Cardozo MSA 2011-2012

Meeting # 1/6/11

**Back to the Basics Part II: Salat – Daily Prayers**

Led by Mehreen Kagzi, Abdul Quorishy and Nitasha Siddiqui

Sources: The Oxford History of Islam- John L. Esposito

Start with Du’a (2-3 minutes):

***Auzubillahi min ashaitan irajeem, Bismillah irrahman iraheem.***

***Alhamdullillahi rabil 'alameen. Wasalaatu was salaamu 'ala ashrafil anbiya i wal mursaleen, wa***

***la 'alihi wa sahbihi ajmaeen. Amma' baad.***

Announcements (5 minutes):

* Candy boxes will be distributed in February (explain) and offer sign up sheet for anyone who wants to sell.

**BEFORE ICEBREAKER:** Say – Before we begin, we’d like to mention something. It has come to our attention, thanks to our fellow Muslim Sarah Zaidi, that last week’s lesson was very biased towards Sunni beliefs and was somewhat “awkward” and controversial for some Shi’a Muslims and it quite possibility could have been for any other Muslims. We apologize for the oversight, it was unfair of us. So what we’d like to mention is that the Shahadah lesson should be taken as more of a similarity or common parallel n our varying beliefs. The two basic parts we spoke about are, to our knowledge, are present in all forms of Shahadah that are spoken (ask if anyone knows otherwise). We all believe in those two basics, Allah SWT and the Messenger right? (Ask to make sure again) So keep in mind, we are not trying to preach to you guys, rather we’re just giving reminders of what we’ve already been taught and may have forgotten. May Allah forgive us for any mistakes we made and guide as we continue to try our best. Ameen.

Icebreaker (10 minutes):

Since the last lesson, who has tried to implement Shahadah in their lives, and how?

Take answers and allow quick and small discussion where the person answering can explain what they did or are doing. Once done say – “Alright, so now that we’ve gotten Shahadah in our hearts, let’s move on to pillar#2!”

I. What is the second pillar of Islam? (40 minutes)

Take answers from the members

* The second pillar is Salat which is prayer
* One of the largest and most iconic elements of Islam, since we pray in a way so unlike any other religion.
* There is a hadith that says “Prayer is the proof [of Islam]” Tirmdhi 🡪 So you can see the importance of Salah for a Muslim.
* It can be seen as a physical recognition of Allah SWT and Islam, that you are reinforcing the truth you hold in your heart and tongue via the Shahadah through your movements.
* You also see the independence of Allah SWT from us and our dependence on Him 🡪 Don’t you usually pray when you need help or are hoping for something like “Please Allah can I…?” And yet Allah SWT does not NEED anything from us in the way we do.
* As you all should know, there are 5 prayers, all of which are to performed daily. What are they? (Take answers) And when are they? (Take answers)
  + If they didn’t answer correctly: In order from/by timing: Fajr(before dawn) Zuhr/Dhur(noon) Asr(md-afternoon) Maghrib(after sunset) Isha (night)
* What comes first, before the prayer itself? (Take answers)
  + If they answer Wudhu say – Yes that’s true, but what’s before even that? (Take answers)
  + Answer: Your intention 🡪 before doing anything, you must make your intention clear. Not only does it strengthen your drive to do whatever you’re about to do, it can also reassure you, or make you refrain from doing something wrong.
  + You make an intention before making Wudu, and you also do so as you begin your prayer.
* The movements of prayer, though with some differences amongst Muslims, are basically reflecting the actions of a person when they are before someone of great prestige.

**Analogy of how prayer is to be like being before a person of greatness**

Imagine you are living in the olden days, the times of kings and queens and rulers of high status. You have been summoned to the Royal Castle of the greatest ruler of them all. When you stand outside to doors of the ruler’s throne room, you are upright and solemn as you summon up your resolve to present yourself to the ruler. That’s you standing in prayer as you ready yourself to present yourself to Allah SWT. It’s where you affirm you intention (niyyah). Next, you enter the throne room and step inside, only to stop and proclaim the magnificence of the ruler. Similarly, we raise our hands to our ears perform takbir or the act of magnification, which begins the prayer. We glorify God by saying “Allahu akbar” Allah is most great! Next comes your addressing of the ruler, and how you speak out of reverence and show loyalty towards them by saying things like “Your Majesty” “Your Greatness” “Your Malevolence” etc. Don’t we say the same, if not even more detailed words of praise and reverence when reciting Surah Fathihah (the Quran’s opening surah) and then reciting another surah to further magnify our praise? Next, comes the bowing to the ruler to show your utmost respect, kind of like how we bow in rukooh. We proclaim Allahu akbar once more then bow, reciting “Subhana rabiyyal auzeem” or Glory to the Greatest Lord 3x and standing once more to proclaim “Samiallahu liman hamidah” or Allah hears the one who praises Him and “Rabana lakal hamd” or Our Lord, all praise belongs to You. Isn’t that even more respectful than simply a bow? And finally, the prostration before the ruler to show your complete submission to them, as do we Muslims in sujud; as we repeat the takbir, come to our knees and bow our heads to the floor, we recite 3x “Subhana rabiyyal a’laa” or Glory to the Lord Most High. Our submission to Allah SWT is so clearly displayed in our position and in our words. See how similar a person’s actions towards great monarchs are to how we act in front of Allah SWT? Why? Because He is the sole ruler of the dunya, the one for whom our praise is meant and the one for whom we should bow. At the beginnings of Islam, Muslims refused to prostrate before foreign kings for they were too loyal to Allah SWT and sought to only do so before Him. Do you see how important our salah is, what it represents, what it means? We are openly showing our belief in Allah SWT and are embracing it with each word, each move, and each heartbeat.

* And at the end of your prayer, when you turn to each shoulder and say “Assalaamulaikum wa rahmatullah” or May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you, is debated upon. Some feel it is said towards the fellow Muslims beside you who are also praying and you are wishing blessings upon them as well, or that you are addressing the angels on your shoulders who write your good and bad deeds. Regardless, it further shows the beautifully calm and peace-loving aspects of prayer.
* But even with all of this, what do you think is the best part of your prayer?
  + Take answers
  + The best part is the du’a at the end. It’s the most intimate part of the prayer, along with the sujood, where you yourself are at your most sincere and are engaging in the most direct communication with Alalh SWT. It’s where you speak your mind and your heart’s desires, beg for forgiveness and wish for Allah’s mercy and blessings. It’s that one moment that I, personally, feel like the world isn’t as bad as I think, that with Allah SWT I am safe. And I am.
* Now you think to yourself: Okay, so yeah I pray every day so I’m already a great Muslim. But stop for a moment and reflect on the quality of your prayers. What do I mean?
  + Are you thinking random thoughts while prayer and are just muttering your words out of habit?
  + Are you speed-reciting your surahs so you can finish faster and go back to watching TV or Facebook or whatever?
  + Are you looking elsewhere or at something specifically while you’re praying, thus distracting yourself?
  + Are you just reciting your surahs and du’as and not once thinking about what you are saying or the weight of your words?
  + Are you ignoring the tajweed and correct recitation of the surahs and possibly reciting incorrectly thus CHANGING the meaning of the surah?
* There are many mistakes that we are making in our salah that lowers the quality of our prayer and makes us seem less sincere in our worship. So what can you do to prevent this and improve your salah?
  + Make your intention very clear. Intention is of utmost important and plays a big role in the quality of your salah. If you stand in place to pray and solemnly resolve to avoid any distractions, to keep your mind clear and free of odd thoughts and pray, you’ve already bettered your salah. The way humans are able to convince ourselves and able to focus ourselves is remarkable and thus a good intention can only lead to a good action.
  + Try your hardest to take your salah slowly and calmly. Your prayers are not meant to be rushed, hasty, or sloppy. Rather they are meant to be done with diligence and attentiveness. Try taking deep breaths and calming yourself down as you pray and recite the surahs carefully, going over every sound as best as you can and making sure that you aren’t messing anything up.
  + As a suggestion, try and go back to the Quran and rereading or rememorizing some of the surahs you often recite in salah. This way you can avoid mistakes and can also refresh the true meaning of the surah in your mind. Same goes for du’as.
* Another very important tip that can really solidify the importance of salah in your daily life is to base your day around the 5 prayers.
  + Know what time which prayer is and work out when you have time to do things like homework and when you have time to relax between prayers.
  + Start your day with fajr salah and end it with isha salah, like starting your day before Allah SWT and ending it with Him.
  + Schedule activities or events around the prayer times and do things based on them.
    - i.e. if you have a gathering to go to and it’s at noon, you should pray zuhr first then go so you have fulfilled that required prayer. And then make sure to either go home or find a way to pray your next prayers at the party. Make salah your top priority above other things. Because really, 5-10 minutes of your time isn’t much but the rewards you receive are invaluable.
* Try and make salah enjoyable!
  + Have jamaat with your family or friends. It builds a sense of unity and a peaceful atmosphere. You’ll feel even closer because you stood before Allah SWT with them.

Salah is a core element of our faith, and our daily lives. It’s a constant in the strange occurrences of life and it’s supposed to be a time where you can slow down and just breathe. 5 daily prayers = 5 breaks from the hardships of the dunya to bask in the blessings of your Raab. Utilize these few minutes to make up for your sins and to receive mercy and peace from Allah SWT. Trust me, they will be the best minutes of your day.

II. Closing Q&As (Rest of period)

Ask what was learned, ideas about improving salah, questions/comments about anything said in lesson, any suggestions for the board; possible free question time (pass out papers for questions and answer them as best as we can)