

## 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 Tashahhud, Salaam, and some other acts in Prayer, we are not allowed to add or substitute the compulsory recitations.

## 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.

## **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.

## **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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## **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.

## **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.
- ✚ Great 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.

## **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 (al-Tusi – 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.

## **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.

## 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))

## 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 one-tenth 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 Prayer, 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.

## 10c – Conclusion

✚ al-Khumeini's comments on the finality of Prayer fits best the conclusion of this short course on 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.