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(1703–1792 C.E., 1115–1206 A.H.) May Allah have mercy on him.

The Conditions, Pillars and Requirements of the Prayer is a short Islamic text that teaches us how to pray correctly. It explains what must be done before prayer, what we must do during prayer and what happens when something important is forgotten. We also learn Wudu, the meanings of Surah Al-Fatihah and the words said during Salah. Learning these lessons helps us worship Allah alone and follow the prayer of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. These lessons are taught upon The Qur'aan & Sunnah as Understood by the Salaf (Pious Predecessors) of this Ummah.

Explanation

A condition is something needed for the prayer to be valid, usually before it begins. A pillar is an essential action or statement inside the prayer. A requirement (wajib) is also necessary but leaving it out by mistake is treated differently from leaving out a pillar. The nine conditions, fourteen pillars and eight requirements are explained below.

Part One: The Nine Conditions of Prayer

The nine conditions are: 1. Islam. 2. Having a sound mind. 3. Being old enough to understand. 4. Having Wudu or the required purification. 5. Being clean from impurities. 6. Covering the parts of the body that must be covered. 7. Praying at the correct time. 8. Facing the Qiblah. 9. Having the intention.

1. Islam

Prayer is an act of worship for Muslims. A person must believe in Allah and worship Him alone. Islam is the opposite of disbelief. Allah says that whoever chooses a religion other than Islam will not have it accepted from him (Surah Aal Imran 3:85). Allah also teaches that acts of worship without true belief are not accepted (Surah At-Tawbah 9:17; Surah Al-Furqan 25:23).

2. Having a Sound Mind

The person must be able to understand what they are doing. A person who has lost the ability to understand is not held responsible in the same way as someone who understands. The Prophet ﷺ taught that three people are not held responsible in the usual way: a sleeping person until waking, a person without sound understanding until it returns and a child before maturity. (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.)

3. Being Old Enough to Understand

This is called Tamyeez. It means a child has reached an age when they can understand simple instructions and the meaning of prayer. The lesson uses seven years as the age to begin teaching children to pray. At ten, parents must take their training more seriously and teach them good sleeping arrangements. This is about learning and understanding; it does not mean that a seven-year-old has reached puberty. (Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Al-Hakim.)

4. Being Clean for Prayer: Wudu

Before Salah we must be in the proper state of purity. Wudu is the washing we do before prayer. If someone has something that breaks Wudu, they need to renew it before praying. Allah teaches us how to wash for prayer (Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:6).

The Ten Conditions of Wudu

The ten conditions are: 1. Islam. 2. A sound mind. 3. Being old enough to understand. 4. Intention. 5. Keeping the intention until Wudu is finished. 6. Making sure the reason requiring purification has ended. 7. Cleaning oneself properly after using the toilet. 8. Using clean and permissible water. 9. Removing anything that blocks water from reaching the skin. 10. Waiting until the proper prayer time when a person has a continuous condition that repeatedly breaks Wudu.

The intention for Wudu is in the heart. We finish Wudu without deciding halfway through to stop. Water must reach the skin, so anything that prevents it must be removed. The last condition concerns people whose Wudu is repeatedly broken by a continuing condition; it does not mean that everyone must wait for a prayer time to perform Wudu.

The Six Essential Actions of Wudu

The six essential actions are: 1. Wash the whole face, including rinsing the mouth and nose. 2. Wash both arms, including the elbows. 3. Wipe the whole head, including the ears. 4. Wash both feet, including the ankles. 5. Do these actions in order. 6. Do them one after another without a long break.

The face is washed from the usual beginning of the hairline to the chin and from ear to ear. We wash the elbows as part of the arms and the ankles as part of the feet. Allah gives the main Wudu actions in Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:6. The Prophet ﷺ taught that we begin with what Allah began with (Sahih Muslim and An-Nasa'i). He also corrected a man who had left an unwashed place on his foot (Ad-Daraqutni).

Saying Bismillah Before Wudu

Say Bismillah (In the Name of Allah) before making Wudu. Saying Bismillah is obligatory when you remember. Complete the washing carefully and in the correct order.

Eight Things That Break Wudu

The eight matters listed are: 1. Something leaving the front or back private parts, such as using the toilet. 2. A large amount of impure matter leaving the body. 3. Losing awareness or consciousness. 4. Touching a woman with desire. 5. Touching the private parts directly with the hand. 6. Eating camel meat. 7. Washing a deceased person's body. 8. Leaving Islam. These are the eight matters taught in the text; some individual rulings are discussed differently by scholars.

5. Keeping the Body, Clothes and Prayer Place Clean

Our body, clothing and the place where we pray should be free from impurities. We clean anything impure before Salah. Allah says to purify our clothing (Surah Al-Muddaththir 74:4).

6. Covering the Body Properly

We must wear clothing that covers the parts of our bodies required in prayer. Men must cover from the navel to the knees and their shoulders should also be covered during prayer. The Prophet ﷺ taught that a person should not pray in one garment without any of it over the shoulders (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Women cover their bodies for prayer except the face and hands as explained in the English notes. Their clothing should also cover the feet. Allah tells us to wear proper clothing for worship (Surah Al-A'raf 7:31).

7. Praying at the Right Time

Every prayer has its own time. We must not deliberately pray before its time begins. Jibril led the Prophet ﷺ in prayer at the beginning and end of the prayer times to teach when they are prayed (Ahmad, An-Nasa'i, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibban). Allah says that prayer is required at fixed times (Surah An-Nisa 4:103). The day's prayers are also indicated in Surah Al-Isra 17:78.

8. Facing the Qiblah

We face the Ka'bah in Makkah when praying. This direction is called the Qiblah. Allah commands us to turn towards Al-Masjid Al-Haram (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:144).

9. Having the Intention

Niyyah means the intention to pray for Allah. The intention is in the heart. We do not need to say it aloud before Salah. Saying a special spoken intention as an act of worship is not part of the Sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ taught that actions are judged by intentions (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim).

Part Two: The Fourteen Pillars of Prayer

The fourteen pillars are: 1. Standing when able. 2. The opening Takbeer. 3. Reading Surah Al-Fatihah. 4. Bowing. 5. Rising from bowing. 6. Prostrating on seven body parts. 7. Rising from prostration. 8. Sitting between the two prostrations. 9. Being calm in every position. 10. Keeping the actions in order. 11. The final Tashahhud. 12. Sitting for it. 13. Sending prayers upon the Prophet ﷺ. 14. The two Tasleems.

1. Standing When Able

Stand for an obligatory prayer when you are able. Allah tells us to stand before Him with obedience (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:238). A person who truly cannot stand prays as they are able.

2. Beginning with Allahu Akbar

Begin Salah with "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is the Greatest). This is the opening Takbeer, also called Takbeerat Al-Ihram. It starts the prayer. The two Tasleems at the end bring it to a close. The Takbeer used at the start is a pillar. The other Takbeers during prayer are requirements.

The Opening Du'a Is Sunnah

After the first Takbeer, one Sunnah opening du'a is: "Subhanaka Allahumma wa bihamdika, wa tabarakasmuka, wa ta'ala jadduka, wa la ilaha ghayruk." It means: "You are free from every imperfection, O Allah, and all praise belongs to You. Your Name is blessed, Your greatness is high and none has the right to be worshipped except You." This du'a is Sunnah, not one of the fourteen pillars. Then say: "A'udhu billahi min ash-shaytan ir-rajim." This means: "I seek Allah's protection from Shaytan." We seek Allah's protection and help so that Shaytan does not distract us from obeying Him.

3. Reciting Surah Al-Fatihah

Surah Al-Fatihah must be read in every rak'ah (unit) of prayer. The Prophet ﷺ taught that prayer is not complete without the opening chapter of the Qur'an (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Al-Fatihah teaches Tawheed, Allah's mercy, the Day of Judgement, worship, asking for help and following the Straight Path (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:1–7).

The Meaning of Surah Al-Fatihah

"Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim" means "In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy." We begin by seeking Allah's help and blessings (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:1).

"Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil-'alamin" means all praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of everything. Allah is the Creator, the One who provides and the One who controls and cares for all creation. Everything apart from Allah is part of His creation (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:2).

"Ar-Rahmanir-Rahim" teaches Allah's mercy. Ar-Rahman shows His great mercy towards creation. Ar-Rahim teaches His special mercy for the believers. Allah is merciful to the believers (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:3; Surah Al-Ahzab 33:43).

"Maliki Yawmid-Din" means Allah is the Master of the Day of Judgement. Everyone will be judged for their deeds and Allah has complete authority that Day (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:4; Surah Al-Infitar 82:17–19).

"Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in" means "You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help." This teaches Tawheed. Worship belongs to Allah alone and our hearts depend upon Him (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:5).

"Ihdinas-siratal-mustaqim" means "Guide us to the Straight Path." We ask Allah to show us what is right and keep us firm upon Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:6).

"Siratal-ladhina an'amta 'alayhim" means "The path of those You have blessed." These are the prophets, truthful believers, those who gave their lives for Allah and righteous people (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:7; Surah An-Nisa 4:69).

"Ghayril-maghdubi 'alayhim wa lad-dallin" means we ask Allah to keep us away from the path of those who knew the truth but did not follow it and those who acted without correct knowledge. Jews are given as an example of knowing the truth without acting upon it and Christians as an example of worshipping without correct guidance. The lesson is to learn the truth and act upon it rather than follow ignorance or wrongdoing (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:7; Surah Al-Kahf 18:103–105).

The Prophet ﷺ also warned that Muslims could copy the mistakes of earlier communities (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). The safe path is to learn the Qur'an and Sunnah and follow them as the Companions understood them. A narration about different groups also stresses staying upon the way of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions.

4–8. Bowing, Prostrating and Sitting

Bowing is called Ruku'. After bowing, rise and stand straight. Prostration is called Sujud. We then rise and sit between the two Sujud positions. Allah commands believers to bow and prostrate (Surah Al-Hajj 22:77).

During Sujud, seven parts touch the ground: the forehead and nose together, both palms, both knees and the toes of both feet. The Prophet ﷺ taught this in a Hadith (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim).

9–10. Staying Calm and Following the Order

Take your time in every position. Do not rush through bowing, standing, Sujud or sitting. Perform the actions in the correct order. The Prophet ﷺ corrected a man who rushed his prayer and told him to repeat it. He taught him to stand, bow, rise, prostrate and sit until he was calm in each position (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim).

11–12. The Final Tashahhud and Sitting for It

At the end of Salah, sit and say the final Tashahhud. Both the final Tashahhud and sitting for it are pillars. The Prophet ﷺ taught Ibn Mas'ud the correct words and explained that Allah is As-Salam, so we do not say that Allah needs peace from His servants (Sahih Al-Bukhari).

The Tashahhud is: "At-tahiyyatu lillahi was-salawatu wat-tayyibat. As-salamu 'alayka ayyuhan-nabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh. As-salamu 'alayna wa 'ala 'ibadillahis-salihin. Ashhadu al-la ilaha illallah wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa rasuluh." (Sahih Al-Bukhari).

Its meaning is: "All respectful greetings, prayers and good words belong to Allah. May Allah grant peace, mercy and blessings to the Prophet. May Allah grant peace to us and His righteous servants. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger."

"At-Tahiyyat" teaches that honour and worship belong to Allah. "As-Salawat" includes prayers and supplications. "At-Tayyibat" means good words and deeds. We ask Allah to send peace upon the Prophet ﷺ and righteous people; we do not worship or make du'a to them. Muhammad ﷺ is Allah's servant and Messenger, so we obey his guidance without worshipping him. Allah calls him His servant (Surah Al-Furqan 25:1).

13. Sending Prayers Upon the Prophet ﷺ

In the final sitting, send Salah upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The wording includes: "Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala ali Muhammadin kama sallayta 'ala Ibrahima wa 'ala ali Ibrahima innaka hamidum majid." This asks Allah to honour Muhammad ﷺ and his family just as He honoured Ibrahim and his family.

Allah's Salah upon His servant means His praise of that servant among the highest gathering of angels. The angels ask Allah to forgive His servants. Our Salah upon the Prophet ﷺ is a du'a asking Allah to praise and honour him. "Allahumma barik" means "O Allah, bless." Extra du'as after this are Sunnah.

14. Ending with Two Tasleems

The prayer ends with two Tasleems. Say "As-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullah" to the right and then to the left. This brings Salah to its end.

Part Three: The Eight Requirements of Prayer

These eight requirements are called Wajibat. They are important parts of Salah. They are not the same as the fourteen pillars.

1. All the Takbeers After the First One

Say "Allahu Akbar" when moving between positions in the prayer. The very first Takbeer is a pillar; these later Takbeers are requirements.

2. Words to Say While Bowing

While in Ruku', say: "Subhana Rabbiyal-'Azim." Meaning: "My Lord, the Most Great, is free from all imperfections."

3. Words When Rising from Bowing

The imam and the person praying alone say: "Sami'a Allahu liman hamidah." Meaning: "Allah hears the one who praises Him."

4. Words After Rising from Bowing

Everyone says: "Rabbana wa lakal-hamd." Meaning: "Our Lord, all praise belongs to You."

5. Words to Say During Sujud

While in Sujud, say: "Subhana Rabbiyal-A'la." Meaning: "My Lord, the Most High, is free from all imperfections."

6. Words Between Two Sujud Positions

While sitting between the two Sujud positions, say: "Rabbighfir li." Meaning: "My Lord, forgive me."

7. The First Tashahhud

In a prayer with more than two rak'ahs, say the first Tashahhud after the second rak'ah.

8. Sitting for the First Tashahhud

Sit while saying the first Tashahhud. This is a separate requirement from the words themselves.

Part Four: When Something Is Forgotten

The conditions must be fulfilled for Salah to be valid. A pillar cannot simply be left out and replaced with Sujud As-Sahw. If a pillar was missed, it must be corrected for the prayer to be valid. Intentionally leaving out a pillar makes the prayer invalid.

Intentionally leaving out a requirement also makes the prayer invalid. If a requirement is forgotten, Sujud As-Sahw (two extra prostrations for forgetfulness) makes up for the mistake as taught in this text. A Sunnah act, such as the opening du'a, is recommended but it is not counted among the fourteen pillars or eight requirements. The main lessons are to prepare properly for prayer, learn the words, keep the correct order, stay calm and worship Allah with a sincere heart. Allah knows best.