



ALI 265: Enhancing the Daily Prayers *SESSION 4:*

June 4, 2014/ Sha'ban 6, 1435

IMPORTANT: The session today will commence at 9:30 p.m. inshāAllāh to give participants in Toronto to complete their Maghribayn prayers which begins at 9:10 p.m.

ALI 265: Course objective

Most Muslims say their salāt but many find it challenging to achieve the spirituality and presence of heart which makes the salāt an act of soaring to the Lord. This course will look briefly at *fiqhī* (jurisprudential) and comprehensively at ‘*irfānī* (spiritual) aspects of salāt with the aim of offering prayers to get us closer to the Creator. The course will also provide guidance on the basic rules of preparing and saying prayers correctly.

Dates: 4 Wednesdays, May 14 - June 4, 2014

Timings: 9.15 p.m. to 10.15 p.m. EDT (Toronto/NY time)

Your Instructor: Hasanayn Kassamali

Advice of Ayatullah Khumayni

Know that for the *salāt*, beside its form, there is a meaning, and apart from its exterior (e.g. acts and recitations) it has an interior; and as the exterior has its disciplines, neglecting which would render the *salāt* invalid or incomplete, likewise its interior has cordial spiritual disciplines, neglecting which would render the spiritual *salāt* invalid or incomplete; It would be possible that after paying attention to and observing the cordial inner disciplines, the *musalli* (the one saying *salāt*) would have a share of the divine secret of the *salāt* of the “people of knowledge and of hearts” -the *salāt* which is the delight of the people of *suluk* and the reality of the *mi‘raj* (ascension) to the proximity of the Beloved.

Prerequisite of beginning salāt

One should, at the time of prayers disengage himself and turn his attention towards salāt, as if he has an important appointment with someone very special and intimate, someone who loves him, someone who will listen to not only his uttering but also his deep thoughts that no one knows in the world. One should also feel that going for salāt is like going to a journey, a sacred journey into the hidden world of heavenly spheres and his own self to establish relationship that will last forever. Thus it is important to realize that salāt is a special meeting with God.

Attention is like a muscle. Initially, when you try and hold your attention on something, it may feel that you are using more and more energy and it is fatiguing. However, the more you flex your attention the stronger it becomes, and easier to hold.

Read about a man under a tree who wished to be disengaged from the noise of birds (*101 Ways to Concentrate in Prayer*, p. 31)

Prepare well for salāt

Place of prayers, clothes you are wearing & your own state should be such that you are free of distractions.

Imam al-Sadiq (a): *The prayer of a Haqin, a Haqib and a Haziq does not count – a Haqin is one who suppresses the urge to urinate, a Haqib is one who suppresses the urge to defecate [before commencing the prayer], and a Haziq is one whose feet are pinched by wearing narrow shoes. (Amali al-Saduq, p. 337)*

It is recommended to use bathroom before wudhū and salāt. This will benefit us as follows:

1. We are free of impurities, for the body can hold them till relieved
2. Efforts, concentration & sensations not used to hold them
3. Helps you to remain in the state of wudhū most of the time

Fadhilat timings: correction

The fadhilat time for the Zuhr is between the decline of midday and the shadow reaching $4/7^{\text{th}}$ of the *shakhis* (size of a shadow of a thing). And it is better (*afdhal*) - even for the one saying nawafil – not to delay it beyond the shadow reaching the $2/7^{\text{th}}$ of it.

The fadhilat time for the 'Asr is from the time the shadow reaches $2/7^{\text{th}}$ of the shakhis until it reaches the $6/7^{\text{th}}$ of it. It is preferable, even for the one saying nawafil, not to delay it beyond its reaching $4/7^{\text{th}}$ of it.

The fadhilat time for the Maghrib for a non-traveller extends from the *Maghrib* to the disappearance of the twilight, which is the redness in the western sky. For a traveller, it extends to a quarter of the night. The fadhilat time for 'Isha' is from the disappearance of the twilight to one-third of the night. (Ref: *Minhaj*, Rule 504 & *Islamic Laws*, Rule 776)

Nafila prayers: significance

Try level best to perform, most if not all, nawafil prayers

Imam Hasan al-‘Askari (a) considers it as a sign of a believer.

To facilitate Nafila prayers, following rules are helpful:

It is permissible to perform the *Nafila* prayers of Zuhr and ‘Asr before midday on Friday, and in fact, on other days also, if there is an excuse (Ayt Seestani, *Minhaj*, Rule 506)

In case a person wishes to offer Zuhr and ‘Asr Nafila after their recommended time, he can offer the Zuhr Nafila after Zuhr prayers, and the ‘Asr Nafila after ‘Asr prayers, but as a precaution, he will not make niyyat of *Ada* or *Qadha* (*Islamic Laws*, Rule 777).

Timings of Nafila prayers

The time for the *Nafila* of the *Zuhr* and 'Asr prayers is from the decline of midday to the last parts of the two obligatory prayers, but it is better to perform the obligatory *Zuhr* prayer before its *Nafila* after the shadow reaches $2/7^{\text{th}}$ of the *shakhis*. So also it is better to perform the obligatory 'Asr prayer first after the above mentioned shadow reaches $4/7^{\text{th}}$ of the *shakhis*.

The time for the *Nafila* of *Maghrib* is after completing the obligatory prayer until the end of the time for the *Maghrib* prayer, although it is more appropriate to first perform the obligatory 'Isha' prayer after the disappearance of the redness in the western sky. The time for the 'Isha' *Nafila* extends in accordance with the extension of the time of 'Isha'.

The time for the *Nafila* of *Fajr* – according to what is widely known – is between the first dawn and the rise of the redness in the eastern sky, although it is permissible to link it to the *Salatul Layl* before *Fajr*. But it is not unlikely that the beginning of its time is the beginning of the time of *Salatul Layl*, after the period of time that is required to perform it, and it extends to a little before sunrise

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Attentiveness is essential

- The Prophet of Allah (s) said to Abu Dhar: Two simple (rak'ats) units of prayer offered with contemplation are better than a whole night spent in worship. (*Wasa'il*, v. 4, H. 686)
- Abu Ja'far (a) that he said to Zurarah (r): Don't be negligent in regard to your prayers. Verily, the Prophet (s) said on his death-bed, 'The one who makes light of his prayers does not belong to me, nor the one who takes intoxicating drinks, and, by God, he will not return to me at the Pond (of al-Kawthar).'
- Imam al-Sadiq (a): As for the prayer, half of it may be accepted, or one-third, or a quarter, or one-fifth, or even one-tenth. And from it is a prayer that may be folded like an old dress, and thrown back at the face of the one who offered it. No part of the prayer is yours except that part which you perform with an attentive heart (وما لك من صلاتك إلا ما أقبلت عليه) (*Bihar*, 79:305) (بقلبك)

Humility in salāt (Q. 23: 1 -2)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers

Almighty Allah here describes the qualities of truly successful believers. The first quality is: they are humble when talking to God. Humbleness is an inner state of meekness when in front of a great and powerful being. This inner state is manifested in the actions and movements of the body. Imam al-Sādiq (a): *When Allah (swt) created the Paradise, He asked it to speak. It recited this verse.*

Humility in prayer is the sign of a healthy heart – untarnished by the disease of pride and vanity. Humility is a keen awareness of one's own lowliness, and the Magnificence of the Almighty. It means being conscious of the sins that have been committed. It includes being overcome at times with the thought of the servant who possesses nothing, standing at the door of the One who is the Master of everything, and being allowed in to have a personal conversation with Him.

Monitor the progress regularly

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ فَإِنْ عَمِلَ حَسَنًا اسْتَزَادَ اللَّهَ
وَإِنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئًا اسْتَغْفَرَ اللَّهَ مِنْهُ وَتَابَ إِلَيْهِ

Famous Hadith: *He is not amongst us, one who does not assess himself daily; if he has done a good deed, he asks Allah for more, and if he has done an evil deed, he should plea for Allah's forgiveness and repent to Him*

How can we do this?

1. Keep a higher target to achieve, (95 – 100 % focused)
2. See how you are doing? It is fine if you progress gradually
3. Zero tolerance to your regressing / retreating
4. Combat with Satan by saying more prayers
5. Use note pad on your mobile to record the progress

Evidence of progress: You a) begin to love saying prayers, b) look forward for prayer time, c) find it spiritually uplifting, d) and feel the sense of contentment.

Take salāt as a privilege, not a duty

When we are in salāt, Allah's special attention and mercy is towards us. This indeed is a privilege for the King of the kings, who is absolutely needless with unlimited powers and wealth thru his vast generosity is looking at a sinner like me!

When Nabi Musa (a) went to get the rules of the Tawrāt from Allah, and is accompanied by a group of the Banū Israel, he goes ahead of them and reaches the appointed place while his people are still behind. Allah asks him why he has rushed ahead of his people. He replies: *I hastened toward You, my Lord, so that You might be pleased* (وَعَجَلْتُ (إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى Q 20:84

Never ever consider salāt as a burden. Nay, it is a direct communion with Allah, the delight (*qurratal 'ayn*) of the Holy Prophet, the practice of all Prophets, Imams and friends of Allah and a sure way to stay away from indecency and evil. Your standing on a prayer mat is a distinguished honor from Allah, the Mighty & Sublime, for an insignificant abased servant.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq said:

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (r) who reports from a group of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ibn Mahbub, from 'Umar ibn Yazid, from Abu 'Abd Allah al-Sadiq(a) that he said: "It is written in the Torah: O son of Man, if you 'empty' yourself (i.e. disengage yourself from all other preoccupations to make yourself available) for My worship, I will fill your heart with richness and I will not abandon you to what you seek and long for. And it will be upon Me to close the door of poverty upon you and to fill your heart with awe for Me. And if you don't 'empty' yourself for My worship, I will fill your heart with preoccupation with the world and I will not close upon you the door of poverty and will abandon you to what you seek (*al-Kafi*, 2, Book of al-'iman wa al-kufr', Chapter on al-'ibadah", Hadith 1.)

10 simple tips to concentrate - 1

1. Decide how long you plan to take for a prayer. E.g. 5 mins for zuhr salāt, or 4 mins for the maghrib. Then assign this time entirely to the worship of Allah, and nothing else; your body, mind and heart are totally for the sake of Allah, the *Rabb* of Universe
2. Pray as if this is your last prayer of the life, i.e. the last meeting before you will be forcefully taken to next world. Also, when you say: *to You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help; Guide/ keep us on the Right path*, bring to your mind that the first thing you are asking is saying of correct prayers.
3. You are in the presence of Allah for He sees you totally, although you cannot see Him. And we will never see Him.
4. Sit a few minutes on prayer mat to relax, settle & rein your thoughts. Thoughts are like a wild bird, which require taming.
5. Recite the dhikr of salāt with comprehension & understanding. So learn the meaning of all recitations in salāt.

10 simple tips to concentrate - 2

- 6. Be alert like a soldier who is guarding a regiment. Shaytan has sworn to disrupt your prayers.
- 7. Different recitations in different Rak'ah, Ruku'a and Sajdah. This is essential for those who forgets the number of Rak'ah s/he is reciting.
- 8. Time yourself for every salāt. Can you give an extra minute for that prayer? Yes! Wow you have solved the problem as you do not need to rush to finish it.
- 9. Fix your gaze and follow the postures. This will allow you to capture your wild thoughts.
- 10. Lengthen the dhikr of Ruku' and more so of sajdah over time. Put efforts to begin enjoying your prayers.

Other tips

Often it hurts us that we are not able to focus in our prayers. Remember, the more you focus on Allah outside your salāt, the easier it will be to focus on Him inside your salāt. Try to fill your mind and heart with Allah as much as you can throughout your day. Talk to Him and make Du'ā to Him constantly. This will build your personal relationship with Him. Then, going to salāt will be like coming home to an old friend.”

A warning from Ayt. Khumayni

- Every action of human beings has a heavenly form. Every human will see his or her good and bad action after death. Thus *salāt* offered in time and with sincere heart will have a delightful heavenly form that will please *musalli* (the person who offered *salāt*) and save him from torments of fire and other displeasing things after death and in the Day of Judgment. Similarly a *salāt* offered out of time and lazily without concentration and without observing recommended rituals will be cause of worry and punishment to the who spoiled it by negligence
- Submission in the *salāt* is regarded as a sign of faith [*iman*]. So, whoever is not submissive in his *salāt*, will, according to Allah's saying, be excluded from the faithful [*ahl-i iman*]. Our *salāts*, which are not accompanied with submission, are caused by a deficiency of faith or our inattentiveness during *salāt*.

May Allah protect us!

محمد بن يحيى، عن أحمد بن محمد بن عيسى، عن الحسين بن سعيد، عن صفوان ابن يحيى، عن العيص بن القاسم قال: قال أبو عبد الله (عليه السلام): والله إنه ليأتي على الرجل خمسون سنة وما قبل الله منه صلاة واحدة فأى شئ أشد من هذا والله إنكم لتعرفون من جيرانكم وأصحابكم من لو كان يصلي لبعضكم ما قبلها منه لاستخفافه بها، إن الله عز وجل لا يقبل إلا الحسن فكيف يقبل ما يستخف به.

Imam al-Sadiq (a): By Allah, it is possible that a person lives for fifty years and not even a single of his prayer is accepted. Is there anything harder and more painful than this? By Allah, you will know from your neighbours and your friends that if you talk to them in the same manner as you talk in your prayer, they will not answer you and think you are ridiculing them. Allah does not accept unless the excellent, so how can He accept what has been belittled? (*al-Kafi*, 3:269)

References

- *Adab as-salāt*, Ayatullah Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini www.al-islam.org/adab-as-salāt-disciplines-of-prayer-second-revised-edition-imam-khomeini
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- 101 Ways To Concentrate in Prayer, Dr Ali al-Hilli, www.sunbehindthecloud.com
- Philosophy of Islamic Laws, <http://www.al-islam.org/philosophy-islamic-laws-ayatullah-al-uzma-shaykh-nasir-makarim-shirazi-ayatullah-jafar-subhani>
- YouTube & Vimeo lectures by Syed Abid Hussain Zaidi titled 'Behtareen Namaz Kayse Parhein.' The 1st lecture is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMXW0V4s9Bg> ; <http://vimeo.com/61473787>

Thank you for attending

Please encourage your family and friends to participate in this course.

