

CONCENTRATION

The 5 Daily Prayers
A Short Course for Children



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Chapter 1

1a - Importance of Prayer

Prayer is the best and easiest way to near ther blessings of Allah.

When Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) was asked what was the best deed that brings human beings close to Allah and is also liked by Him? He replied:

After enlightenment of God's Essence, I do not know anything better than the Prayer.

The most esteemed and favorite deed before Allah is Prayer.

Prayer is the last dying will of all Prophets (AS). According to the Aimmah (AS), Prayer is good because you first have to perform ablution (wudhu), then retire into a corner, and you have the honor of performing Prayer to Allah.

Shaytan gets unhappy when you extend your prostration (sajdah).

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said that Prayer has to be offered with full attention and understanding, otherwise it will not be accepted.

Why? Because:

It is a visit to Allah.

You are standing before Him.

Chapter 2

1b - The Reality of Prayer

Saying your Prayer on time is a highly recommended.

Allah reminds us of this in the Traditions of al-Qudsi:

And when he (the worshipper) knows that it is time of Prayer and he does not pray, he is indeed careless about Me.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said that when you perform the Prayer at its time, then,

The angels would raise you, in good clothing, into heaven.

The Prayer would say to you:

May Allah protect you, as you protected me and entrusted me to a generous angel.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said that when you perform the Prayer after its time (with no excuse), then,

The angels would raise you in bad clothing.

The Prayer would say to you:

You have lost me, may Allah lose you, and may He not care for you as you did not care for me.

Prayer has properties that can make you better than the angels.

The reasons for Prayer are the following:

The recognition of the Lordship of Allah.

Prayer leads one to His Tawhid – Allah is ONE and has no partners.

Prayer is standing before Him, the All-Powerful, with humility, humbleness and confession (of sins), and begging forgiveness of the previous sins.

Prayer means placing your face on dust five times a day as a sign of recognition and confession of His Greatness.

Prayer makes you remember Him.

Prayer helps you from being proud.

Prayer leads to humility, submission and humbleness towards Allah.

Prayer enables you to constantly engage in remembering Allah, both day and night.

While offering Prayer, you stay in the presence of your Lord and in the state of His remembrance, and this very condition stops you from sins and many kinds of corruption.

The pleasure of Allah is in Prayer so that one may always worship the Lord at all times.

The Prophet (S), in his last remaining hours of life, advised his followers to take Prayer seriously.

Chapter 3

1c - The Value of Prayer

The Prophet of Allah (S) used to wait for the time of Prayer.

The Prophet (S) advised Abu Dhar (RA) the following about Prayer:

O Abu Dhar! Allah has made the pleasure of my eye in the 5 daily Prayer.

Allah has made me love Prayer like the hungry person loves food, and the thirsty loves water.

However, I am never satisfied from Prayer.

O Abu Dhar! Anyone who willingly prays 12 units of Prayer, other than the obligatory, he has earned the right to a House in Paradise.

O Abu Dhar! Surely, so long as you are in Prayer, you are knocking on the door of the Great King, and whoever knocks long on the door of the King it will be opened for him.

O Abu Dhar! Be like him, who in a deserted place (though alone), calls Adhan and Iqamah (Call for Prayer) and says his Prayer.

So your Lord says to the Angels, Look at My servant!

He is praying and no one sees him but Me?

Then 70,000 Angels come down and pray behind him and seek forgiveness for him until the next day.

O Abu Dhar! No man puts his forehead (in prostration) in any place on earth but that place bears witness of that for him on the Day of Judgment.

Chapter 4

1d – Prayer and the Day of Judgment

On the Day of Judgment, the first question asked will be about Prayer.

Also,

All good deeds depend on Prayer.

Prayer is the cornerstone of Islam.

If Prayer is accepted then the good deeds will be accepted.

If Prayer is not accepted, then the good works will not be accepted.

The first station in The Bridge (Sirat) involves questioning on Prayer and how you fulfilled this obligation.

Chapter 5

2a – The Blessings of Prayer

When you recite the Adhan and the Iqamah, two rows of angels will perform the Prayer behind you.

But, if you said the Iqamah (only), one row of the angels would perform the Prayer behind you.

Imamm Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) has quoted the Prophet of Allah (S) as saying:

When a believing servant stands for the Prayer, Allah looks at him until he finishes.

His Mercy shadows over your head, the angels surround you from all sides up to the horizon of the heaven, and Allah assigns an angel to stand at your head, saying:

O Worshipper!

If you know who is looking at you, and to whom you are supplicating, you will look nowhere else, nor will you leave your position.

Also, whoever performs 2 units of Prayer without paying attention to any worldly matter, Allah will forgive him his sins.

The Aimmah (AS) have said:

Prayer is what angels love,

Prayer is the practice of the Prophets (AS),

Prayer is the light of understanding,

Prayer is what makes faith strong,

Prayer is what makes actions accepted,

Prayer increases sustenance,

Prayer keeps you away from illness,

Prayer is what Shaytan hates,

Prayer is a weapon to confront your enemies,

Prayer is what will assist you with the Angel of Death (AS),

Prayer is the light in your grave,

Prayer is an answer to Munkar and Nakeer (AS),

and Prayer is what will help you in the grave till the Judgment Day.

Chapter 6

2b – Treating Prayer Lightly

People have observed the Prophet of Allah (S) the following:

The Prophet of Allah used to talk to us and we used to talk to him.

But when the time for the Prayer arrived he appeared as if he did not know us and we did not know him, as his attention was fully directed to Allah.

People have also observed that whenever the Aimmah (AS) used to perform Wudhu, their faces changed color and they trembled.

When they were asked about the reason, the reply was:

When one is going to stand before the Owner of The Throne, his color ought to turn pale and his joints to tremble.

The Prophet (S) has said:

The one who takes Prayer without due consideration is not of me.

No! By Allah (SWT)!

Such a person will not reach the Pond of al-Kawthar.

According to the Prophet (S), one who takes Prayer without due consideration he will be raised with Qarun and Haman, so that it will be right for Allah to put him in Hell together with the hypocrites.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said:

Don't be negligent in regard to your Prayers.

The Prophet (S) said on his deathbed:

One who takes Prayer without due consideration, then he does not belong to me, nor the one who takes intoxicating drinks.

And, by God! He will not reach me at the Pond (of Al-Kawthar).

al-Khumeini (RA) has the following advice to those people who treat the performance of the Five Daily Prayer lightly and of no concern:

A devoted person should be observant of the times of his worship under every circumstance.

Of course, he should observe the timings of Prayer, which is the most important of the acts of worship, and carry it out in the earliest

part of its time, refraining from engaging in any other work during those times.

In the same way as he assigns a certain time to making an earning and for study and debate, he should do the same in respect of these acts of worship.

During this time, he must be free from other pre-occupations, so that he can achieve concentration of the heart.

2c – The Presence of the Heart in Prayer

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said:

I love that person who attends to God with his heart at the time of Prayer and does not pre-occupy his heart with any mundane matter.

Whenever a devotee turns with his heart to God, the Exalted, during Prayer, God looks at him with Mercy.

Allah turns towards him the hearts of the faithful who regard him with affection, following God's love of him.

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS) says:

If the one who worships Allah knew to what extent His (Allah's) Mercy surrounded him during Prayer, he would never raise his head from the state of prostration.

Prayer has been called a believer's heavenly journey that protects him from moral indecencies. Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini says:

Prayer is a pure sparkling stream of spirituality that whosoever enters it five times a day will purify his soul from all sorts of pollution and contamination.

The Aimmah (AS) have also said:

Prayer, half of it may be accepted, or one-third, or a quarter, or one-fifth, or even one-tenth.

Another Prayer may be folded like an old dress, and be thrown back at the face of its owner.

No part of the Prayer is yours except that part which you perform with an attentive heart.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) have further said:

Nothing of your Prayer is yours except that which you did with an attentive heart.

So, if one performed it completely without attention, or neglected its disciplines, it would be folded and thrown back at its owner's face.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) warns us that:

When a servant stands to offer Prayer, Allah pays attention to him and does not shift His attention until the servant goes away from His remembrance for the third time.

When this happens, Allah too turns His attention away from the worshipper.

Therefore, the heart's presence is a must in every single act in Prayer and that is the only way to achieve the merits hidden in this great obligation.

It is narrated that in the above instances, if the worshipper returns his attention and struggles not to lose his concentration, then his past sins are erased and he shall be granted such blessings that his reward cannot be counted.

Allah (SWT) says: Pay attention to Me, because I and the Angels are paying attention to you (in your Prayer).

You should be aware that your heart engages itself into accounting, planning, reviewing past and future problems, solving academic problems, very often recollecting during Prayer, and topics, which were forgotten by him completely.

3 – Stories of The God-Conscious (Pious). How Scholars and Jurists of Islam Treated Prayer and its Obligations

Abu Muhammad Zaynul Abideen

(about how al-Khumayni (AR) treated Prayers)

... How much time is left for midday? Because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his Prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing Prayer at the beginning of its time...

... Once again, he said with disappointment: why do you deal with me in such a way. Take back the food, so that I perform my Prayer.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

Surely Allah Loves those who turn unto Him constantly and loves those who continually purify themselves.

The Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

If you can always be in the state of wudhu, than do so; for verily if the Angel of death were to take the soul of a servant of God while the latter is in the state of wudu, martyrdom is written for him.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) is reported to have said:

Wudu upon wudu is light upon light.

On several occasions, I have seen al-Khumayni performing wudhu, and noticed that he closes the water tap between the acts of wudhu, and re-opens it (only) when it is necessary, to avoid any extra water to flow from the tap.

Whenever the Imam performed wudhu, he would perform all the parts of it facing the qibla (Makkah). Even if the basin was not in the direction of the qibla, at every instance, after taking a handful of water, he closed the tap, and facing the qibla, washed his face or hand.

One day in Paris a person came and said:

The Americans have come to take an interview with al-Khumayni, and this program shall be broadcasted live. If such an action transpires than naturally other European countries would follow suit, and this can be effective in revealing the stances and movement of the revolution.

Incidentally it was a Friday. I came to Imam Khumayni and informed him of the matter. He said: Now is the time of doing the recommended acts-the Friday ghusl, not the time for an interview. When he had performed the recommended acts of Friday, he said: I am ready for the interview.

Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

Be watchful over the Prayers, and the middle Prayer; and stand obedient to God.

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

The best of deeds to Allah is Prayer in the beginning of its time.

One of the important distinguishing characteristics of al-Khumayni was that he always performed the Prayer at the beginning of its time, and would give importance to the recommended Prayers (nawafil). This characteristic was present in him since the beginning of his youth age. al-Khumayni (AR) laid great importance to Prayer. He would narrate a tradition from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS): If a person takes his Prayer lightly, he shall be deprived of our intercession.

Once I said to him: Taking Prayers lightly may mean that a person sometimes performs his Prayers, while sometimes he does not. He said: No. This, rather, is against the religion. Imam al-Sadiq meant that when Zuhr (noon) comes to transpire (for example), and the person does not perform his Prayers at the beginning of the Prayer time, he has in reality given preference to something else.

One night before his demise, I was near him (al-Khumayni) in the hospital from 10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. in the morning. He woke up several times from his sleep and asked for water. When I brought juice for him, he said: Give me natural water. He did not take fruit juice. He also asked about the time a number of times; and continually said: It should not happen that the sun rises and I have to pray qada.

He (al-Khumayni) loved performing his Prayer at the beginning of its time. Even in his last day, he prayed the Prayer of Maghrib and Isha by means of signs at 10.00 p.m. He was in the state of unconsciousness when one of the doctors came besides him and, with the likelihood that probably by means of (mentioning) Prayer, Agha could be brought into consciousness, he said: Agha, it is time for Prayer.

The moment he said this, Imam regained his consciousness and performed his Prayer with signs of his hand. In the morning of that day too, he would always ask us: How much time is left for midday? Because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch. After every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his Prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing Prayer at the beginning of its time.

He (al-Khumayni) always prayed at the beginning of the Prayer time, and advised his children the same.

I remember that in the beginning of the war (Iraq-Iran imposed war), a gathering was held with some presidents and officials, both local and foreign. When there was a call for Prayer, al-Khumayni without paying attention to the others, stood up and performed his Prayer at the beginning of its time, and those present (also) prayed behind him.

And in that very period, not only did he recite the 8 units of nafila Prayers of Zuhr, but also prayed the 8 units of nafila Prayers of Asr.

During the days when he was in the hospital, prior to the call of midday Prayer, he would ask: How much time is left for the call of zuhr Prayer?

And in the middle of the night too he would ask: How much time is left for the call of Subh Prayer? So that he may recite his nafilah Prayers. The time he left this mortal world too, the last moments of his life was together with the word of Prayer. Even when he regained consciousness, the first sentence he pronounced was Allahu Akbar (Allah is great than what is attributed to Him).

The day when he [Imam Khumayni) was transferred to the hospital, he requested that he should be informed about the time for midday and afternoon Prayer; and he would pray at the beginning of the Prayer time and then take his meal.

One day he suddenly noticed that the plate of food was brought inside the room. He asked: Do you mean that it is time for Prayer? Those present said: Yes, it is Prayer time.

al-Khumayni (AR), facing them said in an angry tone: Why then didn't you wake me up? They said: Due to your particular unfavorable state, we did not want to wake you up. Once again, he said with disappointment: Why do you deal with me in such a way? Take back the food, so that I perform my Prayer!

I asked him (my teacher - Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi): What is the correct and balanced program of worship for a seeker of knowledge in your opinion?

He said with his ever humble attitude: I feel ashamed to talk about this, for I myself am greatly deprived of the same. However, I have heard things from great people, of which I shall narrate: ... The late Allamah Tabatabai and Ayatullah Behjat quoted Ayatullah Qadhi (the teacher of Allamah Tabatabai in Irfan), as saying: If a person prays the obligatory Prayers at the beginning of its time and does not attain lofty stations, he should curse me! (or, he said: he should spit at my face!).

The beginning of Prayer time is a great secret!

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. That feeling is okay, as you have to use energy to maintain attention. However, the more you flex your attention the stronger it becomes, and easier to hold.

From the moment you are born your mind functions every second, minute, hour, and day of your life. It is active day and night, extensively while awake, less so while you're asleep, but it is continually working. It is therefore, apparent that the train of thought would continue while you are saying your Prayer unless you make changes to the way you function in Prayer.

Chapter 9

4a – Setting the Prayer Scene and Burning Incense

The place you say your Prayer should be special.

Every item that can distract you from your Prayer should be taken away.

The room should be the one that you don't use regularly, and should be neat and clean, a comfortable temperature, and dark.

With comfortable temperature, you do not have to worry or entertain thoughts that may distract you when the room is hot or cold.

Your skin will constantly remind you of any discomfort to your body.

If the room you use to say your Prayer is slightly dark, the sense of darkness brings into you fear and awe, increasing your concentration by further limiting eyesight.

The lesser the items you are able to see during Prayer, the better it is.

The walls should be free from pictures and other objects that might attract your attention or give rise to a memory or thought.

You are also advised to select an isolated place free from noise and disturbance.

You should not have direct access to a telephone, as its ring would only create thoughts in your mind as to the urgency of the call.

Also, you should be away from any kind of smell from the kitchen to allow you to focus more on the task at hand, rather than salivating and thinking about food during Prayer.

Finally, you should appreciate and respect your communication with Allah by closing doors (not locking them) of the room you pray in, so as not to hear other family members conversing and kids screaming at each other.

You should burn incense to perfume your Prayer room.

It is a greatly recommended act and carries significant weight in research and science.

There is significant evidence on the practical applications of burning incense, as this is one major way to relax one's nerves and emotions, and through deep breathing and meditation, a high inner state of purity is attained.

Aroma therapists are experts in this field and the oils they use to apply on the skin or burn to release fumes can significantly reduce stress in the brain, lower muscle activity, decrease the train of thoughts, thereby increasing concentration in Prayer.

According to researchers, the aromatic properties of pure, natural essential oils are a catalyst for change in the human mind and body.

Essential oil aromas stimulate the part of the brain that affects your mood.

Inhaling essential oils can also help one attain a pleasurable emotional balance.

Deep breathing and Meditation can relax your mind and thus give you better concentration.

Therefore, increasing your level of concentration, through relaxation with essential oils, is highly recommended.

Direct breathing on these oils is also helpful.

For instance, to relieve stressful thoughts, anxiety or lethargy before Prayer, drip 2-5 drops of Chamomile onto a handkerchief, hold it under your nose and breathe deeply.

An aroma therapy lamp, a ceramic vessel equipped with a small basin to hold a mixture of water and essential oil is a good way to diffuse scent.

The basin is warmed from underneath by a candle or light bulb.

Diffusing relaxing oils like Chamomile, Rose or Sandalwood can significantly reduce over-load in the brain, thus allowing you to be attentive in your Prayer.

Chapter 10

4b – Wudhu, as a Way to Increase Your Attention

Wudhu (formal/minor ablution) is one of the most effective ways to prepare the scene for your daily Prayer. It has powers to re-organize your thoughts before Prayer and assist you in offering your Prayer with confidence and not to be swerved by Shaytan, the Accursed.

Performing Wudhu slowly and contemplating on the words in the dua recommended during every wash would help you a great deal to think about your life, death and the Creator whom you will be standing in front of soon.

This way, you employ Wudhu as a strategy to re-organize thoughts and prepare for Prayer.

There should be no interval of talking and discussing worldly matters between the performance of Wudhu and your Prayer.

If there is an interval, you ought to recite duas.

This way the link of concentration is established between Wudhu and Prayer.

True, the more time you engage in meditation and the conception of having only one thought before your Prayer, the more chance you have to say your Prayer without any distraction.

THE INVOCATION OF WUDHU

At the beginning of Wudhu, you start in the Name of Allah (SWT) and praise Him for making the water a pure element.

At the time of washing your hands, you request Allah (SWT) to place you among those who seek His forgiveness and those who are pure.

At the time of rinsing the mouth, you invoke to Allah (SWT) to teach you the correct way to answer the questions on the Day of Judgment when you shall meet His Divine Presence.

At the time of rinsing the nose, you request Allah (SWT) not to deprive you from the smell of Paradise and to place you among those who smell its fragrance.

At the time of washing the face, you ask Allah (SWT) to brighten your face on that Day when He will disgrace and darken the faces of a great number of people.

At the time of washing the right forearm, you plead to Allah (SWT) to place the scroll of your deeds in your right hand and the certificate of permanency in Paradise in your left hand, and that He should render your accounts leniently.

At the time of washing the left arm, you ask Allah (SWT) not to place the scroll of your deeds in your left hand, nor on your back, and He should not hang it around your neck.

You also seek refuge from the fierce Eternal Fire of Hell.

At the time of wiping the head, you request Allah (SWT) to cover you with His Mercy, Blessings and Pardon.

Finally, at the time of wiping the feet, you ask Allah (SWT) to keep you steadfast on His Path on that Day when feet shall slip, and make your efforts like of those that will please Him.

Chapter 11

4c – Understanding and Appreciating Allah’s Presence

It is always to your benefit if you were to ponder the Existence of Allah and His Power, Signs and Decisions related to this world and the next.

Appreciating His presence is one way of bringing humility into your heart and humbling yourself in Prayer, performed with attention and concentration.

It is only He Who looks at you Mercifully during your Prayer, and you ought to keep this in mind every time you say your Prayer.

A good example is from The Prophet (S) who used to treat Prayer very seriously and gave his full attention and concentration.

He appreciated and knew his Creator well enough to fear His Presence and attend with full concentration when standing before Him.

al-Khumeini (RA) reports a tradition that:

For ten years the Prophet of Allah (S) stood on his toes (in his Prayer) until his blessed feet became swollen and his face turned pale.

And he would stand erect all night, until a time came when the Lord consoled him (with the following verse):

We have not sent down The Qur’an on you to cause you distress.

al-Saduq (RA) quotes the following advice from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) that he gave to one of his trusted companions:

O Servant of Allah! When you offer Prayer, pray like someone who bids farewell and fears that he will never return

(i.e. pray in such a manner as if it were the last Prayer of your life).

Then fix your gaze on the point of your prostration.

If you know that there is someone on your left or right, you take more care in offering your Prayer; then know that you stand in front of Someone Who sees you and you don’t see Him.

Chapter 12

4d – Reminding Yourself of Allah

One of the reasons why Adhan and Iqamah have been much emphasized before Prayer is to establish a strong link between the worshipper and his Creator, before you venture into this sacred journey of Prayer and be in direct communication with the Almighty.

This way, you start reminding and convincing yourself of the presence of Allah before you begin Prayer.

The Great Scholar, al-Mutahhari (RA) quotes a tradition, which is referenced in the book *Light Within Me*:

The aim in Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah is that the heart be always aware of al-Haqq (The Most Truthful, a Name of Allah, for its practice banishes inattention.

al-Khumeini (RA) comments:while remembering Allah, do you not see that respecting and obeying such a Benefactor is essential for you? He is the Creator and King of this vast cosmos, whose infiniteness cannot be measured or even conceived by human intellect.

We, human beings, creatures crawling on one of the smallest planets miserably fail to grasp the extent of our own small world, whose sun cannot be compared with far greater suns of innumerable galaxies. Our solar system is nothing compared to other lesser solar systems, which still elude the keen eyes of great explorers and investigators of the world.

We have been advised by the Scholars in Islam to try and remember Allah at all times possible.

This includes repeating certain phrases of worship and servitude, or it can be in the form of meditation, appreciating this world and the hereafter.

al-Taba Tabai (RA) in his book, *al-Mizan Volume Two*, discusses the way of living that is happier and the life that is more durable. In this narration, al-Daylami narrates in his *al-Irshad* that Allah, at one stage during the Ascension (the Day of Meraj), told the Prophet (S):

As for the happy way of living, it is that in which the person is not tired of remembering Me, does not forget My bounties, and does not ignore My rights (on him). He seeks My pleasure day and night. The everlasting life is realized when the person works for his spiritual benefit until the world loses its significance for him, and looks small in his eyes. The hereafter becomes great for him.

He gives preference to My pleasure over his own desire; seeks My pleasures; thinks the right of My bounty great; keeps in mind what I have done for him (i.e. for his benefit); remembers Me day and night whenever he is tempted to commit any wrong or sin; keeps his heart clean from that I dislike; hates Shaytan and his whisperings, and does not let Shaytan establish a hold over, or a passage to his heart.

When he acts like this, then I put (My) love into his heart, until I make his heart, as well as his leisure and engagement, and his thought and speech, a part of (My) favors which I have bestowed on those of (My) Creations who love Me; and I open his heart's eye and ear, so that he hears with his heart and looks with his heart to My Majesty and Greatness; and I make the world straitened for him and make him hate it with all its pleasures; and I caution him of the world and all that it contains, as a shepherd protects his sheep from dangerous pasture lands.

When this happens, he flees from people and transfers from the house of termination to the abode of eternity, and from the house of Shaytan to the Seat of the Beneficent Allah. O Ahmad! I adorn him with dignity and majesty. So, this is the good way of living and the eternal life, and it is the status of those who are pleased (with Me).

So, whosoever acts for My pleasure, I give him three characteristics:

I teach him gratitude, which is not polluted by ignorance, remembrance, that is unadulterated with forgetfulness, and love that takes preference over the love of creatures.

Then when he loves Me, I love him and I open the eye of his heart to My Majesty. I do not keep (My) special beings hidden from him. I converse with him secretly in the dark of night and the light of day, until he ceases talking with and sitting with the creatures.

I make him hear My talk and the speech of My Angels. I make My secret known to him, which I have kept hidden from all (My) creation. I dress him in modesty, until all the creation is awed of him. He walks on the earth (and all his sins are) forgiven. I make his heart hearing and seeing, and I do not hide from him anything of the Garden or the Fire. I make known to him the terror and afflictions awaiting the people on the

Day of Resurrection, and about the things I will question the rich and the poor, as well as the learned and the ignorant.

I will make him sleep (in peace) in his grave, and I will send Munkar and Nakeer (AS) to question him. He will not experience the sorrow of death, or the fright of the prelude (of the next world). Then I will erect his weighing scale for him, and will unroll his book (of deeds). I will then put his book in his right hand and he shall read it unfolded. Then I will not keep any interpreter between Me and him.

So these are the attributes of the lovers. O Ahmad! Make your concern one concern, make your tongue one tongue, and make your body (i.e. your person) alive that is never oblivious (of Me). Whoever is oblivious of Me, I do not care in which valley he perishes.

Chapter 13

5a – Relaxed and Alert State of Mind

An alert state of mind is one of the many vital ingredients of Prayer.

If you are tired and exhausted, it is better to rest and do some deep breathing and relaxation exercises before you make the commitment to stand in front of your Lord.

And yes, it is preferred to pray a bit late but with attention and concentration.

Of course, the delay in performing Prayer from its allocated time should only be for the length of time one has to relax and rejuvenate himself, gain energy to stand before the Almighty. As Imam Ali (AS) has advised us:

Do not offer Prayer in the state of drowsiness.

While offering Prayer, do not think about yourself because you are standing in front of Allah.

Indeed, only that portion of the Prayer will be accepted that he has paid full attention towards Allah.

al-Saduq (RA) reports from Imam Ali (AS) that he said:

None of you should ever stand for Prayer in a lazy or drowsy state, nor should you let (random) thoughts pass through your mind (in the state of Prayer).

For, in that state, you stand before your Glorious and Almighty Lord.

Verily, the reward a devotee derives from Prayer is equal to the extent of it that he offers with an attentive heart.

In Fiqh al-Ridha it is stated:

When you want to perform the Prayer, do not go to it lazily, sleepy, hurriedly, or unmindfully.

Approach it calmly, solemnly and slowly.

You should display submission, imploringly and humbly to Allah. You are to show awe and signs of fear and hope, with caution and apprehension.

Thus, you are to stand before Him, as an escapee and sinful slave stands at attention before his master; on the alert, with joined heels, erected trunk, not looking to right and left, reckoning as if you see Him.

If you do not, He certainly does see you...

The posture of the *Aimmah* (AS) in Prayer always allowed them to relax and be comfortable.

Your posture in Prayer also has to allow you to remain alert and aware.

There is a two-way relationship between slumping and distraction.

Good posture means there is musculoskeletal balance.

This balance helps to protect the joints in the spine from excessive stress.

It also guards against injury and possible deformity.

Good posture helps prevent distress and pain that lead to distraction.

Chapter 14

5b – Understanding What You Recite

It is clear that if you don't try to learn and appreciate the meanings of the verses and glorification you proclaim in your Prayer, you stand very little chance of developing and maintaining the concentration you need to focus in Prayer.

Focusing on the meanings of what you recite would generally keep your mind busy and involved in Prayer.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said:

One who offers two units of Prayer with the knowledge of what he says therein, he does not finish them without God forgiving him every sin that there is between him and God.

Understanding every word of what you recite in Prayer is helpful in developing a tranquil mind and in allowing you to control your immediate thoughts and feelings that would distract you from your Prayer.

You also need to appreciate the words and its meaning in your language of preference, recite and understand them so that your mind does not wander and remains focused on the task at hand.

However, one would not think or ponder on the meanings for this is not the time for it, but only occupy his mind with the meanings of the phrases being recited.

The Prophet of Allah (S) is quoted to have said to Abu Dhar:

Two light units of Prayer offered with contemplation are better than a whole night spent in worship.

Takbir

Allah is Great

Translation of Chapter of Al-Hamd

I commence with the Name of Allah, The Compassionate, The Merciful

Special Praise be to Allah, the Sustainer of the creation

The Compassionate, the Merciful

Lord of the Day of Judgment You alone we worship, and to

You alone we pray for help
Guide us to the straight path
The path of those whom
You have favored, n of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of
those who have gone astray

Translation of Chapter of Al-Ikhlās

I commence with the Name of Allah, The Compassionate,
The Merciful

O' Prophet! Say: Allah is One - the Eternal Being

Allah is He Who is independent of all beings

He begets none, nor was He begotten

And none in the creation is equal to Him

**Translation of the Dhikr During Ruku (Bending) and Sajdah
(Prostration)**

Glory be to my High Sustainer and I praise Him

Glory be to my Great Sustainer, Most High, and I praise Him

Before Going into Prostration

Allah hears and accepts the praise of one who praises

Istighfar, Between Two Prostration

I seek forgiveness from Allah Who is my Sustainer, and I turn to Him

While Standing

I stand and sit with the help and strength of Allah

Translation of Tasbehat Al-Arba-ah

Glory be to Allah, and all praise is for Him and there is no one worth
worshipping other than Allah, and He is Greater than any description

Translation of Tashahhud and Salam

I testify that there is none worth worshipping except the
Almighty Allah, Who is One and has no partner

And I testify that Muhammad is His servant and Prophet

O Allah! Send Your blessings on Muhammad and his progeny

O Prophet! Allah's peace, blessings and grace be upon you!

Allah's peace be on us, those offering prayers - and upon all pi-
ous servants of Allah Allah's peace, blessings and grace be on you
believers!

Chapter 15

5c – Proper Pronunciation

Arabic language is considered one of the sweetest of all the languages.

So, reciting Prayer with proper Makhaarij (proper pronunciation) and Tajweed (following the rules of the Arabic Language) and learning the rules of reciting the Qur'an, would make your efforts in maintaining attention a lot easier.

If you possessed these qualities in you, then you would never feel tired and exhausted reciting long Chapters of the Qur'an or reading long and repeated glorification during Prayer.

Because, you would be deeply involved in the parts of the recitation itself.

This is an effective way to prolong your bending (Ruku) and prostration (Sujud), and a way to lengthen your Prayer without discomfort.

For those whose mother-tongue is not Arabic and have yet to master the correct recitation of the Arabic verses involved in Prayer, you are advised to at least learn to read the compulsory parts of the Prayer correctly and with proper pronunciation.

This way they are sure your Prayer is valid.

You should also try and not completely focus on his recitation, as you would lose your focus on Allah. However, there is no excuse for not learning to recite with proper Makhaarij and Tajweed.

Chapter 16

5d – Confidence

In his book *Self Building*, al-Amini writes:

If one does not succeed in the very first attempt, instead of getting disappointed, he should become more determined and serious in trying again, until attaining domination over the self gradually.

The mind should be cleansed thoroughly from scattered thoughts and should be motivated to pay attention towards God Almighty.

If attaining such a kind of attention is not possible within a day, few weeks or even few months, he should not be disappointed because, after all, such kind of devoted attention is possible.

To have firm intention and belief that whatsoever the case, you will never be misled in Prayer.

You need to be confident and accept with full heart that Shaytan's forces are weaker than what you have been endowed with by your loving Lord, the Most High. Allah (SWT) states in The Qur'an: Indeed! The cunning of Shaytan is feeble.

Self-confidence is arguably one of the most important traits you can possess.

Self-confidence reflects your assessment of your own self-worth.

It will play a large part in determining your level of attention and concentration in Prayer.

Building self-confidence and defeating the distracting thoughts in Prayer takes time and effort.

Goal setting is probably the most effective way of building self-confidence.

By setting measurable goals, achieving them, setting new goals, achieving them and so on, you prove your ability to yourself.

You are able to prove to yourself that you are able to perform and achieve effectively.

You can see, recognize and enjoy your achievement, and feel real self-worth in that achievement.

Chapter 17

6a – Alternating Recitations

You need to alternate recitations by reciting different chapters of the Qur'an, different supplications and different forms of glorification in your Prayer.

This is vital because your brain will not become accustomed and habituated to what is being recited daily and switch off attention to something else.

The human brain can handle different situations at any given time, so you need to restrain this quality whilst communicating with Allah.

One way of doing this is alternating recitations so you are ever mindful.

Learning and memorizing new chapters of the Qur'an, learning new and different supplications and glorification is therefore highly recommended.

For example, if you always recite Suratul Qadr after Suratul Hamd in your first unit of Prayer, then you would recite Suratul Falaq instead, or any other Chapter from the Qur'an.

Since this is a completely new chapter, your mind will not allow any distracting thoughts since it is occupied and focused on the new chapter.

Similarly, if you recite a particular invocation in your Qunut, spend time to learn new and different invocations and recite them in your Prayer.

Also, if you are used to recite glorification in your last prostration, why not try and have these recitations in your earlier prostration as well - something different at all times.

We have to be careful though, because in some instances like Tashahud, Salaam, and some other acts in Prayer, we are not allowed to add or substitute the compulsory recitations.

Chapter 18

6b – Continued Cleanliness

An important and attractive aspect of Islamic teaching is related to cleanliness.

It means to be clean at all times by performing ablution (wudhu) and ghusl (major ablution) whenever necessary.

The major ablution (ghusl) on Friday, for example, has been much stressed and cleans your soul from many sins.

By keeping yourself clean and pure, you make it difficult for Shaytan to enter your soul.

Cleanliness is a barrier preventing lustful ideas and disruptive thoughts from entering your mind during Prayer.

One of the traditions of the Prophet (S), which has come down in the form of an everlasting proverb is that:

Cleanliness is part of faith, and faith leads a person to Paradise.

It is, therefore, a good idea to brush your teeth, perfume yourself, and observe some kind of uniform, preferably white, and stand in-front of Allah, fresh and clean.

Cleanliness is a weapon of a believer and evokes inner enlightenment.

This part of your Prayer may involve any of the following elements:

Always wearing a clean white dress during Prayer.

Applying perfume.

Burning incense.

Using a clean Prayer mat.

Tidy Prayer room.

Seeking forgiveness before Prayer, and so forth.

All the above-mentioned elements create a healthier and spiritual environment for Prayer.

Chapter 19

6c – Seeking Forgiveness and Accepting Your Limitations

After every Prayer you should seek forgiveness, as this will directly increase your attention and concentration during Prayer and bring you nearer to Him.

While accepting your limitations you should sincerely repent to Allah that the Prayer you just finished was not up to the required standards and pray to be forgiven for it by the Merciful Lord.

Then, you return to Him promising that the next Prayer will be a better one.

This process in itself is a motivation to perform better next time you stand before the Almighty.

Accepting faults will create in you desire to perform even better.

Chapter 20

6d – Trust and Fear of Allah (Knowing and Appreciating who Allah is)

It is said that the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (AS) used to writhe and tremble when it was time for the Prayer.

Asked once about his uncommon state, he said: The time has come for the trust which Allah, the Exalted, offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it.

This is in direct reference to the following verse of the Qur'an:

Verily, We offered the trust to the Heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were afraid thereof, and man undertook it.

Verily he was (proved) unjust, ignorant.

Whenever the Infallible (AS) used to stand before Allah in Prayer, their limbs trembled, and because of the intensity of fear, even the number of their breaths could be counted.

They used to become restless as if bitten by a snake, and Prayer was offered as though there would never be another chance to offer another Prayer.

Muhammad, son of Yaqub, quoting al-Sadiq (AS) in Furu al-Kafi, Volume 3, Page 300, Tradition 4 says: My father used to say, when Ali, son of al-Husayn (AS) used to stand for the Prayer, he looked like a trunk of a tree, nothing of which would move unless the wind would move it.

I said to al-Sadiq (AS): I noticed that when Ali, son of al-Husayn (AS) stood for the Prayer, his color changed. He said to me: By Allah, Ali ibn al-Husayn knew before whom he was standing.

This is an excellent precedent for us from the Infallible (AS) whose every word and action were in accordance with the pleasure of the Almighty.

It is truly meritorious to be able to convince yourself that the Prayer you will be offering may be your last one and that you may not have a chance to say another Prayer.

This behavior can be maintained only in pious people, and piety and the fear of Allah are the two qualities you should endeavor to possess.

The imploring moaning of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) used to be heard from a mile's distance, such that Allah praised him by saying: Ibrahim was mild, imploring, penitent.

When performing his Prayer, a sound of fizz like that of a boiler was heard coming from his chest. A similar sound was also heard from the chest of our Prophet (S).

Fatimah (AS) used to pant in the Prayer because of her fear of Allah.

Chapter 21

7a – Stress Management

al-Khumayuni (AR) writes:

One of the important disciplines of worship, especially the invoking worship, is tranquillity.

You should perform your worship with quietude of the heart and a tranquillity of the mind.

This is because if the worship were performed in a state of anxiety and with shaky heart, the heart would not have any reaction.

Thus, no effects of worship would appear in the dominion of the heart, and the reality of the worship would not become an inner image of the heart.

Your body responds to all kinds of stress by trying to get back to a normal physiological state.

Depending on the stress agent, hormones like adrenaline, may surge.

Your heartbeat and blood pressure will probably increase.

Your blood sugar rises.

Besides many health problems related to stress, from high blood pressure to asthma, significant overload is noticed in the brain, and with such a mind, one can hardly say his or her Prayer with concentration.

Less stress will bring much more happiness into your life and more vigilance in your Prayer.

The stress you accumulate, as a result of your reaction to everyday events, bred by various anxieties, creates a barrier to your happiness and normal living.

No one can cause you to become stressful.

Only those insecurities and deep-seated anxieties can cause you to react irrationally to events in your life and lead to stress.

Once this is relieved, your interpersonal relationships will improve, as you emanate warmth from being at peace with yourself.

Once stress has been dissipated through an effective meditation and relaxation exercise, your view of the world becomes much more pleasant.

This way the brain is also relieved of the pressure from the overload and you are able to concentrate in your Prayer.

It is therefore recommended that you exercise, meditate and relax, employing deep breathing strategies before resting at night and in the early morning hours.

Take time for yourself to relax each day; exercise regularly after getting your doctor's okay; learn to let go of things which are outside your control; learn to adapt to changes; learn to take action when you can make a difference; avoid excessive caffeine, fats, and sugar; don't smoke; go away for the weekend, and give your time to something or someone you believe in.

Chapter 22

7b – Senseless Conversations

The Aimmah (AS):

There is no worship superior than silence...

Silence is part of wisdom. It is a sign of every virtue.

It is the way of the devotees of Allah, because Allah likes it.

It is the style of the Prophets (AS), and the habit of the chosen people.

Silence is difficult to practice but very fruitful in the end.

By maintaining silence and pondering over every sentence you speak, you would hardly commit yourself to speculation, backbiting, pride, mockery, lying, etc.

This way, you have less to think about and less thoughts to interrupt you in your Daily Prayer.

You should try and protect the organs of your body from disobedient actions, as they would invite Allah's displeasure. The scholars have said:

One's speech should always be in remembrance of Allah, one's silence should be an effort to think and contemplate, and one's vision should be for deriving a lesson.

It will only add to your disadvantage if you involve yourself in careless and purposeless conversations, as you increase the chances of losing the train of your thought in your Prayer.

The more careless you are with the tongue, the more defensive you'll have to be, and Shaytan will not lose this opportunity to remind you of your inaccuracies and feelings of guilt during Prayer.

You should be careful of your tongue at all times and employ it in earning only the pleasure of Allah.

al-Taba Tabai (RA) concludes the following, after years of struggle in his quest for attaining spiritual perfection:

I have witnessed the most precious effects of silence. Practicing silence for forty days and nights, speaking only when it is absolutely required

and remaining occupied in meditation and invocation until attaining purity and enlightenment.

Chapter 23

7c – Moderation in Eating

Eating and drinking is also one of those matters with regard to which people go to extremes and, of course, mostly towards excess.

No doubt, you need food to live and it is necessary that food should reach the cells of your body to maintain life.

However, the important question is how much food your body needs and whether excessive food is good or harmful.

al-Ridha (AS) says:

You should know that a human body is like fertile land.

If moderation is exercised in the matter of its development, i.e. necessary quantity of water is provided to it, which should neither be so excessive as to drown it and change into swamp and bog, nor so scanty that it should remain thirsty and dry, such land yields much produce.

However, the land will become barren if not properly looked after.

Over-eating is a major cause of inattention in Prayer, and one needs to take care of this problem five times a day before every Prayer.

Luqman Hakim once said to his beloved son:

Dear son! When the stomach is full your faculty of thinking goes to sleep, and your tongue of wisdom becomes dumb and your limbs fail to worship Allah.

Chapter 24

7d – Checking and Inspection

You have to keep track of the level of your attention and concentration in Prayer.

If it is the right level, give thanks; if wrong, ask for forgiveness.

Self-conditioning, contemplation and self-examination are essential prerequisites for a seeker of truth who is battling with his self.

Self-conditioning or stipulation means binding oneself with the resolution not to do anything against God's commands.

al-Khumeini (RA) advises you to specifically be in this state of mind at night, the time for introspection and inner deliberation, and evaluate your deeds of the whole day.

This is the time to see whether you have been honest to the Giver of all, to whom everybody is accountable.

If you have been faithful to Him, you should be thankful to Him that He has made you successful in your intentions. Furthermore, Shaytan and his partners may magnify the volume of the task in your eyes, but these are the guile played by the cheat.

You should always curse, and drive away the devil and evil thoughts from within the depths of your heart and the domain of your mind.

Reviewing your performance on the Daily Prayer should be part of the contemplation you employ every night, to be able to scan through all the problems and suggest possible solutions.

Thus, the next Prayer is significantly different from the previous one.

Chapter 25

8a – Putting Thoughts in Writing

Unfortunately, in any relaxed state and in particular the Prayer, it is only human to have numerous creative thoughts, as well as recollections of things you forgot or need to do.

These thoughts may haunt your continued meditation if you don't write them down.

Geat scholars have advised us that these thoughts have to be written down on a piece of paper so you may free your mind to concentrate on the Prayer.

You can then more easily continue without clinging to thoughts you fear you might forget.

You will be bringing your conscious and subconscious mind closer together and this will yield much useful information and ideas you will want to pursue upon completion of your Prayer.

Chapter 26

8b – Removing Obstacles

Also, before the Prayer, all obstacles in attaining heart's presence must be removed.

As such, you should relieve yourself before starting Prayer, and you should satisfy your hunger or thirst as well.

Also, since over-eating creates a lack of attention and concentration, you should observe moderation if you have to eat before Prayer.

Drinking a full glass of water is recommended before Prayer.

A campaign has been launched in several schools in the United Kingdom to encourage children to drink more water to increase their concentration. Studies have found that children who are dehydrated do not work as well in the classroom as those who have drunk the recommended eight glasses of water a day. All brain activity is neurological and is a chemical activity which doesn't function without water

If you are busy investigating something or you are disturbed and agitated about a particular event, you should try within the bounds of possibilities, to eliminate the causes of the worry before Prayer.

Think it, and work it out before you stand in front of the Almighty.

This way you appear before Allah secured and free from insecurities of life.

The cloth you wear during Prayer may also be an obstacle if it is tight, or very loose and uncomfortable. To avoid such instances, proper attire to one's liking is recommended at all times.

The following tradition gives us an idea of what could transpire in Prayer and what one is supposed to do to maintain the concentration in his Prayer.

al-Khumeini (RA) reports from Shaykh Muhammad, son of al-Hasan (alTusi – RA) reporting in al-Tahdhib with his trustworthy narrators leading to Abu Hamzah al-Thumali RA), that he said:

I saw Ali, son of al-Husayn (al-Sajjad (AS) offering Prayer, when the cloak slipped from his shoulders. The Imam did not arrange it until he

had finished his Prayer. When I questioned him about it, he said: Woe to you, don't you know before whom I stood? Nothing is accepted of a devotee's Prayer except what he offers with the proper attention of his heart.

8c – Grief-Stricken, Submission and Sadness

No doubt, sadness brings to your soul many benefits, one of which is a revolution of the soul. It is the time when you are sad and grief-stricken, that you are able to fully organize and empower yourself to be most attentive in Prayer.

It is widely accepted that a sad mind is more attuned towards an objective (Allah, in this case) and more capable of maintaining a high level of attention and concentration.

There shouldn't be any problem practicing this kind of emotion before Prayer, since you have to warn yourself of the following: You have no way of knowing that your past sins have been forgiven; no way of knowing that you will refrain from committing sins in the future; no way of knowing that your actions win the pleasure of Allah... – Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS)

The Prophet (S) puts this all clearly by saying to Abu Dhar (RA):

O Abu Dhar! Allah (SWT) has not been worshipped with anything like that of length of grief.

O Abu Dhar! Whoever is given knowledge which doesn't cause him to cry simply because he has been given knowledge, it will not benefit him. Allah has described the learned and said: Surely those who were given knowledge before it, when it is recited unto them they fall upon their faces in prostration and they say: Glory be to our Lord! Surely the promise of Allah shall take place. They fall on their faces crying and they become increasingly humble.

At this point, it should be made clear that crying and shedding tears for personal reasons during Prayer will make your Prayer null and void.

8d – Patience, Accepting Fault and Addressing the Problem to Allah

You should be patient with your practice of attention.

You do not perform masterfully the first time in any given circumstance.

It is the continued practice of meditation, relaxation and attention that reaps benefits.

You should not expect specific benefits in a short period of time.

Invoking Allah and addressing your problem of inattention is a good practice, as He would definitely assist you in this matter.

Patience is vital when we have to perform obedient acts for the love of Allah, the Great. As He has said:

Indeed, you will not get what I possess, but being patient with those things, which you don't like (but you still do) in order to seek My pleasure. Patience on My obedience is easier for you than patience in the Fire of Hell. Whenever you intend to perform a good deed, Shaytan is there instantly to persuade you not to do it.

He may practice tricks on you and convince you not to do the deed, but you have to be careful.

You should be able to identify these tricks and discard them.

Knowing his entrance to your soul is an effective way to solve this issue.

And if Shaytan is not successful in convincing you not to do a particular obedient act then he will try his level best to make you do it quickly and with the least of concentration.

al-Khumeini (RA) reports that Patience is of 3 kinds:

Patience at the time of Affliction;

Patience in regard to Obedience;

Patience in regard to Disobedience.

One who bears patiently with affliction, resisting it with a fair consolation, Allah uplifts him 300 degrees, the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between earth and heavens.

And one who is patient in regard to obedience, Allah uplifts him 600 degrees, the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the Throne.

And one who is patient in regard to disobedience, Allah uplifts him 900 degrees, the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the furthest frontiers of the Throne.

Chapter 29

9a – Fasting

al-Khumeini (RA) reports a tradition that there was once a person who was in great misfortune. He had nothing to eat and neither was he invited for a meal on that day. He thus decided to visit one of the houses of Allah (i.e. a mosque) and declare his poverty in front of his Lord. It is reported that he passed the whole night in hunger and his invocation was not answered. The next day the Prophet (S) was informed of the situation. He (S), at that very moment, was blessed with a revelation from the Almighty that:

Tell our guest that We were his Host last night and wanted to provide him with sumptuous food, but found no better food than hunger!

There is a tradition by Imam Ali (AS) that on the night of Me'raj, Allah said to The Prophet (S):

O Ahmad! How sweet and beautiful are the hunger, silence and seclusion?

Wisdom, heart's tranquillity, nearness to Me, continuous grief, righteous talks, thriftiness, indifference at the time of ease, and hardships, are the characteristics acquired by My servant as a result of hunger, silence, and seclusion.

Fasting has not only been well established and well researched as a primal source of mental alertness, but the act has also been well ignored.

Fasting is considered one of the safest therapeutic agents known today in natural as well as conventional medicine.

If only we could use fasting, as a way to increase our mental capability to concentrate, not only would we benefit from the fast, we would also achieve the pleasure of Allah. It has been reported by researches in Alternative Medicine that during the process of fasting, the body lives on it's own substance. The body will decompose and burn those cells and tissues which are diseased, damaged or dead and responsible for accumulating toxins in our body and brain.

During fasting, there also occurs the building of new, healthy cells thus bringing your body to a dynamic state.

In this process, the cleansing capacity of the eliminative organs - lungs, liver, kidneys and the skin - is greatly increased, and masses of accumulated metabolic wastes and toxins are quickly expelled.

Fasting also offers physiological rest to all the major organs in the body, including the brain.

There is a stabilizing effect on all the vital physiological, nervous and mental functions.

Mental powers are thus improved.

Chapter 30

9b – The World and its Pleasures

Daylami, in *Irshadul Qulub*, quoting the Commander of the Faithful (AS), says that the Prophet of Allah (S) said: On the night of the Me'raj (Ascension), Allah, the Exalted, said:

O Ahmad! If a servant performs the Prayer as much as that of the people of the earth and the heaven, and fasts as much as that of the people of the earth and the heaven, and refrains, like the angels, from food, and wears the apparel of a devotee; then I see in his heart a bit of love for this world or for worldly reputation, leadership, celebrity and ornaments, he will not be in an abode in My neighborhood.

I will drive My love out of his heart and make it dark until he forgets Me.

I will not let him taste the sweetness of My love.

According to Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini, one of the greatest obstacle to attaining the state of perfect communion with Allah is unwavering attachment to worldly allurements namely, wealth and property, power and position.

One's attraction to these things causes the worshipper's attention to these transient things.

Therefore, you must cut-off these attractions at all cost, and at all times, so that the heart's presence and attention towards Allah becomes easier during Prayer.

There are various interpretations of the term World.

What is essential here is to understand the Disapproved World.

According to Al-Majlisi (RA):

All things that prevent men and women from obeying Allah and keep them away from His Love, and from seeking the hereafter, is defined as the Disapproved World.

Let it be known to you that which can be deduced from all the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions in this regard; according to our understanding of them - is that the accursed (disapproved) world is the sum

total of all those things that prevent man from obeying Allah and keep him away from His love and from seeking the Hereafter.

These attractions may include television and radio and many of their related illicit pleasures; being part of a group that only backbites people and uses foul language; fill oneself with food at all times; being lazy and wasting time on useless matters, and so forth. This is the world one has to refrain from.

The Prophet (S) had this advise to his companion Abu Dhar (RA) with regards to the Disapproved World, and reads as follows:

O Abu Dhar! The (disapproved) world is cursed!

Curse is what's in it except that which seeks Allah's pleasure.

And there is nothing more hateful to Allah than the (disapproved) world.

He created it then left it. He didn't look at it and will not look at it until the Final Hour (Judgment Day).

And there is nothing more pleasurable to Allah than faith in Him and abandoning that which He forbids.

O Abu Dhar! Blessed are those people who stay far away from this world, and those who await the Hereafter.

They take the earth of Allah as a carpet, its soil as a pillow and its water as perfume.

They read the Book of Allah loudly, call Him loudly and they cut themselves off from worldliness.

The Approved World is:

The abode of truth for him who appreciates its truthfulness, a place of safety for him who understands it, a mine of treasures for him who collects provisions from it (for the next world), and a house of instructions for him who draws lessons from it.

It is the shrine of worship for those who love Allah, the house of Prayer for His Angels, the place where the revelations of Allah descend, and the market place for those devoted to Him. Herein, they earn His Mercy and herein they acquire Paradise by way of profit. (Imam Ali (AS))

Chapter 31

9c – Arresting Thoughts

Because any individual's mind is filled with thoughts at all times, he is supposed to arrest them, and put a stop on them during Prayer.

When a thought comes, a command stop is used subconsciously to arrest and halt that thought and you will not dwell on it.

If this strategy is used on all incoming thoughts, then you will assume command and control over his incoming thoughts during Prayer.

In al-Kafi, on the authority of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS), it is stated that he has said:

When doubts in the Prayer become too frequent, do not give heed to them, and regard the Prayer to be correct.

It is hoped that this state would leave you, as Shaytan causes it.

Do not make it Shaytan's habit to frequent you by breaking your Prayer, as this will stir his greed against you.

Shaytan is evil and gets accustomed to what he is habituated to.

That malignant (Shaytan, the Accursed) wants to be obeyed.

So, if he is disobeyed he will not come back to you.

Arresting your thoughts can help you overcome nagging worry and doubt, which stands in the way of your attention towards the Almighty.

Arresting a thought involves concentrating intensely on the unwanted thought and suddenly stopping and emptying the mind.

The command STOP is generally used to interrupt the distracting thought.

One technique is to draw a small dot on a piece of paper and concentrating on it very intensely. Any thought coming to your mind has to be thrown back and ignored. Focusing more on the dot, and freezing your mind will give rise to unwavering meditation. The more time you involve yourself with thinking about NOTHING, the more attentive and focused you become. This way your brain gets habituated to

concentrating for longer periods of time without letting distracting thoughts interrupt your goals.

It is also more effective if you explore and list down all the stressful and negative thoughts that interfere with your Prayer. You should then categorize them in the following four sections - No interference, Interferes a little, Interferes moderately and Interferes a great deal. This way, you have a list, and all this needs to be done in writing. It should be understood as an accepted fact that none of these thoughts are productive during Prayer.

Arresting your thoughts requires consistent motivation.

You should decide now that you really want to eliminate these negative thoughts during Prayer.

Once this is done and the thoughts put in writing and categorized as mentioned above, close your eyes and visualize each thought, starting with the one that interferes a little only, and try and solve the problem in your mind.

This way, a thought will be eliminated and will have no place in your Prayer.

Together, and after some time, you will eliminate all the thoughts including the ones that interfere a great deal.

This exercise should be performed daily so no thought is misplaced or forgotten.

Taking care of every thought and why it should distract you is one way of making sure the thought doesn't appear in front of you during your Prayer and distract you from your goal.

Some thoughts may return again and again, so you will just have to learn to interrupt them.

Like the experts say, the main effort is to stifle each thought as it begins, and to concentrate on your Prayer.

The thoughts will return less and less readily in most cases, and eventually cease to be a problem.

According to al-Khumeini (RA), in *The Disciplines of Prayer*:

The principal way of taming it (evil desires) is to act to its contrary.

That is, at the time of the Prayer one is to prepare himself to control the imagination during the Prayer and confine it to action, and, as soon as it tries to slip out of his hand, to recapture it. One should carefully watch it in all the actions, recitations, invocations, etc. of the Prayer, observing it so as not to be obstinate. At the beginning, this seems to be a difficult task. But after a while of strict practice and treatment, it will certainly become tame and obedient.

You should not, of course, expect yourself, at the beginning, to be able to control the bird of imagination along the Prayer completely.

Actually, this is impossible.

Perhaps those who stressed this impossibility had such expectations.

The situation requires intention, careful patience and gradual training.

It is possible that you can first control your imagination during only onetenth of the Prayer or even less than that, in which you can have the presence of heart.

Then, if one pays more attention, and if he feels himself in need of that, he can attain a better result, and can gradually overcome the Shaytan of fancy and the bird of imagination, such that they come under his control in most of the Prayer.

9d – Remembrance of Death

Scholars have advised you to keep busy reminding yourself of death as a way to fear Allah and maintain vigilance in your daily Prayer and communication with Allah.

The idea is to develop piety and fear in you and to convince your soul the importance of Prayer. Allah says in Hadith al-Qudsi:

I am surprised at that person who is sure of death and yet laughs (unnecessarily)!

O Son of Adam (AS)! Everyday your life is getting shorter but still you do not understand?

Each day I send down to you My bounties but you are not thankful to Me about them.

You are neither content with My little provision nor are you satisfied with a lot of it.

You can only fear death if you have the knowledge of what will happen to you after death.

Indeed, the Infallible Imams (AS) have advised you to constantly think and fear death and that death is a strong weapon for the devout believer to defeat Shaytan and his weak forces.

Frequent remembrance of death decreases one's desires.

(Imam Ali (AS) Unlike some people's belief that the remembrance of death and the Resurrection Day makes one negligent about worldly affairs and material gains, our belief is that the remembrance of death prevents us from heedlessness and chaos.

He who is cautious about his performances, big or small, will not commit any wrong act.

Apparently, this is one of the most efficient ways to scrutinize your behavior and lead a good and decent life. This way, you would have a strong and valid reason not to lose your concentration whilst communicating with Allah.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) says the following about the effects of remembering death and the Day of Judgment:

Remembering death suppresses inordinate desires.

It uproots the very foundation of negligence and apathy.

With the reminding of Allah's promise, it strengthens a man's heart.

It softens the hard mentality of a man.

It demolishes the banners of inordinate desires and transgression.

It suppresses the evil of greediness and makes the world humble before one's eyes.

10a – Fixing Your Gaze

The Prophet (S) has said:

While a person is in the standing position during Prayer, he must be looking down fixing his gaze to the point where he places his forehead while in prostration; while in Ruku (bending position) the gaze should be between his two feet; while in Qunut (when he raises his hands reciting the invocation) he should fix the gaze on the palms of his hands, placing them in front of his face; during Sajdah (prostration) his eyes looking at his nose; and while in the final sitting position the gaze to be towards his armpits.

After quoting this tradition, Mir Ahmad Ali (RA) continues:

Man, while praying should totally forget himself and get so much mindful to Allah that he must be practically away from the world around him, and with the constant practice, and with the due concentration, the gradual earning of this state is not difficult.

Attention and concentration problems are directly related to eye movements.

When one stands for Prayer, the less his eyes moves, the better.

Visual accuracy, and to fix your gaze on a particular item will greatly lessen your distraction and allow you to concentrate on the task at hand.

According to researchers, attention is greatly enhanced when the eyes align themselves on a fixed point and focus accurately.

Further, a person may become drowsy due to excessive fatigue attempting to maintain focus.

Performance will then decrease.

Headaches, fatigue, blur, eye rubbing, loss of place when reading, tearing, light sensitivity, eyestrain are all common symptoms.

The exercises that are mentioned in later sections should help one eliminate such deficits. Unfortunately, symptoms of focusing problems often become worse with time.

While struggling to overcome these problems during Prayer, one may find ways to avoid and just stop trying to focus and his whole Prayer is filled with distracting thoughts.

10b – Avoiding the Whisperings of Shaytan, the Accursed

Abdullah, the son of Sinan, is reported to have said:

I mentioned to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) about a man who was troubled by waswas (whisperings from Shaytan) in his Wudhu and Prayer, adding that he is a man of intelligence.

Thereupon al-Sadiq (AS) said: What kind of intelligence has he, when he obeys Shaytan? I said: How does he obey Shaytan?

The Imam replied: Ask him regarding its cause and he will tell you that it is a work of Shaytan

In al-Kafi (al-Kulayni (RA) reports) from Zurarah and Abu Basir that they said:

We asked him (i.e. al-Baqir or al-Sadiq (AS) about a man who had frequent doubts in his Prayer, to the extent that he wouldn't know how much he has offered and how much remains to be offered.

He said: He should repeat (the Prayer).

We said to him: That happens to him a lot and wherever he repeats his doubt also recurs. The Imam said: (In that case) he should ignore his doubt. The Imam then added:

Do not let the evil one get accustomed to haunting him by tempting him to break the Prayer. For Shaytan is wicked and gets accustomed to that which he gets used to. So when one of you does not pay attention to his doubt and does not break his Prayer frequently, and this is done a number of times, the doubt will not recur to him.

Then the Imam added: The evil one wants to be obeyed, and when he is disobeyed he will not return to any of you.

The assurance from the Aimmah (AS) is that if you do not permit Shaytan to enter your souls during Payer, then he has no power to divert your attention during Prayer.

He (i.e. the Prophet (S) said:

Shaytan lays his snout, which is like the snout of a pig on the heart of the son of Adam, and instigates him to turn towards the world and that which God has not made lawful. But when a person remembers Allah, Shaytan slinks away.

Further, since Certainty, Conviction, Tranquillity, Steadiness, and Sincerity of the heart are caused by divine inspiration and angelic suggestions, you ought to pray to the Almighty for His divine deliverance and assistance

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said:

A man came to the Prophet of Allah (S) and said: O Prophet of Allah, I complain to you concerning the whisperings from Shaytan that so troubles me during Prayer that I don't know how much of my prayer I have offered. The Prophet (S) said to him:

When you enter the state of Prayer, strike your left thigh with the forefinger of your right hand, then say: In the Name of Allah and by Allah, I put my trust in God, I seek refuge in God, the All-hearing, the All-knowing from Shaytan, the Stoned One." You will exorcise him (Shaytan) and drive him away.

Chapter 35

10c – Conclusion

al-Khumeini's comments on the finality of Prayer fits best the conclusion of this short course on building and maintaining your concentration in Prayer.

As you utter the takbir (ALLAHU AKBAR), regard small all creatures in relation to the greatness of Allah. Examine your heart during the Prayer.

If you tasted the sweetness of the Prayer, and if in your soul you felt pleased by it, and your heart enjoyed the supplication to Allah and conversing with Him, stow that Allah has approved your takbirs.

Otherwise, without feeling pleasure in supplication, and being deprived of tasting the sweetness of worship, you should know that Allah has denied you and dismissed you from His Threshold.

Chapter 36

24 QUESTIONS before you are done with the course

- 1 Have I understood and convinced myself of Allah's presence?
- 2 Am I aware that I am standing in front of Allah?
- 3 Do I understand what I recite?
- 4 Am I making the correct pronunciations in Arabic?
- 5 Am I aware and practicing the Rules for Reciting The Qur'an?
- 6 Have I understood the main reasons behind the Five Daily Prayer?
- 7 Do I have the motivation and energy to sustain my attention?
- 8 Am I confident enough that Allah is with me and that He is assisting me in my Prayer?
- 9 Have I refrained myself from heedless conversations?
- 10 Do I remember death often?
- 11 Do I fast often enough to increase my mental clarity?
- 12 Have I convinced myself that each Prayer I recite maybe my last Prayer?
- 13 Am I satisfied with the environment, the surroundings?
- 14 Am I wearing pure, clean, preferably white clothes?
- 15 Am I clean, pure and scented?
- 16 Am I confident enough in alternating recitations?
- 17 Am I in a relaxed and alert state of mind?
- 18 Have I been moderate in my food intake?
- 19 Am I grief-stricken and submissive?
- 20 Have I satisfied my hunger and thirst, as well as other needs?
- 21 Have I separated myself from the disapproved world and all its attractions?
- 22 Am I confident enough in arresting distracting thoughts in Prayer?
- 23 Have I connected my Ablution to the recitation of Adhan?
- 24 Have I connected my recitation of Adhan and Iqamah to the Takbeer in Prayer?

Chapter 37

Crosswords

For crosswords please refer to

<http://www.al-ijtihad.com/library/Kidz/The5DailyPrayerCourse-forChildren.pdf>

MULTIPLE CHOICE – SELECT ONE ANSWER - 1 to 5

1) Allah remarks to that individual, who says his Prayer with least attention, alertness of mind and concentration:

A. O Liar! Do you want to deceive Me?

B. I swear by My Splendor and Majesty that I will deprive you the pleasure of your invocations and enjoyment of personal communications with Me

C. A & B

D. None of the above

2) You have to do the following during Prayer so Allah may fill your heart with richness and not abandon you to what you seek and long for:

A. Try our best to concentrate

B. Empty our minds

C. Disengage from all other pre-occupations

D. All the above

3) According to as-Sadiq (AS), the Prayer will not be complete except for the one who:

A. Has full purity and a mature completeness

B. Is away from temptation and deviation

C. Lowers his fame and manifests his aim

D. All the above

4) The following is a highly recommended act:

A. Fasting on Ashura

B. Saying your Prayer on time

C. Saying your Prayer a few minutes before the required time

D. None of the above

5) Prayer is:

- A. The acknowledgment of the Lordship of Allah and negating all kinds of partners and plurality for Him
- B. Standing before the Omnipotent, with humility, humbleness and confession (of sins), and begging forgiveness of the previous sins
- C. Placing the face on dust five times a day as (a sign of) recognition and confession of His Greatness
- D. All the above

SOLUTION

1 C, 2 C, 3 D, 4 B, 5 D

Chapter **39**

MULTIPLE CHOICE – SELECT ONE ANSWER - 6 to 10

<http://www.al-ijtihad.com/library/Kidz/The5DailyPrayerCourse-forChildren.pdf>

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let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)