Muslims are obligated to pray to Allah five set times each day. This prayer is called the *Salāh*. It is the second pillar of Islam. Muslims take time out throughout the day to focus upon this special act where they focus on supplications and recitations to Allah. The term *Salāh* in the Arabic language means supplication (*Du'ā*) and in the religious usage it refers to the five daily Prayers that are obligated upon every adult and sane Muslim male and female.

Prayer Times: The prayer times are worked out from the authentic narrations of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). The Angel Jibreel visited the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) over two days. On the first day he led the Prophet at the earliest times of the Prayers. On the second day, he led him at the end times of each of the Prayers. The five prayer-times are based around three daily events: sunrise, midday, and sunset. These times alter greatly between the seasons of summer and winter – and even by country. In Britain, winter prayer times are very different to summer prayer times. Each prayer is announced by the *adhān* (the call to prayer), which is traditionally called by a *mu'adhin* who stands just outside the Mosque and calls Muslims to the Prayer. Nowadays people have the *adhān* recorded into their phones or clocks to remind them of the Prayer times.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"Jibreel led me in Prayer twice at the Ka'bah in Makkah. So he prayed *Dhuhr* the first day when the shadow was similar to the length of the strap of a sandal (i.e. just after midday). He then prayed *'Asr* when an object was similar to the length of its shadow. Then he prayed *Maghrib* when the sun had set and the fasting person breaks the fast. Then he prayed *'Ishā* when the twilight had vanished. Then he prayed *Fajr* when the true dawn began (before sunrise), and when eating is prohibited for the fasting person. On the second occasion he came, he prayed *Dhuhr* when the shadow of an object was similar to the length of it, which was the time of *'Asr* starting the day before. He then prayed *'Asr* when the shadow of an object was about twice as long as it. He then prayed *Maghrib* at the same time as he did the first time. He then prayed *'Ishā* when a third of the night had gone (just before midnight). He then prayed *Fajr* when the land glowed (before sunrise). Jibreel then turned towards me and said, 'O Muhammad, these are the times of the Prophets before you, and the prayer-time is what is between these two times.'"** (*At-Tirmidhī*, 149)

So, in summary, the Prayer-times are as follows:
1. Fajr: After the true dawn but before sunrise.
2. Dhuhr: Just after midday till the shadow of an object is the same as its length.
3. 'Asr: When the shadow of an object is the same as its length until it is twice its length.
4. Maghrib: Just after the sunset until 'Ishā begins.
5. 'Ishā: When the twilight vanishes till half the night has passed. Twilight is the light (or glow) that remains in the western horizon after the sun goes down.

The Prayer has conditions — and without them, the Prayer is not accepted:
1. Islam. A person must be a Muslim.
2. Sanity. The insane person is not obligated to pray.
3. Adulthood. This is known by: coarse hair in the private areas, discharge of sexual fluid, reaching the age of fifteen, the onset of menstrual bleeding (in females). Whichever of these occurs first, adulthood is reached.
4. Purification. Ablution with water (*wudhū*) and if there is no water, then with the earth (*tayammum*).
5. Covering the important parts of the body (*'awrah*) with loose-fitting, non-transparent garments. The woman covers everything except her face and hands. The man must cover himself from the navel to the knees, and his shoulders.
6. One's body, garments and place of prayer must be clean of impurities such as urine and excrement. Soil, food stains, oil, paint, etc. are not impure.
7. Facing the direction of the Qiblah (Makkah) during the prayer.
8. A sincere intention of the heart — and not by utterance with the tongue. This is to know which prayer one is about to pray and he makes it sincerely for Allāh.
9. Time: Making sure that each Prayer is prayed within the correct time.

***Wudhū*:** The method of *wudhū* (ablution) is explained in the Qur'ān: **"When you stand for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows. Then wipe your heads and wash your feet up to your ankles."** (Qur'an 5:6) In the authentic narrations, the Companions explained the *wudhū* of the Prophet (ﷺ): He washed his hands three times, then rinsed his mouth and sniffed water in his nose (in one motion) and blew it out. He then washed his face three times. Thereafter he washed his right hand up to and including his elbow three times, then the left one likewise. Then he wiped his head with his wet hands, from his forehead up to (and not including) the nape of his neck and then back to his forehead. Then he put his index fingers into his ears and the thumb behind the ear lobes. Then he washed his right foot up to the ankle three times, then the left one likewise. In one narration, Uthmān (رضي الله عنه) said, **"I saw Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) performing ablution (*wudhū*) like this ablution of mine."** (Bukhāri, Muslim and others)

Once the feet have been washed, and socks or other footwear worn, a person can wipe wet hands over the footwear for a whole day during subsequent ablutions — and a traveller can do that for up to three days so long as the footwear is not removed. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, **"When one of you enters his feet into his socks whilst they are pure, then you should wipe over them: three days for the traveller and one day for the resident."** (*Saheeh Al-Jāmi,* 1/195) The Companion, 'Ali Ibn Abī Tālib (رضي الله عنه), said, **"The Prophet (ﷺ) made it a day and a night for the resident, and for the traveller three days and nights, meaning: wiping over the socks."** (*Muslim*, 276) Mugheerah Ibn Shu'bah (رضي الله عنه) said, **"The Prophet (ﷺ) made *wudhū* and he wiped over his socks and sandals or shoes."** (*At-Tirmidhi*, *Abu Dāwood*, 159)

When water is not available, then a dry purification

(*tayammum*) is performed, which proves the obligation of purification before Prayer. It is reported that **"The Prophet (ﷺ) struck the soil of the earth with the palms of his hands, then blew off the dust, and wiped his face and rubbed his hands."** (*Al-Bukhāri*, 343) The earth and its soil are physical and spiritual purifiers.

Facing Makkah (the Ka'bah): Muslims face Makkah during the Prayers. Hundreds of millions of Muslims throughout the world stand united in worship focussed in a singular direction of Prayer, worshipping Allah alone and rejecting the worship of everything besides Him whether it be Prophets, saints, idols, the Sun, the Moon and so on. This prayer is normally performed in mosques — and it is obligatory for a man to pray in a mosque if he hears the *adhān* (the call to prayer) coming from it. However, even if Muslims do not hear it, they are still obligated to pray wherever they are.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"The whole of the earth has been made for me as a place of purification and prayer."** However, Muslims are not permitted to pray the daily Prayers in toilet areas or in a graveyard, nor are they permitted to bury their deceased ones in a mosque, as that leads to grave-worship and calling upon the dead for intercession. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Allah cursed the Jews and Christians because they turned the graves of their Prophets and righteous into places of worship."** (Bukhāri)

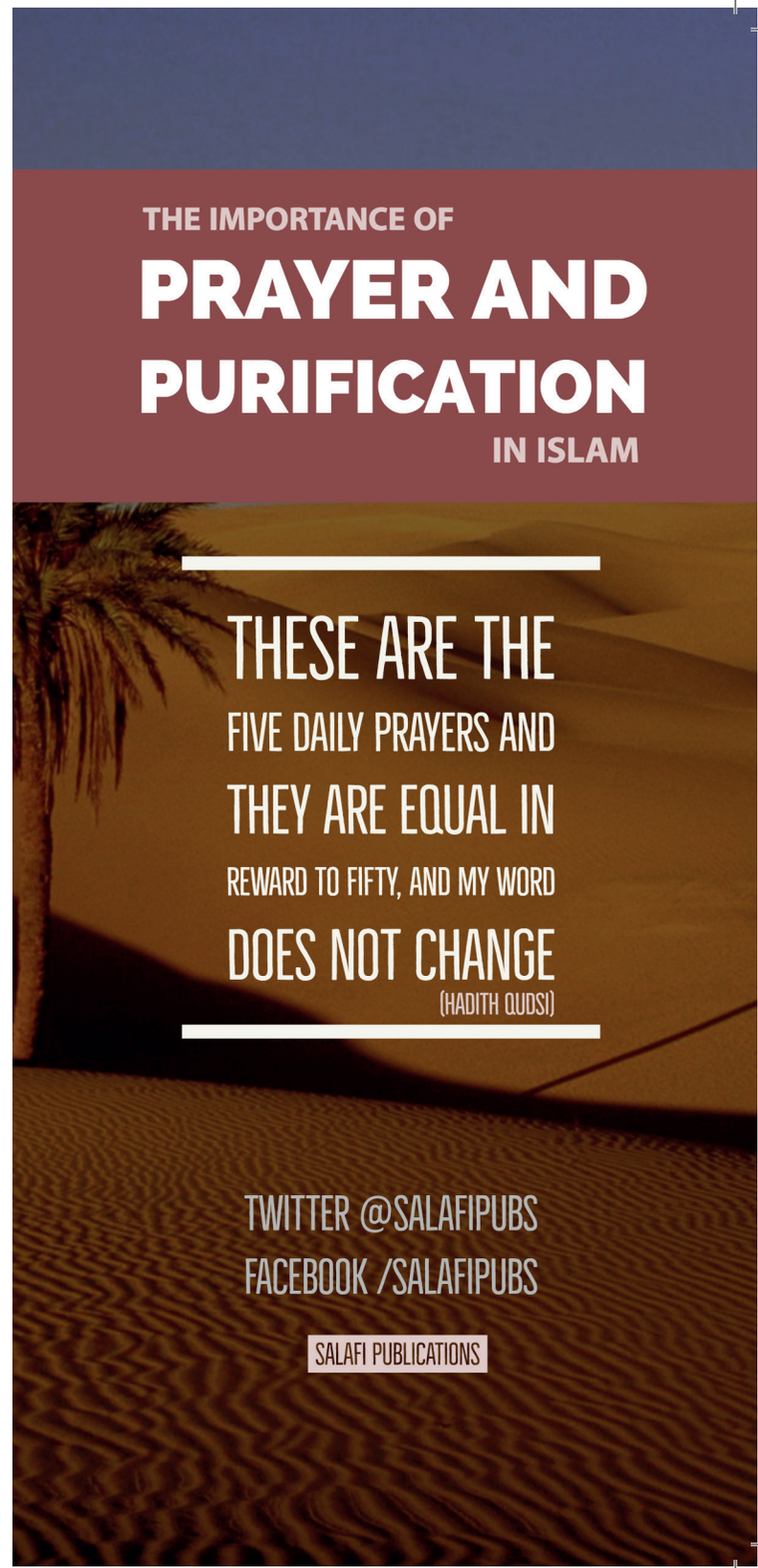
So a Muslim must not miss the prayer. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Between a person and between polytheism and disbelief is the abandonment of the Prayer."** (*Muslim*, 88) The Prayer holds a mighty position in Islam. Sadly in these times we see many Muslims neglecting it — and one can see the effects of the abandonment of the Prayer in their lives, in the lives of their families and in the moral fabric of society. Allah (the Most High) sends His bounties and blessings on those who worship Him, and He guides them, so long as they hold fast to the Sunnah and worship Him alone. Then, in the life after death, He rewards them beyond their imagination!

THE FIVE DAILY PRAYERS ARE WORTH FIFTY: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was taken into the Heavens on a night journey. He said afterwards, **"Allah said to me, 'These are the five daily Prayers and they are equal in reward to fifty, and My word does not change.' Then Angel Jibreel took me until we reached the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary which was shrouded in colours indescribable. Then I was admitted into Paradise where I found low walls made of pearls and the soil was of musk."** (*Bukhārī*, 349)

GUARD THE PRAYERS, ESPECIALLY THE MIDDLE PRAYER: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Whoever misses the 'Asr prayer, then it is as if he has lost his family and property."** (*Bukhāri*, 543)

WHEN AN AFFAIR TROUBLES YOU, SEEK SOLACE BY PRAYING: Hudhaifah bin Yamān (رضي الله عنه) said, **"Whenever something serious troubled the Prophet (ﷺ), he would pray."** (*Abu Dawūd*, 1319)

THE COOLNESS OF THE EYES AND COMFORT OF THE SOUL: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Women and perfume have been made dear to me, and the coolness of my eyes is in the Prayer"** (*An-Nasā'i*, 3940)

THE PRAYERS WIPE AWAY SINS: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Between each of the five daily Prayers, a Jumu'ah to the next Jumu'ah, and a Ramadān till the next Ramadān are an expiation for whatever is committed between them so long as one keeps clear of the major sins."** (*Muslim*, 233/344) The Prayer is a lifeline for Muslims and must never be abandoned. A Muslim, no matter how sinful, should always return to Allah, pray to Him, seek His forgiveness and mercy because Allah, the Lord of the worlds, is truly Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful.

—Written by Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid
—© Copyright 2018 Salafi Publications, Birmingham
—SalafiPubs.com
—AbuKhadeejah.com