

As-Salah – The Prayer

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 1 of 3]

Introduction

Before I start, I would like to say that a lot of people have requested this topic. I did not select it.

Someone asked me how he should stand while performing prayers; what he should say, and is *wudu*¹ necessary or not. And when I said, yes, he replied, “This was in the olden times *ya akhi* (O brother), when the people used to wash their hands by rubbing them with sand, but today everyone of us has a shower with Lux soap every morning, so why do I have to do wudu again? Won’t the shower make up for the whole day? I don’t need to do wudu.” That truly seems to be what I call “American Islam!”²

On the other hand, some people complicate it and say that when you make wudu you have to say this when you wash your face, you have to say this when you wash your hands, you have to say this³ when you wash your feet. *I say to you just make your wudu and don’t open your mouth; don’t say anything and your wudu is correct.*

And when it comes to prayer, many of our brothers

here maintain that you have to say that *Du’a Tawajjo*⁴ at the beginning. What is that? I have never heard about that.⁵ *La!*⁶ Don’t say that. Just say, “I make intention to pray Fajr,⁷ or Zuhr,⁸ *Allah-u-Akbar*” and read Al-Fātihah.⁹ The most essential thing in the prayer is recitation of Al-Fātihah while standing up. Saying *Subhana Rabi-al ‘Adeem*¹⁰ three times when bowing, saying *Subhana Rabi-al ‘Ala*¹¹ three times while prostrating, and reading *Attashahud*¹² after every two *rak’ahs*¹³ while sitting down. These are the pillars of the prayer. If you do this, your

⁴ “Prayer of Attention”

⁵ Imam states in a tone which indicates that he has heard of it but he does not think it is necessary or needed. He then recites two different *du’a* of this kind in Arabic

⁶ No!

⁷ Dawn prayer

⁸ Noon prayer

⁹ The opening chapter of the Qur’an.

¹⁰ Glory be to God, the Greatest.

¹¹ Glory be to God, the Greatest of the great.

¹² A section of prayer to be recited while sitting.

¹³ Each “*rak’ah*” is a unit consisting of standing, bowing, and prostrating twice.

¹ Mandatory ablution before offering the ritual prayer

² Imam states with a hint of surprise and disbelief in his voice

³ Referring to recitation of certain prayers

prayer is correct and you need not do anything else.

There is *sunnah*,¹⁴ which you can add to your prayers. *Sunnah* means “optional”; if you do it, it’s good, if you don’t do it, it will *not* void your prayers. So what you are going to see in the movie today is a demonstration of the prayer and wudu. You will see that when you are prostrating, there are seven parts of the body,¹⁵ which are directed towards the qibla.¹⁶

The main thing is to pray. How? I think I remember saying this to you one day. Someone who normally does not pray himself asked me, “Which is right, Imam? I see people are standing up in prayer like that,¹⁷ and I see people standing in prayer like that,¹⁸ and I see people standing up in prayer like that.¹⁹ Which is correct?” I said to him stand up in prayer like that²⁰ and I’ll thank you very much! *Just pray!*²¹ So sometimes we argue over the nonessentials. We talk about the skin and we leave the core. The main idea is to pray, because prayer is the only direct link between man and God. And when you are standing up in prayer, with the feeling that you are facing your Creator – that is the feeling – then these movements and actions that you are doing are just rituals, and that is why the Prophet said, “Actions are to be judged according to intentions.” The first and most important thing in the prayer is *al niyyah* – the intention.

A lot of people have asked why we raise our hands when we say *Allahu Akbar*, and they see different people doing slightly different actions so they ask, “Why?” This is because there are different schools of thought, for example, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i, Hanbali, Ja’fari, ‘Ibadi. These are all accepted schools of thought in Islam and everyone has an idea or opinion, and you cannot say this one is right and this one is wrong. All of them got their information from the Prophet,

either from the hadith²² or from seeing him during his lifetime. In the essential things there are no differences in these schools of thought. The differences are always in the minor or additional things; so do them the way you like, but the main thing is to pray and establish the link with God five times a day.

I have received two questions which I am going to share with you. One question is from Toledo, Ohio, and the second question is from Kingston, Ontario. It will give us an idea about how the Muslims view Islam nowadays. The question from Kingston, Ontario, came in the form of a letter. Since they are building a mosque, they are asking where the women should pray: “Is it necessary that the women should be at the back, or could the women be parallel to the men, as long as they are separated from each other?” The letter mentioned that a general assembly meeting was going to be held on the 15th of January²³ and that they would appreciate an answer before then so it could be put before the general assembly because they were having a lot of trouble with the issue of where women should pray in a mosque. This makes me think that, especially in North America, nothing occupies the Muslims²⁴ more than the woman: they are very busy with where the woman should stand, where the woman should pray, should the woman come to the mosque or not? And in fact, this preoccupation of what the woman should, or should not be doing is a disease among some groups of Muslims.

Imam Shafi’i²⁵ lived in two cities, or rather, two countries. He lived in Baghdad, Iraq, and he lived in Egypt. He gave *fatwas*²⁶ in Baghdad, and when he went to Egypt, he changed his mind and he changed his fatwas. And when reminded about having said something different when he was in Iraq, his answer was, “There is a difference in the environment, and a change in environment will change the outlook because we weigh our fatwas and our verdicts keeping in mind the public benefits resulting from them.” So what about us nowadays? Should we not use our brains and make *ijtehad*²⁷ to suit our environment?

There is a group from our community going for

¹⁴ Additional rak’ahs of prayer offered by the Prophet in addition to the obligatory or Fard rak’ahs.

¹⁵ The face (forehead and nose), two hands, two feet, and two knees.

¹⁶ The *Ka’bah* – the House of God, in Makkah – the direction of prayer, and it means that these seven parts of the body *should be touching the ground* during prostration.

¹⁷ Imam demonstrates with his hands folded over the mid abdomen like he himself used to do.

¹⁸ Demonstrates this time with his arms folded across his chest.

¹⁹ Demonstrates with his arms down by his sides

²⁰ Imam stands with his hands behind his back, obviously joking.

²¹ Now Imam resumes a very serious tone

²² A report or account of what the Prophet said

²³ 1990

²⁴ Men

²⁵ Founder of the Shafi’i School of Thought in Islam. Born in Gaza, Syria, in 69H, died 122H in Egypt (767 CE-820 CE).

²⁶ Religious verdicts.

²⁷ A sincere effort to make an educated, enlightened, and informed opinion explaining an issue related to Islam.

‘Umrah next month, and while making *tawaf*²⁸ around the Ka‘bah, they will find that there is no separation between males and females. They will be praying in Al Masjid Al Haram²⁹ and they will find that the women are sitting on one side and the men are sitting on the other side, and there is no partition between the two. All of them are praying in the same mosque with no partition. And I remember a Saudi friend, who visited us here one day, said, “That partition is very low.”³⁰ I said to him, “But it is higher than the partition in Al Masjid Al Haram!” That is the type of Muslim who is creating trouble for no reason. When the woman goes to a bar she is highly welcomed. When she goes to a movie house everyone will receive her with joy. When she goes to a nightclub she will be applauded. But when she goes to a mosque she is rejected. Isn’t that so?

So, this is the letter with the above question [holding up the letter]. On the other side, I have a question from someone in Toledo. One of our ladies came to me and said, “Recently we had a party where there was dancing, *dabka*³¹ and fun, and I did not attend it. So, some of the ladies bombarded me with questions as to why I wasn’t there, and when I said to them that I did not attend such events, they asked me to give them a verse from the Qur’an which prohibits the *dabka*.” See the extremes? We have no middle. We are either on the far right or on the far left. I told her I was not going to answer that question, but if anyone should ask her that question, she should just play deaf. I told her if you are convinced of what you are doing, don’t let anyone influence you; you just do what you believe in.

You know, there was no Lebanon at the time of the Prophet, and the *dabka* did not exist at that time so a revelation could come to him regarding the *dabka*. But I looked into the Qur’anic verses in the hope that maybe I will find something that will just give a clue in this matter and I found it! I found the Qur’anic verse which prohibits the *dabka*! It did not talk about *dabka* specifically by name, but it talked about the *movements of dabka*. What the Qur’anic verse says is:

“ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنَ زِينَتِهِنَّ ”

... and they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments...³² So, if that *fatwa* seems right to you, follow it; if not, you did not hear me say anything.

Only one hour ago, I received the monthly pamphlet of Rashad Khalifa from Arizona, in which he says the Muslim imams believe the Trinity. That is the title, so, naturally, I started to read it. And I found the “trinity” he is talking about is the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the *Ijma’a*.³³ The man himself believes in the Qur’an only, and he does not believe in the Sunnah; he says that *hadith* is junk and we should not follow it. So, he accuses the imams of believing in the “trinity” and mentions these three sources of Islam as constituting a trinity according to him. With this introduction, now let us come to our main topic – As-Salah.

If we examine the Qur’an as a whole, we will not find any verse which prescribes the number of prayers to be offered during the day. Nor will we find any verse which specifies the postures of standing up, bowing, prostrating, and sitting down. We’ll not find any verse which names the prayers as *Fajr*, *Zuhr*, *‘Asr*, *Maghrib*, or *‘Isha*. We’ll not find any Qur’anic verse which prescribes the *Fard*³⁴ part of *Fajr* as being two rak‘ahs, *Maghrib* three rak‘ahs, and the rest as four rak‘ahs. *How did we get to know that? From the sunnah!*

The sunnah is of three kinds: *Sunnah Qawliya*, normally referred to as *hadith*. The word *hadith* is taken from the verb *haddaka*, which means “To talk”. So, *Sunnah Qawliya* are the *sayings* of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The second is *Sunnah Al Fi’liyyah* or the *actions* of the Prophet. The third is *Sunnah Taqerriya*, which refers to practices that existed before the advent of Islam, and which the Prophet did not prohibit; he accepted those traditions and said there was no harm in them; they can be continued. If we examine the prayer in that framework, the Prophet said, “Pray as you have seen me pray”. His contemporaries found him reading *Fatihah* while standing up, bowing and saying *Subhana Rabi-al Adheem*, prostrating twice in every rak‘ah and saying *Subhanna Rabi- al ‘Ala*, sitting

²⁸ Circumambulation – a ritual of the Hajj or Pilgrimage.

²⁹ The Grand Mosque in Makkah containing the Ka‘bah.

³⁰ The prayer room in the Islamic Center consists of one big octagonal hall under the dome, with a three-foot high partition along the center. The women pray on the left side of the partition and the men pray on the right side.

³¹ A form of Lebanese dance.

³² 24:31

³³ The consensus of the Muslim scholars.

³⁴ Obligatory.

down and reading *Attashahhud*, and the people of succeeding generations have followed the same. So, in fact, the Qur'an did not talk about these things and if someone will come to me and say, "Give me a verse of the Qur'an which says that the prayers are five" I'll say to him, "Sorry, there is no such verse".

Normally we read between the lines. There is a Qur'anic verse which indicates that the prayers are more than one – it does not specify the number – but it says:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ
وَقَوْمُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

... perform regularly your prayer, especially the middle one."³⁵

From this command we deduce that there may be 3, 5, 7, or any odd number so it will have one in the middle. How does the Qur'an prove that the words contained in it are not those

of a man but of the One who created Man? Here is the challenge of the Qur'an to the human mind: from the sunnah of the Prophet, and the way he offered his prayer, we agree that the daily prayers are five in number. So the Muslim scholars of the past attempted to determine which prayer is the "middle one". Everyone had an opinion and they differed among themselves. Some said it is the *Fajr*³⁶ prayer, because it is in the middle between the night, which has ended, and the day, which has just begun. Another scholar maintained that it is the *Zuhr*³⁷ prayer, because it falls in the middle of the day. Another scholar said that it is the '*Asr*³⁸ prayer, because it is between the *Fajr* and *Zuhr* on one side, and *Maghrib*³⁹ and '*Isha*⁴⁰ on the other. A fourth scholar said that it is the *Maghrib* prayer, because it is between the end of the day and the start of the night. Yet a fifth scholar came along and insisted that it is the '*Isha* prayer because '*Isha* is located between the day and the night and his reason was that the day does not end until the twilight disappears from the horizon. So, the direction we get from the Qur'anic verse which says, "Perform regularly your prayer, especially the middle one" is that we have to perform regularly *each and every prayer* and we have not reached any definite conclusion as to what constitutes the "middle prayer".

³⁵ 2:238

³⁶ Dawn

³⁷ Noon

³⁸ Late afternoon

³⁹ Sunset

⁴⁰ Late night after the end of the twilight period

We refer to the Qur'an as a constitution. A constitution represents the highest law. You cannot amend a constitution except through the authority which established it. You know, we have, here in America, three levels of law: we have federal laws, we have state laws, and we have municipal laws, and above all these is the Constitution. Anything in these laws which is in conflict with the Constitution is declared null and void. It is in a similar vein when we refer to the Qur'an as a constitution. The *hadith*, and *ijma'a*, and the *qiyas*⁴¹ are sources of Islamic Law. If any one of them is in conflict with the Qur'an, it will be null and void. So don't ask anyone to give you a Qur'anic verse that will take care of everything in your life because, the Qur'an, like a constitution, consists of general rules.

The lesson from this is that *even prayer, an important pillar of Islam*, which is also the most repeated one, is not detailed in the Qur'an, but we follow the sunnah. And, as a result, we find lots of differences because the Prophet prayed in different places and, at different times, he performed different actions. But there are no differences of opinion in the essential things. Have you ever seen anyone not performing *rukū'*?⁴² Never! Or *sujood*?⁴³ Or standing up and reading *Fātihah*? Or reading *Attashahhud*? Never! There is no difference in those essentials and no two people will differ with each other on those. But the differences are in regard to placing your hands and all that. These are very minor things. Whether you do them or you don't do them, they will not affect your prayer.

At some time it has occurred to most of us to ask ourselves the questions *why* we raise our hands when we enter into the prayer and *why* we call this *Takbeer-el-Ihram*? Why do we say *Subhana Rabi-al Adheem* when bowing? Why do we say *Subhanna Rabi-al 'Ala* when we are prostrating? Why are we reciting *Attashahhud* when we are sitting? Why don't we read or say anything else? All these actions have a meaning. The actions of the prayer complement and harmonize with what we recite. Normally, when someone bows, he bows before a great person. In *rukū'*, we are bowing before God and while we are bowing we say *Subhana Rabi-al Adheem* (Glory be to God, the greatest). In the same manner, while we are in *sujood* and our forehead and nose are touching the ground and our

⁴¹ Analogy

⁴² Bowing

⁴³ Prostration

position is the lowest or humblest, the Muslim is acknowledging that God is the highest of the high by saying *Subhana Rabi- al'Ala*.

The most essential part of the prayer is reciting Al-Fatihah. If you didn't do that, it is as if you didn't pray. According to some Muslim scholars, if you don't recite *Attashahhud* while sitting down, but you sit for a duration long enough in which it could be recited – even though you didn't actually recite it – your prayer is correct. But, without Al-Fatihah, your prayer is invalid.

When you enter into the prayer you say “I make intention to pray Salat-al-Fajr” and you raise your hands up to your ears. What does that mean? It means, “O God, everything related to this world and its ornaments I am putting behind my back, and now I am entering into contemplation, to be in a direct link with You.” That is why you raise your hands up to put everything at the back; that is the meaning of it. It is stated in the books of fiqh⁴⁴ that you have to touch your earlobes with your thumbs as you say *Allahu Akbar* and this specific action is called *Takbeer-el-Ihram*. *Ihram* is adapted from the verb *yuharrim* which means “to prohibit.” The *Takbeer-el-Ihram* is the pronouncement of *Allahu Akbar* which will make what was legitimate before saying it, prohibited immediately thereafter. So, before beginning the prayer, you could answer the telephone, but now, as soon as you begin the prayer, it is prohibited; you cannot open the door, you cannot eat, you cannot chew gum, you cannot smoke; you cannot do any of these actions which were legitimate before. *Takbeer-el-Ihram* prohibits you from doing what was permissible before you pronounced it.

In the Army, when soldiers are standing in formation, they stand in a way such that their feet form the shape of the letter V [heels together and toes apart]. This is the most comfortable way to stand up, and, as they say nowadays, the most ergonomic way. And that is exactly how Muhammad stood up in prayer and he recommended it.

Immediately following the *Takbeer-el-Ihram*, there are some *du'a*⁴⁵ people recite and they are called *Du'a Tawajjo* (Imam recites two different ones in Arabic). There are many kinds of supplications which the people recite after *Takbeer-el-Ihram* and some people make a big issue of it, especially when children neglect to recite it while they are learning how to

pray. But it is not a must. It is not obligatory. Whether you recite it or not, your prayer is correct. If you say it, good, if you say any other *du'a*, good, and if you don't know any *du'a*, then just forget about it and start with recitation of the Fatihah right away. [The following is a translation of the seven verses of Al-Fatihah:]

1. “In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace:
2. All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds,
3. The Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace
4. Lord of the Day of Judgment.
5. Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid.
6. Guide us to the Straight Way –
7. The Way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned by Thee, nor of those who go astray!”

Why is Al-Fatihah selected from the entire Qur'an to be recited especially in the prayer? Al-Fatihah is referred to in the Qur'an as “The Mother of the Book (*Ummul Kitab*)”.⁴⁶ Fatihah is, in itself, a form of supplication: O God, guide us to the straight way, the way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed thy blessings not the way of those who have been condemned by Thee, nor of those who go astray. This is all supplication, but Al-Fatihah starts by the praise *Alhamdulillah* which means “Praise be to God”. This is followed by some attributes of God: the first one is *Rabb bil 'Alameen* which means “Cherisher and Sustainer of all the worlds”. *'Alameen* is the plural of *'ala* which means “world”.

God is the Cherisher and Sustainer of “all the worlds”. What are the worlds? There are varieties of them: there is the world of the human beings, the world of animals, the world of birds, the world of plants, the world of sea animals and so on, and He is the God of all these worlds. And if He is their God, then, it means all of these creations are worshipping Him. What does the word “worship” mean? It means “to obey”. So, all these “worlds” are obeying His orders. The sun rises in the east every morning and sets in the west, and that is the obedience of the sun to the laws of its Creator. The birds are glorifying His name in their nests; the animals are glorifying His name wherever they are. The Qur'an says:

⁴⁴ Jurisprudence

⁴⁵ Supplications

⁴⁶ 13.39

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَّا
تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ

Everything in that universe is glorifying His name but you don't understand their language."⁴⁷ So when you are saying "الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ" Praise be to God, the Lord of all the Worlds" it includes all those creatures and planets and not only the human beings.

The reason *Sura Al-Fātihah* is referred to as the *Mother of the Book* is that it encompasses all that is essential in the Islamic faith, especially the unity and the attributes of God. In another part of the Qur'an *Al-Fātihah* is referred to as "The Seven Oft-Repeated Verses".⁴⁸ This means that the first *ayah* (verse), *Bi-smi-Allah-ir- Rahmān-ir- Raheem*,⁴⁹ is included as an essential part of the sura. Looking into the rest of the chapters or suras of the Qur'an, we find only one other sura – *Sura An-Naml*⁵⁰ – where *Bi-smi-Allah-ir- Rahmān-ir- Raheem* is written

at the start of the chapter and mentioned again in the body of the sura. The one at the start of the sura is not counted as a verse of that chapter, but the one mentioned in the body of the sura is an integral part of it. *Naml* – ant. Even the ant has a chapter in the Qur'an named after it! I am reminded of the Arab guy who said, "Read for us some of the chapter of the camel". When he was told that there was no chapter in the Qur'an named after the camel, he said, "This *little ant* has a chapter and the camel has nothing!"

All our obligations for worship including prayer, fasting, zakah,⁵¹ pilgrimage,⁵² as well as all the prohibitions in Islam are meant, not only to be of spiritual benefit to man, but of psychological and physical benefit as well. The Prophet used to resort to prayer whenever something was worrying him, and it is a very well-known saying that he used to say to Bilal, the *muezzin*⁵³ "Give us the ease through the prayer" – meaning psychological ease.

⁴⁷ 17:44

⁴⁸ 15:87

⁴⁹ "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace."

⁵⁰ Chapter 27 of the Qur'an, entitled "The Ant"

⁵¹ The obligatory poor-due (2.5% of net income.)

⁵² Hajj: the greater pilgrimage, and 'Umrah: the lesser pilgrimage.

⁵³ The person who makes the call to prayer, the *adhān*

As-Salah – The Prayer

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 2 of 3]

Wudū' and Adhān

Today we are going to talk about things which precede the prayer.

Before we enter into a prayer we have to have *wudū'*⁵⁴ and many people, sometimes, are unsure of the essentials of *wudū'*, or how to make *wudū'*. I intend to make this talk more educational especially as this topic was a request from some members; they would like to know more details about these things which are essential in Islam. What should one say while making *wudū'*? What parts are obligatory to be washed? What are the optional parts to be washed? If one cannot make *wudū'*, is there any substitute for it and what is the method of substituting for the *wudū'*? And a question which is commonly asked by many people is, “Can I wash my feet once a day and then, while making *wudū'* before each prayer, I just run my wet hands over my socks?” I am going to talk about all these items today.

The prayer leads to cleanliness of the spirit; it is paired with cleanliness of the body, so the *wudū'* was imposed upon Muslims. [Imam quotes in Arabic. The English translation

is:]

“O you who have attained to faith! When you are about to pray, wash your face, and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and pass your wet hands lightly over your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles” [5:6].

Washing those four parts of the body mentioned in the Qur'anic verse, are, therefore, obligatory. If a Muslim will do a minimum of this much, his *wudū'* is correct and in turn, his prayer is valid. If a person does the optional sunnah which the Prophet added, such as rinsing the mouth, rinsing the nose, washing the ears and rubbing the neck, it will increase his reward, but if he does not, there is no punishment for that, and it will not affect the validity of his prayer. This is the minor *wudū'* which is the one that we do before each prayer.

How many types of *wudū'* are there in Islam? There are three kinds. The minor *wudū'* I talked about already. The major *wudū'* is referred to in the Islamic fiqh as *al ghusl*, or, what we call in English “shower”. It should wash all the body. This major *wudū'* is sometimes obligatory and sometimes

⁵⁴ Obligatory ablutions prior to praying

sunnah.⁵⁵ For example, the Prophet used to have a shower before going to the mosque on Friday and he said, "If anyone makes wudū' only before going for the Friday prayer it is okay, but it is better to have a shower." But the *ghusl* or the major wudū' is a must in certain cases: it is obligatory after intercourse for both the man and the woman, and it is also obligatory on the woman at the end of her monthly period and after the cessation of the bloody discharge following a delivery.

What is the difference between the shower (*al ghusl*) and the minor wudū'? There is a very touchy point here we should know. You remember we said that in the minor wudū' rinsing the mouth and rinsing the nose are sunnah, but in the major wudū' they are *fard*.⁵⁶

Many Muslims frequently inquire if they have a shower, do they still have to perform wudū' separately? The answer is no. If the water reaches every part of the body, then what do you need the wudū' for? By showering you have actually done more than a wudū', so it is not a must; if you have a shower, then you have your wudū' automatically.

The third type of wudū' is called *tayammum* (the dry wudū'). What are the circumstances which will legitimize the *tayammum*? The first is lack of availability of water within a reasonable distance. Muslim scholars have agreed upon a distance of one mile. If water is available more than a mile away, it will be rather difficult for a person to go, make wudū', and come back. In this case he could make *tayammum*. For us now, we have no excuse: you push a button and you have hot water; you push another button and you have cold water; and you can even mix the two, but, in spite of all this convenience, we are not ready to make wudū'. See the bounties of God on us and we are not even willing to thank Him for that. We still want more: we want the tap to bring oil, not water!

Other reasons for doing *tayammum* include sickness, travel, and fighting. If a person is sick and unable to make wudū', or upon the advice of a doctor, he is not to use water on his body, *tayammum* is permissible. It could be done also if a person is traveling and he has water with him, but it is for drinking. Soldiers, while they are fighting in the army of Islam, are allowed to have *tayammum* in lieu of wudū', because, if they will go somewhere to make wudū', it may take them away from the battlefield and they may be killed. The idea behind it is to make the life of the Muslim easy.

The *tayammum* is a substitute for wudū' and when a Muslim performs it, he can enter into prayer. Being a substitute for the normal wudū', it has nothing to do with cleanliness since no water is involved and it is merely a symbolic action because, you know, you have to do something to get to another thing. *Yā'nī*,⁵⁷ Allah, *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*,⁵⁸ was able to make the palm tree shower ripe dates upon Maryam⁵⁹ so she could eat after delivering Jesus. But nothing can happen without one exerting an effort and so she had to exert an effort for the dates to fall from the tree. To make a cause for an effect and, so that everyone should *work* for anything that one is to acquire, the order came to her from God: "Shake the trunk of the tree, ripe dates will fall upon you."⁶⁰ What could she do with a big palm trunk? How could she shake it? But she did *something*. So the *tayammum* is a symbolic ritual that replaces the wudū' which is obligatory before entering into prayer.

The *tayammum* is performed by touching a wall, or sand, or, as the Qur'an describes it "a pure dust", with the palms of your two hands, then rubbing the face, then touching the pure dust again and rubbing your left hand over the right hand and forearm up to the elbow, and then rubbing your right hand over the left hand and forearm. That is the symbolic *tayammum*.

There is a very important point here. If a Muslim cannot afford to perform Hajj, be that for physical reasons or for financial reasons, he is exempted. If he is sick or traveling, he is exempted from fasting, but he is required to make up for the missed fasts later. But if his illness is such that he cannot fast at any time, then he is supposed to pay the ransom, which is to feed one poor person for each day that he missed fasting. A Muslim person, who is poor, is exempt from paying *zakah*.⁶¹ This leaves only one pillar of Islam for which there is no exemption and no ransom, and that is prayer. A Muslim must do it even if he is terminally ill – with or without the wudū'. He must perform the prayer standing up if he can, or sitting down if he cannot stand, or lying on his side if he cannot sit, and as a last resort, by nodding his head or just his eyelashes to

⁵⁵ Optional

⁵⁶ Obligatory

⁵⁷ An Arabic expression which has no equivalent in English and means, loosely, "I mean" or, "you know" or, "in other words" depending on the context.

⁵⁸ Glory be to Him, He is above all

⁵⁹ Mary, mother of Jesus

⁶⁰ 19:25

⁶¹ The obligatory poor due (2.5% of net income)

indicate the *rukū'* and *sujood*.⁶² In Chapter *Āl-e-Imrān* there is a verse which indicates all this.⁶³ So, when it comes to prayer there is no exemption at all for it. This shows the importance of prayer in Islam.

When a man or woman is impure, i.e. after sexual intercourse, during the monthly period, or after the birth of a child, there are certain things that are prohibited for them. It is prohibited for them to enter a mosque, to touch or read the Qur'an, and it is prohibited for them to circle around the Ka'bah. What is the meaning of "mosque" as that term is used here? The mosque is the place where people perform their prayer. In a building like this one,⁶⁴ the area which can properly be called a "mosque" is that carpeted area only. The rest of the building does not constitute a mosque. Therefore, such a person can go everywhere else except enter that room if he or she is in an impure condition. Some people ask why they cannot touch the Qur'an. The Qur'anic verse is very clear: "Which none shall touch except those who are pure."⁶⁵ Another question frequently asked is, "My neighbor is a Christian – or a Jew – and he asked me to show him the Qur'an; he would like to have a copy of the Qur'an. Can I give him a Qur'an?" Some of our people say no, because he is "impure". I say, no, *give* it to him, because the Islamic Law is not applicable to Christians or Jews. The Law is applicable to *you* because you are a citizen of Islam and you are not supposed to touch the Qur'an if you are impure. And, who knows, maybe, when that Christian or Jew has a Qur'an, God will guide him and he may find it attractive enough, so he will come here and pay *zakah* and, at least, make up for some of you!

If a woman goes for Hajj or 'Umrah and it happens that her monthly period begins while she is there, then, some Muslim scholars are of the opinion that she could circle around the Ka'bah, and thereby, at least, fulfill part of the obligation after undertaking a long trip from a distant land. Some modern people nowadays suggest that she take some pills which will postpone her period. From the Islamic point of view, it is permissible to postpone the onset of menstruation.

The question about washing the feet as part of wudū'

has been asked. There are a lot of people who complain that their socks smell, or that their feet smell, and they buy powders and chemicals of all kinds to mask the smell and they give business to the Jews. You can avoid smelly feet and socks by washing your feet as part of your wudū' five times a day. And if you know someone who does not pray and he has that problem, advise him to have wudū' five times a day and let him see for himself how it gets rid of the odor. The prayer is meant to cleanse the heart. If the cleanliness of the heart is combined with the cleanliness of the body, then you have achieved the spiritual and the material. That is the essence of the obligation of wudū' – to keep the Muslims clean. If you are going to meet a congressman, you take a shower before you leave, wear a nice suit, and then go to meet a congressman. So, in a similar analogy, if you are going to meet with God – in prayer – at least, you have to be clean. The four parts of the body that are to be washed during wudū' are normally the most exposed parts of the body. When it comes to the feet, the Muslim who prays five times a day and washes his feet five times a day can, I'm sure, wear his socks for two weeks and he will not smell! But the guy who is not required to make wudū' may need to change his socks every day. Therefore, wudū' is the highest type of cleanliness.

When you go to some mosques in the Muslim world, you will find 5000, 10,000, or 20,000 people praying in the mosque on a Friday afternoon. If those people are following the true way of wudū' then, in spite of the great number, there is no bad smell in the mosque. That is what Islam wants and, as a result, it is frowned upon by Islam, if someone eats garlic or onion and then goes to the mosque on Friday. Why? So the people won't want to escape from the mosque. Islam tried to make that type of gathering pleasant, lovable, and attractive to the people, and it recommends using perfume and wearing your best clothes when going to the mosque.

The final part of this subject always reminds me of a joke. When I was a student, I lived with two other students in a house and I was responsible for cleaning the cooking pans by taking them to a man in the street. Every morning this man started out by calling upon the people to bring their pots and pans to him to be cleaned. He was very, very short and he wore boots that reached up to his thighs like the kind worn by the soldiers of the past. A friend of mine used to say, "That man! Three-quarters of his body are his shoes!" These boots are what is referred to, in Islam, as *khubzs*, and they are made

⁶² Bowing and prostration

⁶³ 3:191

⁶⁴ The Islamic Center of Greater Toledo

⁶⁵ 56:79

of leather. In the olden times, the Muslims used to make their wudū' in the morning only, and then they would wear the *khubzs*. At the time of making wudū' for *Zuhr*, *'Asr*, *Maqhrīb* and *'Isha* prayers, they did not take them off, but would run their wet hands over them and that would substitute for washing of the feet. This practice is known in Islamic jurisprudence as *al masa*. There is a chapter in Islamic jurisprudence known as *Al Masa 'al Khubzayn* (rubbing your wet hands over your two *khubzs* or "socks"). However, the "socks" referred to are the ones made of leather so that water will not penetrate through them.

What are the characteristics of the *khubzs* such that a Muslim will not be obligated to wash his feet five times a day? First, it should be very tight fitting, and secondly, the water should not penetrate through them. If these two conditions are met, only then is it permissible for a Muslim to rub with water his "socks" after having washed his feet during the first wudū' of the day. Nowadays the socks are made of nylon, acrylic, and wool – materials that are very loosely woven as compared to leather, and are especially porous. In this respect, the socks do not meet the requirement of the *khubzs*. But, in spite of that, there are some scholars who maintain that *al masa* is permissible. I disagree with that personally and I don't care who says it. This is a very common practice in Saudi Arabia. You may have noticed our Saudi brothers here will do a complete wudū', but when it comes to the feet they just rub their socks with their wet hands. Some people here, then, imitate them. I suspect the correctness of this practice and, as a result I say, no, I am not losing anything by washing my feet five times a day.

Last Sunday, while we were leaving the lecture hall, someone said to me that there was one point I had not talked about. I asked him what it was. He said, "What will make a wudū' void?" I said, why do you ask that question? He replied, "Sometimes I see people coming out of the lecture hall, going to the washroom, and after finishing their business in the washroom, they go directly to the prayer room without doing wudū'. So it looks like you have to clarify. Maybe those people don't know. So, clarify for us what will make the wudū' void."

When should one make wudū'? I think everyone should know that after you go to the toilet,⁶⁶ you have to repeat your wudū'. But, there are other events, which people

don't know about that may or may not call for a fresh wudū', because these things are clarified only in the books of jurisprudence, such as, for example, the flowing of blood⁶⁷ from any part of the body, and vomiting. Will these void a wudū'? The answer is: not always. In the case of bleeding gums, if the saliva is colored all red, it means there is more blood than saliva and one must repeat his wudū'. If the color of the saliva is not all red, it means that the saliva is more than the blood and wudū' need not be repeated. In the case of nasal bleeding or bleeding from a skin cut, if the amount of blood is so small that it stays in its place and does not flow, then it will not affect the wudū'. If it drains from the point of origin you have to re-do wudū'. What about vomiting? Vomiting will spoil wudū' if it fills the mouth; if it is less than that it will not affect the wudū'.⁶⁸

Adhān

Our talk today will be about *adhān*.⁶⁹ Several questions were asked regarding *adhān* and *Iqama*:⁷⁰ Is it necessary that we have *adhān* and *ikama* before prayer while we are in the mosque? If we pray without *adhān* will that affect our prayer? What about if we are praying at home, should we have *adhān* before the prayer? Someone asked why they make two *adhāns* before the *Fajr* prayer. I will answer all these questions but, first, how did the *adhān* come into existence?

At the start of Islam, the Muslims gathered together to discuss how to call the people for prayer. Some of them suggested that a fire be lit on top of a mountain for the people to see and, thereby, know the time of prayer. This idea was rejected because the Zoroastrians worshipped the fire and the Muslims did not like to be associated with them in any way. Another suggestion was to ring a bell to call people to prayer, but that, too, was rejected because the Christians ring the bell in a church to call people for prayer. They did not reach a decision in this respect until one of the companions of the Prophet came to him one day, in the morning, and said to him: "I had a dream last night of a man standing up on a height and

⁶⁷ Or pus

⁶⁸ Imam did not talk about *isthinja*. *Isthinja* is the washing of the genital and perianal area. This is obligatory after going to the toilet (urination or defecation), but not after passing gas. It is done prior to the wudū'.

⁶⁹ The call for prayer

⁷⁰ *Iqama* is a second call immediately before the prayer so the people will stand up in rows.

⁶⁶ After urination, defecation or passing gas

calling *Allahu Akbar, Ashhadu Allah i-laha illallah, ashhadu-anna Mohammad ar-Rasoolullah, hayya lal-salah, hayya lal-falah, Allahu Akbar, la-ilaha illallah*,⁷¹ repeating each statement twice.” The Prophet told him that this was a true dream, and that this would be the adhān or call for prayer. The Prophet asked that these words be taught to Bilal because his voice was resonant, and henceforth he would call for prayer by those words.

When Bilal went up to a high place and called for the prayer in these words the people came to the mosque. Among them was Omar bin Khattab who said to the Prophet that he had seen, in his dream, the same thing which Bilal was saying. Since that day, this has become the adhān of the Muslims.

A lot of people, when they come to this mosque,⁷² ask questions about the purpose of these “towers”.⁷³ They call them “towers”. When they were building this mosque, some truckers passing by on the highway used to ask one another on their CB radios: “What is that atomic reactor going up in that place for?” So these are minarets. The American people ask us what their significance is in Islam. And our answer always is: they have no significance. They are not a must in Islam. They are architecturally significant. If an architect designs a mosque and the design is according to Islamic requirements, and he does not include these minarets, his design is wrong from the point of view of architecture. But from the aspect of religion there is no significance for them at all. In the olden times, because of the height of the minarets, the *muezzin*⁷⁴ used to climb up to the top of the minaret and call for the prayer, so as to be heard everywhere. Nowadays we don't need it. Everyone has the Japanese technology on his wrist, and he knows the time of prayer. And in the Muslim countries they make further use of Japanese technology by putting the loudspeaker at the top of the minarets while they make the adhān down below, and there is no need for the *muezzin* to climb 93 steps and lose five pounds. You know we have 93 steps in each of these minarets. Anyone who is on a diet and wants to lose weight can come and climb them once a day.

The adhān itself is a sunnah.⁷⁵ Its purpose is

informational: to inform the people that the time of the prayer is here. So it is preferable to say adhān, but if you don't make it, it will not affect your prayer in anyway be that at home or at the mosque. In Egypt they make not two, but three calls for *Fajr* prayer specially. They make the first call and then, sometime later a second call, and you find someone at the microphone in the mosque and it is not adhān he is saying but *tasabeeh*⁷⁶ and praising of the Prophet, and so on. And the reason is because the people are sleeping and the recitation of these things is to enable the people to wake up early, make their wudū', and go to the mosque for prayer. But it is not a must. The third call will be the formal adhān. In some places, the people start the first call one hour before the Fajr. In some other countries they start half an hour before; it has no fixed time. In some mosques they don't make it at all; they just say the adhān at the right time and that's it.

Iqama Salah,⁷⁷ also, is not *fard*, but it is preferable to have *ikama*. A question was handed to me before the sermon asking, “Can a woman make adhān?” This, in fact, is a question about which different scholars have different opinions. Some Muslim scholars say that the voice of a woman is *awra*. *Awra* means “something attractive” – which could attract a man – and, as a result, it is preferable that she not make the adhān. Other scholars say if she is singing songs then why prevent her from singing that divine song – the adhān. And the opinion, which is in between these two, says that since Islam allowed a woman to be a leader of prayer for her counterparts, if she is with women, then she could make the adhān for them. I hope this will satisfy the question.

The other question, which we are faced with and which is touchy because of the technology available nowadays, is the timing of prayer. We have to know exactly what is the timing of the prayers, what it means, and what is its origin. I have witnessed in one of our Muslim communities, while performing a funeral, that while we were giving a talk before the funeral prayer, someone from among the “new” Muslim people of nowadays, looked into his watch and said it was time for *Zuhr*, and went on to make the adhān. The people were perplexed, not knowing whether to listen to the adhān or to

⁷¹ God is great. I bear witness that there is no god but one God. I bear witness that Muhammad is his messenger. Come to prayer. Come to prosperity. God is great. There is no god but one God.

⁷² The Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, Ohio

⁷³ Minarets

⁷⁴ The one who makes adhān

⁷⁵ Optional

⁷⁶ Glorifying God

⁷⁷ This is the same as adhān but each statement is made once and not twice. It is made immediately before the prayer is to start to call the attention of the worshippers to stand up in rows for the prayer.

listen to the talk.

The origin of the prayer times is in the Qur'anic verse which states: "Verily, for all believers prayer is indeed a sacred duty linked to particular times of day" [4:103].

What are those times? It is not a special minute or a specific hour but it is a *range* of time. Say, for example, the *Fajr* time starts when the first light appears in the night sky and that is called in the fiqh *Al Fajr as-Sadiq* which means a light, which will not be followed by the darkness. That is considered to be the start of the time of *Fajr* and that is how it was referred to in the olden times. There was no watch and no Japanese technology at the time of the Prophet. Time was measured by the sun and the moon and other things. When the first light appears in the sky, we say that *Fajr* time is here and that time extends up to sunrise; that is the range of time for *Fajr* prayer, which, if we are to follow according to our watch nowadays, will be a period of about 1 ½ to 2 hours. Anytime you perform *Fajr* prayer during that time you are praying the *Fajr* on time; you are paying your debt when it is due; there is no delay.

How did people in the olden times measure the time for *Zuhr*? They say it starts when the sun is in the middle of the sky. How do you know the sun is in the middle of the sky? You know it from the shadow of an object such as a stick in the ground. When the length of its shadow is the shortest, the sun is at the highest point in the sky. This is the start of the *Zuhr* prayer and it extends until the shadow of the object, or the stick, is as long as the stick is high, and at that time *Asr* will start. This is according to one school of thought. Another school of thought said no, *Asr* will not start until the shadow of the stick is *twice as long*. If you look at the prayer timetable in the *Monitor*,⁷⁸ you will find that under *Asr* there are two stated times: one says "According to Abu Haneefa" the other says "Other Schools". So you are perplexed sometimes and ask which one to follow. *And I say to you follow whichever one you like*. Note that the differences of opinion among the Muslim scholars regarding prayer timings concerns the *Asr* time only. Therefore, from the time that the sun is in the middle of the sky until the shade of the object is as long, or twice as long, whichever one you follow, that is the *Zuhr* time. You can pray the *Zuhr* in that span of time and you are paying your debt on its due time. So you are not required to come at 12:31 P.M. sharp and say *Zuhr* time is here and you have to pray *right now*.

The *Zuhr* time is a *range of time* which sometimes reaches four hours depending on the season and the latitude one is in.

The *Asr* time starts as mentioned above and lasts until sunset. It is clear-cut. The *Maghrib* prayer starts from sunset until the twilight disappears from the sky. What is the twilight? In Arabic it is called *Al-shafaq al-ahmar*, that is, the red color in the sky where the sun sets. When the red color disappears and is replaced by the darkness, then *Isha* time begins.

Nowadays, we don't look at all these things. When we come to pray *Zuhr*, we do not put a stick in the ground. We get the Japanese watch and look at it and say now it is 12:30 and it is time to pray *Zuhr*, it is now 3:15 and *Asr* is here; these days the time of sunset is announced on the local television at 5:31, therefore, *Maghrib* is here, and that is the Japanese technology of nowadays and we follow it. And this, in fact, is very precise. Sometimes you find a difference between one calendar and another with regard to the *Fajr* time or the *Maghrib* time and that is also correct. The reason for that is because some scholars consider that the twilight ends [and *Isha* starts] when the "whiteness" – which follows the "redness" of the sunset appears; others say when the darkness or the "blackness" overtakes the redness of sunset then *Isha* starts; so, that will make around 15 to 20 minutes difference. How do the astronomers of nowadays measure the time? By measuring the number of degrees that the sun is below the horizon. When the sun disappears over the horizon it will be at the level of the ground. When it goes lower than that – some say seven degrees, others say ten degrees – then the twilight is replaced by the "whiteness" or "blackness" and that is what accounts for the difference between one calendar and another.

So the timings for prayer are represented by a range of time. Some people think that if they do not pray *Isha* at exactly seven o'clock, then they are late and the prayer time is over. No, you can pray *Isha* till *Fajr* time because that is the range of time for *Isha*.

Let us compare two things here – prayer and fasting – two equally important pillars of Islam and it will show us how we, the Muslims, employ a double standard when it comes to our religion. In the matter of prayer, I look at my watch and then check the prayer times in the *Monitor* to see what time *Asr* is due today, and if the two timings are in agreement, I pray. But with regard to fasting, in order to determine the exact day when Ramadan will start, we say we have to go to the top of the Sears Tower, in Chicago, and look for the new moon. And not only that, we have to see the moon

⁷⁸ Bimonthly magazine of the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo

with our *naked eye*. Isn't this a double standard? Why do we accept a calculation for the prayer timing and reject that same calculation for the start of fasting? When you analyze it, when you utilize your brain, you can see that we are following a certain method in one area, and falsifying that same method in another area.

The Qur'an is the origin of the science of astronomy. But I have people say to me, "No, we don't believe in that; that is the science of the Americans – the *kuffar*."⁷⁹ *Who* are the *kuffar*? *Wé*, the Muslims, taught them how to utilize this

science. There is no single human being on the earth who knew about the science of astronomy before the revelation of the Qur'an and before the Muslims. Although we taught it to others who utilized it to reach the moon, we ignored it ourselves. That is a strange thing. Islam made it very simple for us, and gave us the means to know time and to calculate the number of years by observing the day and the night, the sun and the moon, the stars and so on, and to use the calculation for everything related to our lives.

⁷⁹ Unbelievers/pagans

As-Salah – The Prayer

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 3 of 3]

Number of Raka'āt in each Prayer Types of Prayer

Legislation in Islam is divided into:

1. *Fard* which means “Obligatory”.
2. *Sunnah* which means “Optional”.
3. *Mustahab/jaa’-iz* which means “Possible”.⁸⁰
4. *Fard Kifāyā*.

Fard

In the case of the Fard raka'āt,⁸¹ there is no argument and no disagreement between *any* of the schools of thought in Islam: the *Fajr* is two raka'āt, the *Zuhr* is four, the *'Asr* is four, the *Maghrib* is three, and the *'Isha* is four. *There is no school of thought that differs in this regard.* The Prophet prayed the Fard regularly all his life. But the sunnah is optional: the Prophet did it sometimes and not at other times, because if he had done so regularly, it would have been construed as Fard by his companions, and would then cease to be regarded as sunnah.

⁸⁰ *Mustahab* means “Recommended” and *jaa’-iz* means “Permissible”

⁸¹ Raka'āt: plural of rak'ah: “Units” of prayer: each consists of reading Fatihah, bowing, and prostration.

Sunnah

People ask how many sunnah raka'āt there are in each prayer. How many raka'āt before the Fard and how many raka'āt after the Fard? They note some people praying two raka'āt sunnah before *Jum'ah*,⁸² others praying four raka'āt, while a third person is just sitting waiting for *Jum'ah* prayers to begin, and he does not pray the sunnah at all. They get confused and want to know who is doing the correct thing. Sometimes, for Muslims, this sort of thing becomes a problem because if you do not follow *their* way, then you are wrong; to be right you have to follow *their* way. This is the attitude of many of us. We are not ready to accept the practice of others which is based on others' opinion. In one mosque, I have seen a person who was standing up in prayer with his feet in the shape of a “V” and, since according to another school of thought, the feet have to be separated, another worshipper took it upon himself to enforce this “requirement”. So, he pulled his leg – *pulled it for him!* That is because he did not believe in the correctness of the

⁸² The Friday congregational prayer which consists of the sermon followed by two raka'āt Fard

other worshipper’s practice. But, we have several schools of thought in Islam and proponents of every one of them have given their understanding according to what they saw the Prophet do.

With regard to the sunnah, there are two kinds: *Sunnah Mu’akkadah* or the emphasized sunnah, and *Sunnah Ghayr-mu’akkadah* or the unemphasized sunnah. The emphasized sunnah is the one that the Prophet did *most* of the time, while the unemphasized sunnah is the one that the Prophet did some times. This accounts for the difference when you see someone praying four raka‘āt before *Jum‘ah*, while another is praying two raka‘āt; two raka‘āt are *mu’akkadah* and two raka‘āt are *ghayr-mu’akkadah*. So those who pray four raka‘āt follow a certain Muslim school of thought, while those praying two raka‘āt follow another Muslim school of thought. What happened is that the Prophet prayed two Sunnah at one time, and one of the Muslim scholars who saw him, when asked about it, said the Prophet prayed two raka‘āt before *Jum‘ah* and that he had seen him with his own eyes. Another person saw the Prophet praying four raka‘āt before *Jum‘ah*, so he issued his verdict according to what he had seen. A third scholar saw him just sitting instead of praying [presumably waiting for *Jum‘ah* to begin], so he related what he had seen. No one is wrong because that is what the Prophet did. When the Prophet had the time, he used to pray *continuously* to the extent that, they say, the Prophet sometimes used to pray during the night until his feet were swollen from prolonged standing up in prayer.⁸³ I am sure we are not ready to do that.

The total of the emphasized sunnah are as follows: two raka‘āt *before* Fajr; two raka‘āt *before* Zuhr and two raka‘āt *after* Zuhr; two raka‘āt *after* Maghrib; two raka‘āt *before* ‘Isha, and two raka‘āt *after* ‘Isha. If we add the unemphasized sunnah to the above, you can pray six raka‘āt after *Maghrib*, four raka‘āt after *Zuhr*, four raka‘āt before *‘Asr* and so on. In fact, I’ll be very delighted if the Muslims will pray the Fard only on a *regular* basis but, at least, you should know about these things.

It is normal for us human beings to enter into prayer thinking of other things, and this makes us forget whether we prayed three raka‘āt or four raka‘āt. So what to do in this respect? The Prophet, peace be upon him, was talking to his companions one day about how thinking of worldly affairs, while one is in prayer, makes a person forgetful. Ali ibn Abi

Talib⁸⁴ said to him, “Prophet! I am a man who concentrates in my prayer; I *never* get distracted from my prayer.” The Prophet replied, “Ali, go and pray two raka‘āt, and if you do not think of anything else, I will take your word and I will give you my cloak.” Ali went for the prayer, finished his two raka‘āt, and came to the Prophet. The Prophet asked him, “Did you concentrate Ali? Nothing distracted you from your prayer?” He said, “To be exact with you Prophet, I was thinking about which cloak you are going to give me – the red cloak or the white one!”

In this regard it is good to know that if you are praying *Zuhr* and you forgot if you made three raka‘āt or four raka‘āt then it is better to get up and do another rak‘ah. *Yā‘nī*, it is better to do five raka‘āt than three raka‘āt, and it is better to do four raka‘āt than two if you are praying *Maghrib*, and it is better to do three raka‘āt than one rak‘ah if you are praying *Fajr*.

The *Sujood Sahw*⁸⁵ is the sujood which is performed if you forget something and consequently make a mistake. It can be performed any time after completing *Attashahud*⁸⁶ and before getting out of the prayer. When you say *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah*⁸⁷ to the left you are out of the prayer, so you must do it before that. It is exactly like the sujood in your regular prayer and consists of two prostrations and you say *Subhana Rabi-al ‘Ala*.⁸⁸

Fard Kifāyā

An example of *Fard Kifāyā* is the *janaza*⁸⁹ prayer. Suppose some Muslim dies in a city like Toledo, and no one prays the funeral prayer on him, then all the Muslims in Toledo will be sinners. But if two or three people perform the *janaza* prayer on that person, then the obligation of *janaza* prayer has been met on behalf of all the Muslims of Toledo. This is called *Fard Kifāyā*. The same thing applies to *Taraweeh*.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ The Prophet’s son-in-law and the fourth Khalifa of Islam

⁸⁵ Prostration

⁸⁶ The prayer to be recited while sitting down

⁸⁷ “Peace be upon you and the mercy of God.” Uttering these words while turning the head to the right and again while turning your head to the left marks the end of the prayer.

⁸⁸ God is the greatest

⁸⁹ Funeral

⁹⁰ Special prayers in the month of Ramadan. See below

⁸³ Imam states with great awe

Sunnah Kifāyā or Wajib Kifāyā

It is said that Taraweeh is *Sunnah Kifāyā*, or *Wajib Kifāyā* which is very close to Fard. If Taraweeh prayer is not performed by anybody in a certain locality, then all the Muslims in that locality are sinners. But if *some* people in that locality pray the Taraweeh during the month of Ramadan, then the obligation has been met on behalf of all the Muslims in that area and they will not be sinners.

Taraweeh

How many raka‘āt are there in Taraweeh? That is perplexing. You go to one place and find the people praying 20 raka‘āt Taraweeh, whereas, in another place, you find Muslims praying eight raka‘āt. You ask who is right and who is wrong? It reminds me of a friend from Lebanon who never prayed Taraweeh in his life. He came to London, Ontario, to visit friends during the month of Ramadan. His host suggested that they go to the mosque and pray Taraweeh. It happened that the imam of the London mosque, at that time, was very spiritual and prayed 20 raka‘āt Taraweeh. So the guest from Lebanon stood up to pray, but he did not know how to pray Taraweeh. When the imam prayed the first two raka‘āt, and said *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah, Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah*, the guest started to shake hands with his friend praying beside him and said to him *Taqabbal Allah*.⁹¹ His host stopped him, informing him that they had not finished. They prayed the second two raka‘āt, and he extended his hand again but was told they were not finished yet. This spectacle was repeated after every two raka‘āt until the 20 raka‘āt were finished, and his host, after shaking hands, finally said “Now we have completed”. The visitor said: “You know, that shaykh of yours – any person who prays behind him needs to take a two-week vacation!”

The word “Taraweeh” is taken from the word *tarweeha* which means “you rest”. You relax for a minute between every two raka‘āt, or between every four raka‘āt. You don’t stand up to pray the next section right away. Normally the people will read some *du‘a* or *tasbeeh*⁹² in between every two raka‘āt and that is what makes it *tarweeha*.

According to the Muslim schools of thought, some people saw the Prophet pray 20 raka‘āt Taraweeh in Ramadan, so they pray 20 raka‘āt. Others saw the Prophet pray only

eight raka‘āt, therefore, they pray only eight raka‘āt. This explains why in some mosques they pray 20 raka‘āt while in other mosques they pray eight raka‘āt. There is even a third opinion, which says that the Prophet used to pray eight raka‘āt in the mosque, but he completed the 20 raka‘āt after he went home.

Taraweeh can be performed individually. One can pray Taraweeh at home, but it is preferable to do so in groups to encourage people to meet and share the sacred month together. The Taraweeh, when prayed two raka‘āt at a time, is exactly like the two rak‘ahs of the Fajr prayer.

Salat-ul -Witr

You know, after *Isha*, there is another prayer of three raka‘āt which is called *Al-Witr*. Many people don’t know that *Al-Witr* is a separate prayer to be prayed *after Isha*, and that is because we are most familiar with the five prayers during the day i.e. *Fajr*, *Zuhr*, *‘Asr*, *Maghrib*, and *Isha*. We don’t normally talk about *Witr* as the three raka‘āt which should be performed *after Isha* but, rather, we consider it as part of *Isha* because most people are familiar with praying it immediately after *Isha*.

Salat al-Witr is three raka‘āt and follows the *Isha* prayer, and, at one’s option, offered immediately after *Isha*, or delayed until midnight if you are sure that you will be staying up until then. It is not obligatory like the Fard and it is not Sunnah or optional, but falls between these two categories, and is known in Islamic jurisprudence as *Wajib*. *Wajib* is a must but it is not as powerful as Fard, and yet not as optional as the Sunnah. That is why if you missed your *Isha* prayer and you are making up for it in the morning, according to some Muslim scholars, you need to pray the Fard only, while others maintain you have to pray the Fard and the *Witr*. Some people pray the three raka‘āt *Witr* together, exactly like *Maghrib*. Some people separate them and pray the *Witr* two raka‘āt, followed by one more rak‘ah which is performed by itself. The three raka‘āt of *Witr* are supposed to be performed by everybody individually, even if they are praying *Isha* together in the mosque behind the imam, *except* in Ramadan. In Ramadan, *Witr* is to be performed in *jama‘ah*.⁹³

Then there is another difference you should know about because, sometimes, you see someone praying one way and others are praying in a different way and you may be

⁹¹ “May God accept your prayer”

⁹² Glorify God

⁹³ In congregation

perplexed. According to Imam Shafi 'i, there is a *du'a*⁹⁴ in the Fajr prayer, in the second rak'ah *after* the *rukū'*.⁹⁵ In Imam Abu Haneefa⁹⁶ school of thought there is no *du'a* in the Morning Prayer, but the *du'a* is in the *Witr* prayer, in the third rak'ah *before* the *rukū'*: after reading Al Fātihah followed by a sura, there is a *takbeera*⁹⁷ and after the *takbeera* the *Du'a Al Kunuth* that the Prophet used to recite in the prayer.

Islam is very simple; it is very wide, with many schools of thought, among which there is no right and no wrong. Follow whichever you find easy, whichever makes your life easy in the locality in which you are living, because it is the responsibility of the man who established that *madhab*⁹⁸ based upon his *ijtehad*,⁹⁹ and he is *rewarded* for that.

Many of us are not familiar with what to do when it comes to praying in the mosque behind the imam. Sometimes one comes to the mosque and finds that the people have already started the prayer. Many people enter into the prayer in the very last rak'ah and, as soon as the imam says *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* they end their prayer along with the imam and the rest of the congregation, which is wrong. For instance, if you are coming for the *Zuhr* prayer, which is four raka'āt, then you *must pray four* raka'āt. If you come while the imam is in the first rak'ah and you were able to catch up with him for the first *rukū'*, then you did not miss anything. *Rukū'* is the posture of bowing down and is one of the pillars of the prayer. If you missed the *rukū'* it means that your prayer is not complete; it means that you performed three raka'āt only with the imam and missed one. What should you do in this case? You follow the imam until he says *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* to the right; you do not say *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* to the right but wait until the imam proceeds to say *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* to the left, then get up, and pray one rak'ah to complete the four raka'āt. There is a reason why you should wait until the imam starts saying *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* to the left, and that is because of the possibility that the imam himself forgot something and he has to make *Sujood Sahw*. *Sujood Sahw* can be performed

any time before saying *Assalam-u Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* to the left, so you follow the imam in the *Sujood Sahw*. When the imam starts to say *Assalam* to the left you get up, and, if you missed one or more raka'āt, complete them. If you were able to catch up with the imam while he was reciting *Attashahud* at the end, and you missed all four raka'āt, then you have to pray all four raka'āt. If you were able to follow the imam in the recitation of *Attashahud* only, it will make your prayer count as *jama'ah* and you will get the reward for the collective prayer which is higher than for the prayer performed individually, even though you offered the prayer individually.

Salat-ul-Mareed: The prayer of the sick person. A sick person is one who has some condition or defect in his health such that he cannot do some actions of the prayer. If we look at the pillars of Islam, we find that in the case of fasting, when one is terminally ill, one is exempt from fasting and is allowed to ransom each day of fasting by feeding a poor person. If someone, due to his health, cannot travel in order to perform the Hajj, then he is exempt. He can send someone to make pilgrimage on his behalf. But when it comes to the pillar of prayer, there is no exemption. If someone cannot stand up for prayer, he must pray while sitting down; if he cannot pray sitting down, he must pray while lying down; if he cannot make *rukū'* or *sujood*, he is to nod his head to indicate the *rukū'* and *sujood*; and if he cannot even nod his head, then he is to move his eyelids and eyelashes to indicate the *rukū'* and *sujood*. There is no exemption for prayer at all. If water will adversely affect your health or there is none available, pray with *tayammum*; if you cannot make *tayammum*, pray without *tayammum*, without the *wudū'*, without anything. This shows the importance of prayer as a link between man and God. And this is why there is a special chapter in Islamic fiqh, called *Salat-ul-Mareed* or the "Prayer of the Sick Person".

Salat-ul-Musafir: the Prayer of the Traveler. There are many instances in Islamic jurisprudence which are intended to make the life of a Muslim easy. If someone is traveling during the month of Ramadan, he is allowed to forego fasting on those days, and to make up for the missed days after the month of Ramadan. When we consider the spirit of Islam, and its essence, we find that this license was given in order to make our life easy. In the olden times, people rode camels or they walked on foot. The desert is very hot and a person walking or

⁹⁴ Supplication

⁹⁵ Bowing

⁹⁶ Died in 150 AH

⁹⁷ Saying *Allahu Akbar* and raising your hands to your ears

⁹⁸ Practice

⁹⁹ A sincere effort to make an educated, enlightened and informed opinion explaining an issue related to Islam.

riding his camel would sweat and lose a lot of water; that is why Islam has allowed them not to fast and to make up later for that day of traveling. Nowadays, we apply this exemption in our lives and when someone is traveling to Detroit, for example, he says, "I am *musafir*¹⁰⁰; it is 85 km away, and Abu Haneefa said that a journey of 85 km and over, entitles you to that allowance." So he does not fast. But, nowadays, we go from Toledo to Florida in one hour-and-a-half in an air-conditioned aeroplane, in total comfort, and yet we say we are *musafir* so we are not going to fast. *What* hardship are you enduring when you travel like that? We have to look at the situation, as it exists now, and not just follow to the letter what is written in the books. That book was written at a time when people did not have the facilities that we have nowadays. The same thing is applicable to prayer.

For a traveling Muslim, Islam makes it easy in two ways: every four raka'āt prayer is shortened to two – *Zuhr*, *Asr*, and *Isha*. To put it in American terminology, you get a discount of 50% in the prayer; it is on sale while you are traveling! In addition to that, you can combine two prayers; you can pray *Zuhr* and *Asr* at the same time, and *Maghrib* and *Isha* at the same time. At your option, you can combine *Zuhr* and *Asr* at the time of *Zuhr*, or at the time of *Asr*, and you can combine *Maghrib* and *Isha* at the time of *Maghrib*, or at the time of *Isha*. This allowance for prayers is meant to make the life of the Muslim easy while traveling.

The Prayer of the Solar or Lunar Eclipse

There are some special prayers you may not know about. For example, the prayer to be offered when there is a solar eclipse or a lunar eclipse. Normally, when someone is in hardship, he prays to God to remove that hardship. The eclipse of the moon is due to the earth coming between the sun and the moon, so the moon will not be able to reflect the light of the sun to the earth. The eclipse of the sun is due to the moon coming between the earth and the sun, and the light of the sun does not reach the earth. This is the result of the orbiting of these planets which the Qur'an talked about. [Imam quotes, in Arabic. The English translation is:]

"And neither may the sun overtake the moon, nor can the night usurp the time of day, since all of them float through space in accordance with Our laws" [36:40].

But, at one time, they will interfere and that will be at the end

of this earthly life. Another Qur'anic verse referred to that when it said, [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

"Nonetheless, man chooses to deny what lies ahead of him, asking [derisively], 'When is that Resurrection Day to be?' But, on that Day when the eyesight is by fear confounded, and the moon is darkened, and the sun and the moon are brought together – on that Day will man exclaim, 'Wither to flea?' But nay: no refuge [for thee, O Man] with thy Sustainer, on that Day, the journey's end will be" [75:5-12].

So, at the time when this will happen, a disintegration in the system of the universe will take place, and it will be the end of this life. When the solar or lunar eclipse occurs, it is possible that you are about to be in hardship because you don't know what will happen. The prayer which the Prophet recommended at these times is to pray to God to protect us from the hardship. This is a very normal prayer and it is to be performed individually, although it could be performed in groups.

The Prayer for Rainfall

It is offered in Saudi Arabia even nowadays. The reason is that it is a desert and the rain is limited, and when there is drought, the people hearken to prayer and make du'a to Allah for rain. Here, in the United States, in the summer we have rain, and in the winter we have snow, and so we have abundance of water. But we did have a taste of the drought here, when, for two months or more, there was no rain, and in the nature of human beings, the people remembered Allah and everyone used to look at the sky and whenever there was a cloud in the sky they had hope that rain would fall. Farmers feared losing their crops, and, in desperation, they invited the Red Indians and paid them a big amount of money to come and pray in their own way.¹⁰¹ Although the rain did not materialize, at least it showed that the nature of human beings is the same everywhere: when man is in hardship, he will remember Allah. The prayer for rain could be two raka'āt and can be prayed individually or collectively, and it is based upon du'a to Allah to let the rain fall. The origin of this prayer is mentioned in Chapter Nuh: "Ask your God forgiveness and He will let the rain fall upon you."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ A traveler

¹⁰¹ By performing their rain dance

¹⁰² 71:10-11

Sujood Tilawah

Finally, there is something with which some people may not be familiar, and that is known in Islamic fiqh as *Sujood Tilawah* – the sujood¹⁰³ for listening to the recitation of Qur’an. There are fourteen verses¹⁰⁴ in the Qur’an, following which, when you hear them or read them, you are required to make sujood; it has become fard upon you exactly like any other fard; it has become a debt around your neck. You may do the sujood at the same place immediately upon hearing the recitation of the

Qur’an, or you may do it later, if you are not in wudū’. In these fourteen verses in the Qur’an, the word *sujood* or *sajda* is mentioned and it is underlined. In other places, where the words *sajda* or *sujood* are *not* underlined, it is not a must to do *sajda*¹⁰⁵ when you hear it or read it. If you would like to check it as soon as you go home check *Sura ‘Iqra’* [#96], the first chapter revealed to the Prophet, peace be upon him. You will find that the word sujood is mentioned in it and underlined.

¹⁰³ Prostration

¹⁰⁴ 7:206, 13:15, 16:49, 17:107, 19:58, 22:18, 22:77, 25:60, 27:25, 32:15, 41:37, 53:62, 84:21, 96:19.

¹⁰⁵ Same as sujood