic verses are recited in a low voice, such as the afternoon and late afternoon prayers.

8 He says after reciting *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* or listening to it behind the *imaam*: *Aameen*, which means “O Allah, answer my prayers.”

9 After reciting *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah*, he recites another *soorah* or some other Qur’anic verses. In the third and fourth units of the prayer he recites only *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah*.

- *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* and whatever Qur’anic verses are recited after it are normally recited aloud in the dawn (*Fajr*), sunset (*Maghrib*) and late evening prayers (*‘Ishaa’*). As for the afternoon (*Dhuhr*) and late afternoon prayers (*‘Asr*), they are recited in a low voice.
- All the supplications are normally recited in a low voice.

Soorat Al-Faatihah Explained

Al-hamdu lillaahi rabbil-'aalameen "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds." (1:2): I extol Allah with all His attributes, acts and apparent and hidden blessings, with due love and reverence. *Rabb* (translated here 'Lord') refers to Almighty Allah, the Creator, Owner, Provider and Disposer of all affairs. The 'worlds' refers to anything apart from Allah ﷻ and includes, among other things, the world of human beings, that of the jinn, that of the angels and that of animals.

Ar-Rahmaan-ir-Raheem "The Beneficent, the Merciful." (1:3): *Ar-Rahmaan* (Most Beneficent) and *Raheem* (Most Merciful) are two of Allah's names. *Ar-Rahmaan* is more intensive, in that Allah's mercy includes in its objects the believers and the unbelievers, while *Ar-Raheem* has for its peculiar object the believers only.

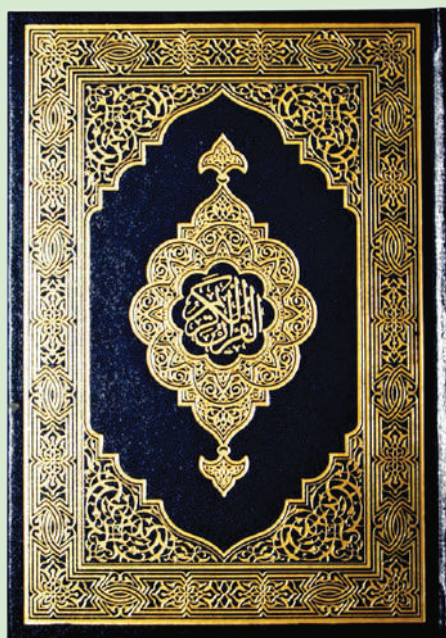
Maaliki yawmid-Deen "Master of the Day of Judgement." (1:4): He is the only Judge on the Day of Judgement. This statement reminds the believers of the Last Day and prompts them to do righteous deeds.

Iyyaaka na'budu wa iyyaaka nasta'een "You alone we worship. You alone we ask for help." (1:5): We worship none but You, and we do not associate anyone with You in worship. We also seek only Your assistance and support in all our affairs, for the power of decision rests with you alone.

Ihdinassiraat-al-mustaqeem "Guide us on the Straight Path." (1:6): Show us the Straight Path and help us adhere to it until we meet You. The Straight Path (*as-siraat al-mustaqeem*) is nothing but Islam, the clear religion that leads to Allah's good pleasure and Paradise. It was Muhammad ﷺ, the Seal of Prophets, who guided us to it, and man's happiness entirely depends on adhering to it.

Siraatalladheena an'amta 'alayhim "The path of those You have blessed;" (1:7): That is, the path to which You have guided the prophets, the righteous people who know the truth and follow it.

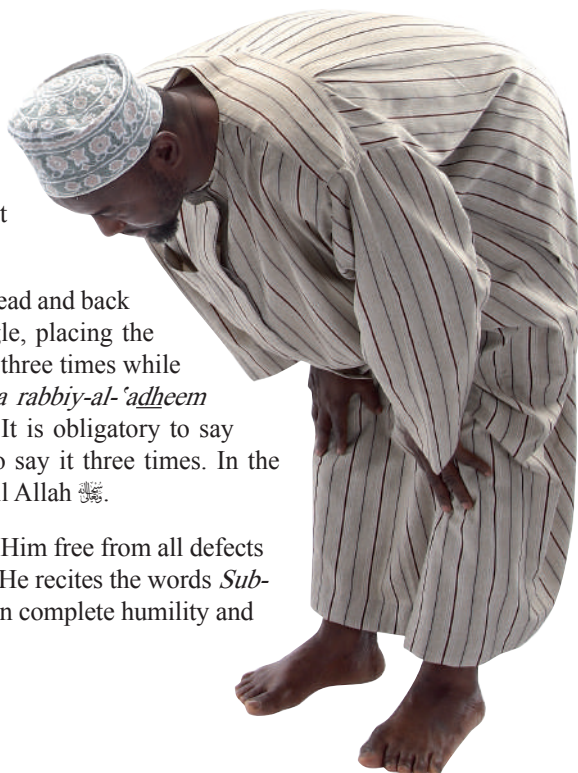
Ghayril maghdoobi 'alayhim waladh-daalleen "not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray." (1:7): Keep us away from the path of those with whom You are angry because they know the truth but have chosen not to follow it, also keep us away from the path of those who have not been guided to the truth due to their ignorance,.



10 Then he recites the *takbeer* while raising his hands up to the level of the shoulders or a little above them, with the palms of his hands facing the *qiblah*, just as he has done upon reciting the first *takbeer*.

11 Then he bows down, lowering his head and back and keeping them straight at a right angle, placing the palms of his hands on the knees. He says three times while in this position, called *rukoo'*, *Subhaana rabbiy-al-'adheem* (Glory be to my Lord, the Almighty). It is obligatory to say this only once, but it is recommended to say it three times. In the *rukoo'* position, we must glorify and extoll Allah ﷻ.

Subhaana rabbiy-al-'adheem : I declare Him free from all defects and to recognise His absolute perfection. He recites the words *Subhaana rabbiyal-'adheem*, whilst bowing, in complete humility and in total submission to Almighty Allah.



12 Then he resumes the standing position, raising his hands up to the level of the shoulders or a little above them, with the palms of his hands facing the *qiblah*, saying *Sami'allaahu li man hamidah* (Allah listens to him who praises Him). He says this whether he is praying alone or is the prayer leader (*imaam*). Then each one says: *Rabbanaa wa lakal-hamd* (Our Lord, to You is due all praise). It is recommended to say after this: *hamdan katheeran tayyiban mubaarakan feehi. Mil'assamaawaati wa mil'al-ardji wa mil'a maa shi'ta min shay'in ba'd* (An abundant, beautiful and blessed praise. A praise that fills the heavens, the earth and all that You will thereafter).

13 Then he recites the *takbeer* and prostrates himself, with the toes of both feet, the knees, the hands and the forehead and the nose touching the floor. He is recommended not to bring the arms close to the sides nor the abdomen close to the thighs, making sure that his forearms are not in contact with the floor.



14 He says in this position, called *sujood*, *Subhaana rabbiyal-a'laa* (Glory be to my Lord, Most High). It is obligatory to say this only once, but it is recommended to say it three times.

The prostrate position (*sujood*) is the noblest state where supplications must be made to Almighty Allah. Thus, after reciting the obligatory supplication mentioned above, a Muslim is recommended to invoke Allah and humbly and earnestly ask Him for anything which he wants in this life or in the hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The nearest a servant can be to his Lord is when he prostrates himself in prayer. So invoke Allah much in this state.” (*Sahheeh Muslim*: 482)

Subhaana rabbiyal-a'laa means: I declare Allah, Most High, the Almighty, above the heavens, free from all defects. This statement reminds the worshipper, who is humbly prostrating himself before Allah, of the difference between him and his Creator, Most High, prompting him to humbly submit to Him.

15 Then he recites the *takbeer* and sits between the two prostrations. He is recommended to sit on the left leg while keeping the right foot upright with the toes pointing towards the *qiblah* and resting his hands on his thighs close to the knees.

- In fact, all the sitting postures during the prayer should be done in this way, except for the sitting posture where the final *tashahhud* is recited, in which case it is recommended to sit with the left buttock on the ground, the right foot placed vertically with the toes pointing towards the *qiblah*, and the left foot on its side emerging from underneath the right foot.
- If he cannot sit in this manner for the first *tashahhud* or the second one due to some knee pain or because he is not used to such postures, then he can sit in a similarly comfortable manner.



16 He says between the two prostrations: *Rabbighfir lee, warhamnee, wahdinee, warzuqnee, wajburnee wa 'aafinee* (O Lord, forgive me, have mercy on me, guide me, provide for me, support me and protect me.).

17 Then he recites the *takbeer* and prostrates himself in the same way as before. This completes one unit (*rak'ah*) of the prayer.

18 Then he rises to the standing position again, for the second unit, reciting the *takbeer* as he does so.

19 He performs the second unit in exactly the same way as the first one.

20 After the second prostration in the second unit, he takes a sitting posture and recites the first *tashahhud*: *Attahiyyaatu lillaah, wassalawaatu wattayyibaat, assalaamu 'alayka ayyuhannabiyyu wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuh, assalaamu 'alaynaa wa 'alaa 'ibaad-illaah-issaaliheen, ash hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah, wa ash hadu anna Muḥammadan 'abduhu wa rasooluh* (All reverence, all worship, all sanctity are due to Allah. Peace be on you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be on us and all the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that none is worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger.)

21 Then he rises, reciting the *takbeer*, to assume a standing position and complete the rest of the prayer units if the prayer consists of three units (*Maghrib*) or four units (*Dhuhr*, *'Asr* and *'Ishaa*). In the third and fourth units, however, he recites only *Soorat Al-Faatihah*.

If the prayer consists of two units (*Fajr*), he recites the final *tashahhud* after completing the first *tashahhud*.

22 In the last unit after the second prostration, he takes a sitting posture and recites the final *tashahhud*. This consists of the first *tashahhud* mentioned earlier, which is immediately followed by the following: *Allaahumma salli 'alaa Muḥammad, wa 'alaa aali Muḥammad, kamaa sallayta 'alaa Ibraaheema wa 'alaa aali Ibraaheema, innaka ḥameedun majeed*.



Wa baarik 'alaa Muḥammad, wa 'alaa aali Muḥammad, kamaa baarakta 'alaa Ibraaheema wa 'alaa aali Ibraaheema, innaka ḥameedun majeed (O Allah, exalt Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad, as You have exalted Abraham and the family of Abraham. Verily, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. O Allah, bless Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad, as You have blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham. Verily, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.)

After this, he is recommended to recite the following supplication: *Allaahumma innee a'oodhu bika min 'adhaabi jahannama, wa min 'adhaab-il-qabri, wa min fitnat-il-mahyaa wal mamaati, wa min fitnat-il-maseeh-id-Dajjaal* (O Allah, I take refuge in You from the punishment of the Fire, from the torment of the grave, from the trials and tribulations of life and death and from the mischief of the false Messiah.)

23 Finally, he turns his face to the right side, saying: *Assalaamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullaah* (Peace, and mercy of Allah be on you). Then he turns his face to the left side and says the same thing.

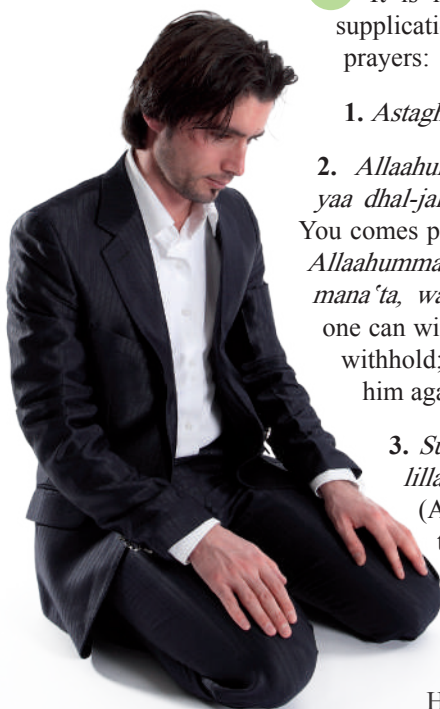
With these greetings he concludes his prayer, as the Prophet ﷺ said, “The prayer begins with the *takbeer* and ends with the *tasleem*.” (*Sunan Abu Daawood*: 61; *Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 3) The *takbeer* refers to the words *Allaahu akbar* (Allah is the greatest of all), and the *tasleem* refers to the words *Assalaamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullaah* (Peace and mercy of Allah be on you).

24 It is recommended that a Muslim recites the following supplications after completing any of the five obligatory daily prayers:

1. *Astaghfirullaah*, (I seek Allah's forgiveness) three times.

2. *Allaahumma antas-Salaam, wa mink-as-Salaam, tabaarakta yaa dhal-jalaali wal-ikraam* (O Allah, You are Peace and from You comes peace. Blessed are You, Owner of might and honour). *Allaahumma laa maani'a limaa a'tayta, wa laa mu'tiya limaa mana'ta, wa laa yanfa'u dhal-jaddi, minkal-jadd* (O Allah, no one can withhold what You give, nor can anyone give what You withhold; and the might of the mighty person cannot benefit him against You.)

3. *Subḥaanallaah* (Glory be to Allah) 33 times, *Al-ḥamdu lillaah* (Praise be to Allah) 33 times and *Allaahu akbar* (Allah is the greatest of all) 33 times. He completes the total of one hundred by saying: *Laa ilaaha illallaahu, wahdahu laa shareeka lahu, lahul-mulku, wa lahul-ḥamdul, wa huwa 'alaa kulli shay'in qadeer* (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah; He has no partners; the kingdom and praise belong to Him and He has power over everything)



> How to Pray (The Standing, Bowing and Prostrate Postures)

1

Assume a standing position and recite the *takbeer* while raising your hands up to the level of the shoulders or a little above them, with the palms of your hands facing the *qiblah*.



2

Place your right hand on the left hand, having both of them on your chest, recite *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* and as much of the Qur'an as may be easy for you. Do this in the first and second units of prayer.



3

Recite the *takbeer* while raising your hands up to the level of the shoulders or a little above them, with the palms of your hands facing the *qiblah*, then bow down, lowering your head and back and keeping them straight at a right angle, placing the palms of your hands on the knees. Say three times, while in this position: *Subḥaana rabbiy-al-'adḥeem* (Glory be to my Lord, the Almighty).



4

Resume the standing position, raising your hands up to the level of the shoulders or a little above them, with the palms of your hands *facing* the *qiblah*, saying *Sami'allaahu li man hamidah* (Allah listens to him who praises Him). Say this whether you are praying alone or you are the prayer leader (*imaam*). Then say: *Rabbanaa wa lakal-hamd* (Our Lord, to You is due all praise).



5

Recite the *takbeer* and prostrate yourself, with the toes of both feet, the knees, the hands and the forehead touching the floor. It is recommended that you do not bring the arms close to the sides, nor the abdomen close to the thighs, making sure that your forearms are not in contact with the floor. Say three times, while in this position: *Subhaana rabbiyal-a'laa* (Glory be to my Lord, Most High).



6

Say between the two prostrations: *Rabbighfir lee, warhamnee*, (O Lord, forgive me and have mercy on me).



> How to Pray (The Second Rak'ah, the Tashahhud and the Tasleem)

7

Rise, while reciting the *takbeer*, from the prostrate position to the standing position again to perform the second unit, and do exactly as you have done in the first *rak'ah* (standing, reciting, bowing, rising from the bowing position and assuming the standing position, prostration and the relevant recitations and utterances).



8

After the second prostration in the second unit, take a sitting posture similar to the one taken between the two prostrations, and recite the first *tashahhud*: *Attahiyyaatu lillaah, wassalawaatu wattayyibaat, assalaamu 'alayka ayyuhannabiyyu wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuh, assalaamu 'alaynaa wa 'alaa 'ibaad-illaah-issaaliheen, ash hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah, wa ash hadu anna Muḥammadan 'abduhu wa rasooluh* (All reverence, all worship, all sanctity are due to Allah. Peace be on you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be on us and all the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that none is worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger).



9

If the prayer consists of three units (*Maghrib*) or four units (*Dhuhr*, *'Asr* and *'Ishaa*), rise, reciting the *takbeer*, to assume a standing position for the third unit and do exactly as you have done in the previous two units. In the third and fourth units, however, recite only *Soorat Al-Faatihah*. If the prayer consists of two units (*Fajr*), recite the final *tashahhud* after completing the first *tashahhud*.

10

After the second prostration of the final unit, take a sitting posture and recite the first *tashahhud* and follow it up with the final *tashahhud*: *Allaahumma salli ‘alaa Muhammad, wa ‘alaa aali Muhammad, kamaa sallayta ‘alaa Ibraaheema wa ‘alaa aali Ibraaheema, innaka hameedun majeed. Wa baarik ‘alaa Muhammad, wa ‘alaa aali Muhammad, kamaa baarakta ‘alaa Ibraaheema wa ‘alaa aali Ibraaheema, innaka hameedun majeed* (O Allah, exalt Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You exalted Abraham and the family of Abraham. Verily, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham. Verily, You are Praiseworthy, and Glorious).



11

Finally, turn your face to the right side, saying: *Assalaamu ‘alaykum wa rahhmatullaah* (Peace, and mercy of Allah be on you). Then turn your face to the left side and say the same thing.



> The Pillars and the Obligatory Acts of the Prayer

The pillars (*arkan*; singular: *rukʿn*) of the prayer are its essential parts that are necessary for its validity. If any of these pillars is left out due to forgetfulness or deliberate omission, the prayer becomes invalid.

They are as follows:

The opening *takbeer*; assuming the standing position, if one has the ability to do so; reciting *Soorat Al-Faatiḥah* (in the case of performing the prayer alone, i.e., not being led by an *imaam*); bowing; rising from the bowing position; prostrating, sitting between the two prostrations, the final *tashahhud*, sitting while reciting the *tashahhud*, the *tasleem*; and making certain that each body part assumes the appropriate position before one moves from one position to another.

The obligatory acts of the prayer (*waajibaat*, singular: *waajib*) are those acts that must be done in the prayer. If they are deliberately omitted, the prayer becomes invalid. However, if they are left out due to inattention or forgetfulness, the prayer is still valid, but the acts that are left out can be compensated for with the two prostrations of forgetfulness, as will be explained later.

The obligatory acts of the prayer are as follows:

Recitation of *takbeer* throughout the prayer other than the opening *takbeer*, saying *Subḥaana rabbiy-*

al-ʿadḥeem (Glory be to my Lord, the Almighty) once; saying *Samiʿallaahu li man ḥamidah* (Allah listens to him who praises Him), whether one is praying alone or one is the prayer leader (*imaam*); saying *Rabbanaa wa lakal-ḥamd* (Our Lord, to You is due all praise); *Subḥaana rabbiyal-aʿlaa* (Glory be to my Lord, Most High) once; saying *Rabbighfir lee*, (O Lord, forgive me) while sitting between the two prostrations once; and reciting the first *tashahhud*. These obligatory acts can be made up for with the two prostrations of forgetfulness.

The recommended acts of the prayer (*sunan as-salaat*) are those words and acts other than the pillars and the obligatory acts of the prayer. They serve to complement the prayer and it is recommended to observe them. Omission of any of these acts, however, does not render the prayer invalid.



> The more a person keeps distractions away by concentrating in prayer and humbling himself before his Lord, the more rewards he will get and the higher his grade in Paradise will be.

The Two Prostrations of Forgetfulness

These prostrations are generally performed to make up for any deficiency in the prayer.

When can they be performed?

They can be performed in the following cases:

- 1 If a person forgetfully adds an extra act in the prayer, whether this act consists of assuming an extra standing position, prostrate position, bowing position or sitting position, then he has to perform the two prostrations of forgetfulness at the end of the prayer.
- 2 If he unintentionally leaves out any of the pillars of the prayer (*arkan*), he must add the missing pillar and then perform the two prostrations of forgetfulness at the end of the prayer.
- 3 If he unintentionally leaves out any of the obligatory acts of prayer (*wajibat*), such as the first *tashahhud*, he must perform the prostrations of forgetfulness.
- 4 If he is in doubt as to the number of the prayer units he has performed, he simply assumes he has performed the lesser number to be on the safe side and performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness at the end of the prayer.

Manner of Performing the Two Prostrations due to Forgetfulness: These can be performed in exactly the same manner he normally performs them in the prayer; that is, by performing two prostrations and sitting between them.

When to Perform the Two Prostrations of Forgetfulness: They can be performed:

- After the final *tashahhud* and before reciting the *tasleem*, he performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness and then recites the *tasleem* as he normally does to conclude the prayer.
- After reciting the *tasleem*, he performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness and then recites the *tasleem* again.



> It is disliked to fiddle with the hands or face during the prayer.

Acts which Invalidate the Prayer

The prayer becomes invalid in the following cases:

- 1 If any of its pillars (*arkan*) or obligatory acts (*waajibaat*) are intentionally or forgetfully omitted despite one's ability.
- 2 If any of its obligatory acts (*waajibaat*) are intentionally left out.
- 3 Deliberately speaking whilst in prayer.
- 4 Laughing out loud whilst in prayer.
- 5 Making unnecessary, continuous movements.

Acts which Are Disliked During the Prayer

These are the acts which are bound to decrease the reward for one's prayer and negatively affect humility, concentration and attentiveness in it. They are as follows:

- 1 Turning the head around during prayer, When the Prophet ﷺ was asked about this act, he said, "It is a way of stealing by which Satan takes away a portion from a person's prayer." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 718)
- 2 Fiddling with one's hands or face, placing one's hands on the hips, clasping one's hands together and cracking one's fingers.
- 3 Engaging in prayer when one is distracted by something, such as one's need to answer the call of nature, for the Prophet ﷺ said, "No prayer can be correctly offered when the food is served before the worshipper, or when they is prompted by the call of nature." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 560)

> The Recommended Voluntary Prayers

Muslims are required to offer only five prayers a day.

However, Islam encourages them to offer other recommended prayers, for doing so makes them worthy of Allah's love and serve to make up for any deficiencies in the performance of the obligatory prayers.

The following are some of the most important supererogatory prayers:

1 The Supererogatory Prayers Accompanying the Obligatory Prayers (*As-Sunan Ar-Rawaatib*): These are the prayers that are offered before or after the obligatory prayers and Muslims generally do not neglect them.

Regarding the reward for performing these prayers, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah will build a house in Paradise for any Muslim who prays twelve units of voluntary prayer during the night and day." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 728)

They are as follows:

1	Two units before the <i>Fajr</i> prayer
2	Four units before the <i>Dhuhr</i> prayer, reciting the <i>tasleem</i> after each two units; and two other units after the <i>Dhuhr</i> prayer
3	Two units after the <i>Maghrib</i> prayer
4	Two units after the ' <i>Ishaa</i> ' prayer

2 The *Witr* Prayer: the Arabic word *witr* means "odd number" and refers to odd-numbered prayer offered after the '*Ishaa*' prayer. It is considered to be one of the best and most meritorious of all supererogatory prayers. The Prophet ﷺ once commanded the Muslims, "Followers of the Qur'an! Perform the *witr* prayer." (*Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: 453; *Sunan Ibn Maajah*: 1170)

The best time to offer the *witr* prayer is in the later part of the night before the *Fajr* prayer, but a Muslim may perform it at any time between the '*Ishaa*' and the *Fajr* prayers.

The minimum number of units for the *witr* prayer is one, but it is better to offer three. A Muslim may offer more if he wishes, but the maximum number of units which the Prophet ﷺ used to perform was eleven.

The units of the supererogatory prayers are generally offered two by two, followed by the *tasleem*. The *witr* prayer is no exception. However, if a Muslim wants to conclude his prayer, he must add one single unit, during which he may recite a special supplication, known as *qunoot* supplication. This supplication is recited after rising from the bowing position and before prostrating. After this supplication, he may pray to Allah and ask Him for whatever he wishes, holding his hands in front of him with both palms up.



Times During Which It Is Not Permissible to Offer the Supererogatory Prayers

A Muslim may offer a supererogatory prayer at any time, except at such times during which it is prohibited to offer them, as they are generally times specified for prayers offered by some non-Muslims. During these times, he is only allowed to make up for the obligatory prayers he may have missed or the supererogatory prayers which are offered for a reason, such as the prayer of *tahiyyatul-masjid*, “greeting the mosque”, a prayer which consists of two units and is performed upon entering the mosque and there is enough time to perform it before the obligatory prayer commences. A Muslim may, however, invoke Allah and recite supplications at any time.

These times are as follows:

1	From the time following the <i>Fajr</i> prayer until the sun rises above the horizon by the length of a spear, a short period of time specified in Islamic Law and is equal to approximately twenty minutes in countries with a temperate climate.
2	From the time the sun is at its zenith until it declines westward from the middle of the sky. This is a short period of time preceding the beginning of the time of the <i>Dhuhr</i> prayer.
3	From the time following the <i>‘Asr</i> prayer until sunset



> It is strictly prohibited to offer the optional prayers from the time following the *‘Asr* prayer until sunset.

> The Congregational Prayer

Allah ﷻ commands Muslim men to perform the five obligatory prayers in congregation and promises them a great reward for doing so. Mentioning the reward of the congregational prayer, the Prophet ﷺ once said, “The reward for a prayer offered in congregation is twenty-seven times greater than that offered by a person alone.” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 619; *Saheeh Muslim*: 650)

The congregational prayer can be established by at least two people, one of them acts as the prayer leader (*imaam*). However, the larger the congregation, the dearer it is to Allah.

Following the Imam in Prayer

This means that those praying behind the *imaam* must do the same as he does during the prayer by observing all the prayer movements and taking all the prayer postures, such as bowing and prostrating, immediately after him. They must not engage in any movement or posture before him or differ with him in this respect in anything whatsoever.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “The *imaam* is to be followed. Say *Allaahu akbar* when he says it, and do not say it until he says it first. Bow when he bows, and do not bow until he has done so first. When he says, *sami‘-Allaahu liman hamidah* (Allah listens to him who praises Him),’ say, “*Rabbanaa wa lak-al-hamd* (Our Lord, to You is due all praise).’ Prostrate when he prostrates, and do not prostrate until he has done so first.” (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 710, *Saheeh Muslim*: 414 and *Sunan Abu Daawood*: 603)



Who Should Lead the Prayer?

Generally speaking, the person who knows the Qur’an the best should be given preference in leading the prayer. If those present are equal in that respect, then the one who is best informed in the rules of religion, as the Prophet ﷺ said, “Let him act as *imaam* to a congregation who knows the Qur’an by heart the best; and if all present should be equal in that respect, then let him perform who has the deepest knowledge of the *Sunnah*...” (*Saheeh Muslim*: 673)

Where Does the *Imaam* and Those He Leads Stand in Prayer?

The *imaam* stands in front of those he leads in prayer (*ma’moomoon*; singular: *ma’moom* /follower). The followers, standing shoulder to shoulder, form straight lines behind him, and the front rows should be filled and completed first. If there is only one follower (*ma’moom*), he positions himself to the right of the *imaam*.

How to Make up for Missed Prayer Units

If the prayer has already started, the latecomer should join in the congregation in the very position in which he finds the *imaam*. For example, if he finds the *imaam* in the prostrate position, he must recite the *takbeer* and then prostrate himself. When the *imaam* concludes the congregational prayer by reciting the *tasleem*, the latecomer rises, reciting the *takbeer*, to assume a standing position and complete the rest of the prayer individually, by making up for the units he has missed.

The unit (*rak'ah*) that he catches up with the *imaam* when he first joins the congregation counts as the beginning of his own prayer, and whatever he makes up for after the *imaam* concludes the congregational prayer counts as the rest of his prayer.

How to Determine that a Complete *Rak'ah* Is Offered

The prayer is determined by the number of units offered in it; if a latecomer joins the congregation while the *imaam* is in the bowing position, he is considered to have offered a complete unit (*rak'ah*) even though he has not recited *Soorat Al- Faatihah* in that particular *rak'ah* in the standing position. If, however, he misses the bowing position, then he must recite the *takbeer* and join the congregation. In this case, he is considered to have missed this particular *rak'ah*, and whatever movements and postures in it do not count.

If someone joins the congregation during the *Fajr* prayer while the *imaam* is in the second *rak'ah*, he must, after the *imaam* concludes the prayer with the *tasleem*, rise, reciting the *takbeer*, to assume a standing position and make up for the other *rak'ah* which he has missed. He must not recite the *tasleem* until he completes the prayer, for the *Fajr* prayer consists of two units and he has only offered one unit with the *imaam*.

Examples Illustrating Ways of Making up for Missed Prayer Units

If he joins the congregation during the *Maghrib* prayer while the *imaam* is in the sitting position reciting the final *tashahhud*, he must, after the *imaam* concludes the prayer with the *tasleem*, rise, reciting the *takbeer*, to assume a standing position and offer three complete units of prayer. The reason for this is that he has joined the congregation only at its end while the *imaam* is reciting the final *tashahhud*. A unit (*rak'ah*) only counts as complete if one joins the congregation while the *imaam* is in the bowing posture.

If he joins the congregation during the *Dhuhr* prayer while the *imaam* is in the bowing position of the third *rak'ah*, then this means that he has offered two complete units of prayer, which count for him as his two first units. As soon as the *imaam* concludes the prayer with the *tasleem*, he must then rise, reciting the *takbeer*, to assume a standing position and offer two more units, namely the third and fourth units, considering that the *Dhuhr* prayer consists of four units of prayer.

> The Call to Prayer (Adhaan)

> The *adhaan* is one of the most meritorious acts in the sight of Allah ﷻ.



The *adhaan* serves the purpose of calling people to prayer and signalling the beginning of the time of an obligatory prayer. Another call, called the *iqaamah*, serves the purpose of summoning Muslims to line up for the beginning of the obligatory prayers. Muslims used to meet up and seek to know the time of prayer, but no one summoned them. One day they were discussing how to gather everyone for prayer.

Some suggested using a bell as the Christians do, and others recommended using a ram's horn, following an ancient Jewish practice. Then 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab ؓ, one of the Prophet's companions, suggested appointing someone to call people to prayer. The Prophet agreed, so he turned to Bilaal ؓ, and said, "Get up, Bilaal, and call the people to prayer." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 579; *Saheeh Muslim*: 377)

The Manner of Reciting the *Adhaan* and the *Iqaamah*

- Both the *adhaan* and the *iqaamah* must be recited in the case of a group of people (congregation) but it is not the case with an individual. If a congregation intentionally leave it out, their prayer will still be valid but they will be considered sinners.
- The *adhaan* ought to be recited in a nice and loud voice so people can hear it and come to the mosque and perform the congregational prayer.
- The *adhaan* has different formulas, all approved by the Prophet ﷺ. The following is the common formula:

The Adhaan

- 1 *Allaahu akbar* "Allah is the greatest of all" (four times)
- 2 *Ash hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah* "I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah" (twice)
- 3 *Ash hadu anna Muḥammadan rasoolullaah* "I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah" (twice)
- 4 *Hayya 'alassalaah* "Come to prayer" (twice)
- 5 *Hayya 'alal-falaah* "Come to success" (twice)
- 6 *Allaahu akbar* "Allah is the greatest of all" (twice)
- 7 *laa ilaaha illallaah* "There is no god worthy of worship except Allah" (once)

The *Iqaamah*

- 1 *Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar* “Allah is the greatest of all, Allah is the greatest of all”
- 2 *Ash hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah* “I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah”
- 3 *Ash hadu anna Muḥammadan rasoolullaah* “I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah”
- 4 *Hayya ‘alassalaah* “Come to prayer”
- 5 *Hayya ‘alal-falaah* “Come to success”
- 6 *Qad qaamat-issalaatu, qad qaamat-issalaah* “The prayer is about to begin, the prayer is about to begin”
- 7 *Allaahu akbar, Allaahu akbar* “Allah is the greatest of all, Allah is the greatest of all”
- 8 *laa ilaaha illallaah* “There is no god worthy of worship except Allah”

Responding to the *Adhaan*

It is recommended, upon hearing each statement of the *adhaan*, to repeat after the *mu’adh-dhin* (the caller to prayer) and say exactly as he says, except when he says *Hayya ‘alassalaah* “Come to prayer” or *Hayya ‘alal-falaah* “Come to success”, in which case one must say: *Laa hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaah*, which means “There is neither might nor power except with Allah”.

It is recommended to recite the following supplication after the *adhaan*: *Allaahumma rabba haadhih-id-da’wat-it-taammati, wassalaat-il-qaa’imati, aati Muḥammadan-il-waseelata wal-fadeelata, wab’athu maqaaman mahmoodan alladhee wa’adtah*

(O Allah! Lord of this perfect call and this established prayer, grant Muḥammad the intercession and favour, and raise him to the Praiseworthy Station which You have promised him).



> Allah ﷻ rewards for every step one takes to the mosque.

> Humility and Attentiveness in Prayer

Humility and attentiveness (*khushoo'*) constitute the essence of the prayer and involve deep concentration and total humility before Almighty Allah, trying one's best to concentrate and understand the Qur'anic verses and supplications recited in the prayer.

Being one of the most meritorious acts of worship, Allah ﷻ considers it to be one of the characteristics of the believers: "Successful indeed are the believers; they are those who humble themselves in their prayer." (*Al-Mu'minoon*, 23:1-2)

Those who observe *khushoo'* in their prayer taste the sweetness of worship and faith, hence the Prophet's saying, "The prayer is the source of my greatest joy." (*Sunan An-Nasaa'ee*: 3940)

Means of Observing *Khushoo'* in Prayer

There are a number of means which help develop this state of humility and attentiveness in prayer including the following:

1 Making the Necessary Preparations for the Prayer

This can be done by going early to the mosque (for men), observing the recommended acts that precede it, wearing appropriate and fine clothes and walking to the mosque humbly and in a dignified manner.

2 Keeping Distractions away

One must not engage in prayer while there are some distractions that are bound to affect his concentration, such as pictures, loud noises, the need to answer the call of nature and hunger and thirst after food has been served. By keeping such distractions away, one develops a serene mind that paves the way for better concentration in this great act of worship one is about to offer.



> The nearest a servant can be to his Lord is when he prostrates himself in prayer.

3 *Tuma'neenah*

Tuma'neenah has no equivalent in English, and it generally means avoiding haste and not moving from one posture to another until it has lasted at least the time that it took for the bones to settle. The Prophet ﷺ never offered his prayer hurriedly. He would perform all the prayer postures and movements perfectly and would not move from one posture to another until it lasted at least the time that it took for the bones to settle. He would also order those of his companions who rushed their prayers to take their time in all the prayer postures and movements and to complete them properly. He did not like them to rush it and compared the act of hurriedly offering the prayer to that of the pecking of crows.

He once said to his companions, "The worst kind of thief is one who steals from his prayer." They asked him, "How can someone steal from this prayer?" He replied, "By not completing its bowing and prostrate postures properly." (*Musnad Ahmad*: 22642)

Those who rush their prayer cannot possibly offer it with deep concentration and total humility before Almighty Allah, for haste undoubtedly affects attentiveness and humility in prayer, reducing one's rewards.

4 **Contemplating Allah's Greatness**

We must contemplate the greatness of the Creator, recognising His perfection and acknowledging our own weaknesses and defects. Those who contemplate the greatness of Allah cannot help but notice that they are rather worthless by comparison. This increases their reverence of Allah and makes them invoke Allah and humbly and earnestly ask Him for anything. We must also remember the eternal bliss Allah ﷻ has prepared for the obedient believers and the severe punishment

He has prepared for the unbelievers. We also must think about the day when we will stand before Allah for the final judgement.

Allah ﷻ mentions in the Qur'an that those who do so are indeed those who are certain they will meet Him: "Seek Allah's help with patient perseverance and prayer; and truly it is a very hard thing except for the humble, those who know that they will have to meet their Lord, and that to Him they are returning." (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 2:45-6)

The more conscious awareness we have that Allah can hear us, give us and respond to our prayers, the more humbleness we develop and the more we will contemplate Allah's greatness.

5 **Meditating on the Qur'anic Verses and Other Prayer Utterances and Responding to Them**

The Qur'an was revealed to be reflected on, as the Qur'an states, "It is a Book We have sent down to you, full of blessing, so let people of intelligence ponder its signs and take heed." (*Soorat Saad*, 38:29) This cannot be possibly achieved without understanding the meaning of the invocations, supplications and Qur'anic verses recited in prayer. Meditation on the meaning of what one recites as well as on one's own condition is bound to increase one's concentration and humility in prayer and even move one to tears and ecstasy. Such emotional effect becomes evident with every verse to which one listens, as the Qur'an states, "Those who, when they are reminded of the verses of their Lord, they do not turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to them." (*Soorat Al-Furqaan*, 25:73)

> The Friday Prayer (*Salaat-ul-Jumu'ah*)

The Friday prayer (*salaat-ul-jumu'ah*) is a religious obligation which takes the place of the daily afternoon prayer (*salaat-udh-Dhuhr*) on Friday. It is one of the most exalted Islamic rituals and one of its confirmed obligatory acts. On this day, Muslims gather once a week, listen to the sermon which the *imaam* delivers, and then offer the Friday prayer.

Virtues of Friday

Friday is the best and most exalted day of the week, for Allah ﷻ has favoured it over other days due to a number of virtues including the following:

- Allah ﷻ has specifically chosen it for the Muslims, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah led those who came before us away from Friday. The Jews had Saturday, and the Christians had Sunday. Then Allah brought us and He guided us to Friday." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 856)
- Allah created Adam on it, and on this very day the Day of Judgement will take place, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Friday is the best day on which the sun rises. On this day, Adam was created; on it he was admitted into Paradise and on it he was turned out of it. The Day of Judgement will also take place on Friday." (*Saheeh Muslim*: 854)



> Worshippers must listen attentively to the Friday sermon and must not engage in anything which is bound to distract them from it.

Who Must Perform the Friday Prayer?

The Friday prayer is a religious obligation that is binding on those who meet these conditions:

- 1 **They must be men:** Women do not have to offer it.
- 2 **They must be legally accountable (*mukallaf*)** for their actions: It is not obligatory for insane or children who have not reached puberty.
- 3 **They must be resident:** It is not obligatory for travellers or those who live in the countryside, outside towns and cities.

The Friday Prayer: Manner and Rulings

1 It is recommended that a Muslim should take a ritual bath (*ghush*), wear nice and clean clothes and proceed early to the mosque.

2 Muslims gather in the mosque. The *imaam* mounts the pulpit (*minbar*), faces the worshippers and delivers the *khutbah* (sermon), which normally consists of two sections, between which he sits briefly. In this sermon, he reminds them of being conscious of Allah, offers them advice, preaches to them and recites to them verses from the Qur'an.

3 Muslims must listen attentively to the *khutbah*. They are not allowed to engage in talking or do anything which will otherwise deprive them of benefiting from the *khutbah*, even if it is fiddling with the carpet, stones or sand.

4 The *imaam* then descends from the pulpit, takes his position and leads the people in a two-rak'ah prayer in which he recites the Qur'an aloud.

5 The Friday prayer can only be performed if a certain number of people are present. If any person misses it for a valid reason, he cannot make up for it; and if he offers it on his own, it will not be valid. Instead, he must offer the daily afternoon prayer (*salaat-udh-Dhuhr*).

6 If a person comes late to the mosque and catches up with the *imaam* in less than one unit (*rak'ah*), he must complete his prayer after the *imaam* concludes the prayer, treating it as the afternoon prayer (*salaat-udh-Dhuhr*).

7 Those who are exempt from offering the Friday prayer, such as women and travellers, do not have to offer the daily afternoon prayer (*salaat-udh-Dhuhr*) if they have already performed the Friday prayer in the mosque.

Those who Are Exempt from Attending the Friday Prayer

Islam stresses that Muslims who are not exempt from offering the Friday prayer must perform it and warns them against occupying themselves with worldly pursuits: "O you who believe, when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business and traffic. That is best for you if you only knew." (*Soorat Al-Jumu'ah*, 62:9)

It also warns that Allah will set a seal on the hearts of those who miss it without a valid excuse, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah will seal up the hearts of those who



miss three Friday prayers consecutively, out of sheer negligence and without an excuse.” (*Sunan Abu Daawood*: 1052; *Musnad Ahmad*: 15498) This means that He will cover their hearts and place ignorance in them, just like the hearts of hypocrites and disobedient people.

An excuse that is considered genuinely valid for missing a Friday prayer is one which involves unusually great hardship or one which is bound to cause serious harm to one’s health or is detrimental to one’s livelihood.



> “Say, ‘What is with Allah is better than trade or entertainment.’”
(*Soorat Al-Jumu’ah*, 62:11)

Can a career that requires one to work at the time of the Friday prayer be considered a valid excuse to miss it?

Generally, taking up careers that require one to carry on working at the time of the Friday prayer is not a valid excuse for missing the Friday prayer, for Allah ﷻ commands us to leave our worldly pursuits when we are called to the Friday prayer: “O you who believe, when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business and traffic.” (*Soorat Al-Jumu’ah*, 62:9) Therefore, a Muslim is required to take up jobs that will not prevent him from observing religious obligations even if such jobs are with less pay.

The Qur’an also states, “For those who fear Allah, He ever prepares a way out, and He provides for them from sources they never could imagine. And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him.” (*Soorat At-Talaq*, 65:2-3)

When Can a Career Be Considered a Valid Excuse to Miss the Friday Prayer?

A career which requires us to carry on working during the time of the Friday prayer can only be considered a valid excuse in the following two cases:

- 1 Such a career must provide a great benefit which cannot be possibly realised if a person leaves the job and attends the Friday prayer. By the same token, leaving it will certainly cause great harm, especially when there is no one else to replace him.

Examples:

- Doctors who treat emergency cases.
- Guards or police officers who protect people and their property from theft and criminal activity.
- People who hold supervisory positions in large firms and the like which require constant supervision.

- 2 If such a career is the sole source of income which covers his basic expenses, such as food, drink and other necessary matters, for him and his family, then he may not attend the Friday prayer and may continue his work until he finds an alternative job or until he finds a source of food, drink and necessary matters that are sufficient for himself and his dependents. However, he must keep looking for another source of income.

> The Prayer of the Sick

A Muslim must offer the obligatory prayers under all circumstances as long as he is fully conscious and in full possession of his mental faculties. Islam does, however, take into account people's various situations and special needs, hence its legislation regarding sick people.

To clarify this point:

- If he is too sick to stand up, or if offering the prayer in a standing posture is bound to delay recovery, he is allowed to offer it in a sitting posture. If he cannot possibly do so, then he can offer it while lying down on his side. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Pray standing; if you cannot do so, pray in a sitting position; if you cannot do so either, then pray on your side." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree*: 1066)
- If he cannot bow or prostrate, he may only lean forward as far as he can.
- If he cannot sit down on the floor, he may sit on a chair or anything similar.
- If he cannot perform *wudoo'* for every prayer due to his sickness, he may combine the afternoon prayer (*Dhuhr*) and the late afternoon prayer (*Asr*), and the sunset prayer (*Maghrib*) and late evening prayer (*Ishaa'*)
- If he cannot use water due to his illness, he may perform *tayammum* (dry ablution) instead and then offer the prayer.

> *The Traveller's Prayer*

- **A traveller may**, when moving from one place to another or during his temporary residence which lasts less than four days, shorten the four-*rak'ah* prayers to two each. Thus, he offers two units (*rak'aat*, singular: *rak'ah*) instead of four for the afternoon prayer (*Dhuhr*), the late afternoon prayer (‘*Asr*’) and the late evening prayer (‘*Ishaa*’), unless he prays behind a resident prayer leader (*imaam*), in which case he must follow suit.
- **He may leave off** the supererogatory prayers that are regularly offered with the obligatory ones (*as-sunan ar-rawaatib*) with the exception of the supererogatory prayer of the Fajr prayer.
- **He may combine** the afternoon prayer (*Dhuhr*) and the late afternoon prayer (‘*Asr*’), and the sunset prayer (*Maghrib*) and the late evening prayer (‘*Ishaa*’) at the due time of either of them. This serves to ease the hardship he undergoes while travelling.

