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13 The Five Daily Prayers

Salat

Aisha is a US Muslim who currently lives in Chicago.¹ Born in India, she lived in the United Kingdom for a number of years before moving to the United States in 2004. Aisha is in her second year of law school and has already interned at several law firms. She was raised in an Indian Sikh family but became Muslim in her late teens. *Salat*, or the five daily prayers, is a fundamental component of Aisha's spirituality. For Aisha, *salat* provides five times a day to start anew. When she was young and felt overwhelmed, her father would tell her to think about life in thirty-minute increments. Breaking her day into manageable chunks let her regain control over the hours that loomed ahead of her. After she became Muslim, Aisha transferred this advice to *salat*, partitioning her day and tackling its challenges in the segments of time between her prayers. Whenever the day feels like it is running off course, *salat* lets her seek counsel with her Lord and restart. She feels renewed after every prayer.²

Praying at work, however, is often difficult for Aisha. Finding a private bathroom or even just a sink in which to perform *wudu*, or ablution—lest your boss walk in and catch you with your foot in the sink—is only the first of many hurdles. She enters every office space or meeting place with anticipatory anxiety, mapping out in her brain where the nearest bathroom is and what seems like the least disruptive space in which to pray. Because Aisha does not cover her head in public, remembering to bring a scarf with her is also important. In addition to finding the right space for *salat*, finding the time to pray in a busy workday is also a challenge. It can appear disruptive to abruptly leave a meeting, and she always fears she might seem rude or disinterested in the conversation. However, the blessings that praying at work brings to Aisha far outweigh the challenges. Leaving her desk multiple times a day to clear her mind, even when her workaholic tendencies resist, is liberating. In a profession as demanding as the law, Aisha sometimes

1. Aisha is a pseudonym.

2. This case is based on Aisha, email interview with the author, February 23, 2020.

feels that all that keeps her from burning out is her *salat*. Billable hours, bonus amounts, forced smiles while networking—these all fade as she wraps her scarf tight, closes her eyes, and remembers that she has someone greater to report to. To Aisha, *salat* is a blessing because it reminds her who she is—a Muslim, a servant of God in constant submission to him alone—before she claims to be anyone or anything else. *Salat* is disruptive. It undermines her backbreaking daily routine and the nonstop flow of the capitalist workday. With every “Allahu akbar,” or “God is great,” invoked during the postures of prostration, bowing, and kneeling down, Aisha remembers that God is greater than anything else she does or any roadblock she might face.

Salat (literally, “connection”) is the second pillar of Islam and an essential element of Islamic spirituality and worship. In addition to the formal *salat*, various forms of prayers exist in Islam such as supplication (*duas*), remembrance of God with various religious phrases (*dhikr*), contemplation of God through his creation (*tafakkur*), and recitation of the Qur’an. This chapter mainly concentrates on the five daily prayers.

Foundations of *Salat*

Worship is a major theme of the Qur’an, and *salat* is at the heart of Islamic worship. Besides its classical meaning, *salat* has various other connotations noted in the Qur’an: supplication, seeking God’s forgiveness, or places of worship.³

The five daily prayers became an obligation for the Muslim community during the last years of the Prophet Muhammad’s time in Mecca. Not long before his emigration to Medina in 622, the Prophet ascended to heaven during his famous night journey (*mi’raj*). The archangel Gabriel took him from Mecca to Jerusalem and then to heaven; the miraculous journey marks the Prophet’s direct encounter with God. It was also during this time that the Prophet met with all the other prophets, including Jesus and Moses, who prayed behind him in the sacred mosque of Jerusalem. This gesture has been understood as a sign confirming his prophethood, indicating that he is the “seal of all prophets,” as the Qur’an states. During the Prophet’s famous journey, God gave him and his followers the gift of the five daily prayers. Initially,

3. Qur’an 9:103; 33:43; 33:56; 22:40.

God required fifty prayers a day, but Moses encouraged Muhammad to ask God to reduce the number, and God relented, cutting the number to five.⁴

The Qur'an presents *salat* as a key trait of believers who are mindful of God.⁵ It describes the believers as those who perform their *salat* continuously and properly.⁶ Those who live in awareness of God model themselves after the prophets. The Qur'an often refers to the prophets' *salat* and particular supplications. For example, Zachariah received the good news of having a son by the name Yahya (John the Baptist) while he was praying in the sanctuary of the temple.⁷ The prophet Abraham prayed that God would make him and his offspring among those who persevere in prayer.⁸ When the infant Jesus miraculously spoke in support of his mother, Mary, he referred to prayer as well.⁹

The Qur'an also points out that the daily prayers are required for believers at prescribed times.¹⁰ As to the exact times, it mentions morning, noon, late afternoon, evening, and late evening.¹¹ The Qur'an also refers to the different postures performed during prayers such as standing, bowing, and prostrating.¹²

The five daily prayers are also an important component of the Sunna, or example of the Prophet Muhammad. Major chapters in hadith collections are dedicated to this key ritual of Islam. While the Qur'an references prayer, the Prophet remains the prime model for performing them properly. Muslims believe that the archangel Gabriel himself taught the Prophet how to perform the *salat*.¹³ And this is why the Prophet instructed believers to take him as a model in establishing the five daily prayers.¹⁴ Various hadiths refer to the five daily prayers as one of the most spiritually rewarding forms of worship and the central pillar of Islam.¹⁵ Muslims regard prayer to be the believer's minor ascension (*mi'raj*) to the divine realm.¹⁶ In a hadith addressing his companions, the Prophet told them to imagine a river flowing in

4. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, 186–87.

5. Qur'an 2:3.

6. Qur'an 8:3; 7:173.

7. Qur'an 3:39.

8. Qur'an 14:40.

9. Qur'an 19:31.

10. Qur'an 4:113.

11. Qur'an 24:58; 11:114; 17:78; 2:238; 30:17–18.

12. Qur'an 22:77; 3:191.

13. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 59, hadith 32; al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, book 5, hadith 214.

14. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 10, hadith 28.

15. Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, book 1, hadith 4, and book 40, hadith 11.

16. Major *mi'raj* refers to Muhammad's ascension to heaven.

front of one's house. He then asked whether any dirt would remain on the body if a believer would wash himself in the river five times a day. The companions affirmed that anybody would come out pure and clean. The Prophet asserted that, similarly, the five daily prayers function together like a river. *Salat* cleanses the believer from daily sins and faults.¹⁷ The Prophet also said that the highest act of love for God is prayer performed at the prescribed time.¹⁸

Prayer was central to prophetic spirituality. The Prophet divided his daily routine into three parts. The first part revolved around prayer and recitation of the Qur'an, the second was reserved for social relations, and the third he dedicated to rest. His daily schedule was based on the five daily prayers, and most of the time, he would perform them in the mosque with his community. He also spent most of his nighttime in devotion. According to a hadith reported by the Prophet's wife Aisha, Muhammad would get up during the night and pray until his feet became swollen. When Aisha asked, "Oh Prophet of God! Why do you force yourself to worship so much when God has forgiven your past and future sins?" he would answer, "Should I not be a grateful servant of God?"¹⁹ As defined by the Prophet, formal prayer in Islam is the most comprehensive expression of love and gratitude toward God.

Form and Structure of *Salat*

Based on both the Qur'an and the prophetic example, Muslims turn in the direction of the Kaaba to perform the daily prayer five times a day: dawn (*fajr*), noon (*dhuhr*), afternoon (*asr*), sunset (*maghrib*), and night (*isha*). Dawn prayer begins at the break of day and ends just before sunrise. Noon prayer begins when the sun is at its high point, or zenith, and ends when the shadow of an object becomes the length of the object itself, which then begins the time of afternoon prayer until just before sunset. Sunset prayer is offered during the time between sunset and the disappearance of twilight. Night prayer can be performed any time between twilight's disappearance and dawn's onset. However, Muslims commonly do it before midnight.

17. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 9, hadith 7.

18. Al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, book 1, hadith 162.

19. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 65, hadith 4837.

Each prayer consists of cycles (*rakaat*). One cycle includes the following postures: standing, bowing down, standing again, prostrating oneself with the forehead and nose touching the floor, sitting, prostrating oneself again, and then moving to the final sitting position. The dawn prayer has two required (*fard*) cycles, the noon and afternoon prayers have four each, the evening prayer has three, and the night prayer has four. There are also recommended (*sunna*) cycles in addition to the required ones. Prayer is performed in silence and requires no clerical leader.

Prior to prayer, believers need to be in a state of ritual purity, which requires an ablution. The hadith collections include sections on ritual purity. Also, the books of Islamic law typically begin with rulings about ritual purification. Minor ablution (*wudu*) usually entails washing the hands up to the elbows, then the mouth, nose, face, head, and feet up to the ankles. There is also a major purity ritual (*ghusl*), which requires the entire body to be washed. Muslims perform this ritual after sexual intercourse and wet dreams. Women are required to complete a major purity ritual after their menstrual period and postpartum bleeding. It is also common among Muslims to perform *ghusl* before congregational Friday prayer. On exceptional occasions when water is not available to perform ablution, Muslims can then refer to the ritual of dry ablution (*tayammum*), which involves putting the palms on clean earth, dust, sand, stone, or a wall and then wiping the face and forearms symbolically.

Another requirement of prayer is the dress code for both women and men. While women cover their entire bodies except for their faces and hands, men are required to cover their shoulders and the area between the navel and the knees. It is also common for Muslim men to cover their heads while praying.

The Content of Prayer

Muslims generally pray in silence, but when they pray in congregation, the imam, or leader, recites the Qur'an out loud during dawn, sunset, and night prayer. Prayer is the glorification of God (*tasbih*), the proclamation of God's greatness (*takbir*), and the expression of gratitude (*shukr*) and love.

The language of prayer is Arabic—specifically, qur'anic Arabic, which is a particular form of the language. Any Muslim knows a significant amount of the Qur'an by heart. The most common phrases recited during the postures are “God is great,”

“Glory be to my God,” and “All praise is due to God.” The common portion of the Qur’an that is recited in each cycle is the first chapter, “Al-Fatiha” (“The Opening”): “In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful! Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Master of the day of Judgment. You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help. Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed, not of those who incurred Your wrath or have gone astray.”²⁰ This part is followed by reciting verses from the Qur’an based on the believer’s personal choice. During the sitting postures, Muslims recite a fixed expression praising God and asking him to send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad. The prayer ends with salutations to the left and right by reciting the formula of “Peace and blessings of God be upon you.” Since Muslims believe that angels join them during prayer, this greeting is also directed to them—the unseen community of worshippers.

Mosque and the Call to Prayer

The Arabic word for mosque is *masjid*, which literally means “the place of prostration.” The mosque has never played as central of a role in Islam as the church has in Christianity; Islam has no priests, and mosques were never institutionalized under an authorized hierarchy. Believers are not required to do their five daily prayers in a mosque. The earth is considered sacred and, as such, a place of worship.²¹ Muslims can perform their prayers wherever they want. In this regard, Muslims can carry out most of their religious duties in their homes. What matters most in praying is ritual purity: the place of prayer needs to be clean, since the forehead is put to the ground. In order to meet this standard, Muslims usually pray on a prayer rug or mat.

While praying in a mosque is not obligatory, the Prophet did strongly encourage Muslims to offer their prayer in community. Communal prayers were a significant element of the Prophet’s spirituality. It became the established habit of the Prophet to perform his daily prayers, including dawn and night prayers, with the community in the mosque. In one of the hadiths, the Prophet said, “A prayer that is done communally is twenty-seven times more rewarding than the one done individually.”²²

20. Qur’an 1:1–7.

21. Al-Sijistani, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, book 2, hadith 99.

22. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 10, hadith 46.

If two Muslims are gathered, they are encouraged to pray together, with the older person leading the prayer. If three Muslims are present, the person best able to offer a beautiful recitation of the Qur'an should guide the prayer. In another hadith, Muhammad said, "Whoever leaves his or her house with the intention of going to the mosque, for each of his/her steps there is a reward."²³ While prayers can be offered at any spot that meets the purity requirements, the mosque has played a key role in establishing the prayers communally since the early years of Islam.

From the outside, a mosque can usually be identified by a dome, a minaret, and a place of ablution. The call to prayer (*adhan*) is chanted from the minaret by the one who calls to prayer (muezzin). This practice dates from the Prophet's time. Both minaret and *adhan* are marks of Islamic societies. In seventh-century Arabia, Christians had a clapper or bell, while Jews had a horn to mark the sacred time. For Muslims, the human voice became the defining characteristic. Initially, the call to prayer was done from the rooftop. However, once minarets became part of the architecture of mosques in Muslim societies, muezzins began to recite the call from them. In most Muslim majority countries, the call to prayer is broadcast live during the prayer times. The muezzin calls the believers to prayer with the following formula in Arabic: "God is greatest, God is greatest, God is greatest, God is greatest. I bear witness that there is no deity but God. I bear witness there is no deity but God. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Hasten to prayer. Hasten to prayer. Hasten to success. Hasten to success. God is greatest, God is greatest. There is no deity but God." For the dawn prayer, the line "Prayer is better than sleep" is added. In the Shiite tradition, the *adhan* formula also includes the phrases "Come to the best of actions" and "Ali is the vicegerent [*wali*] of God."

A prominent element inside a mosque is the mihrab, a niche in the front wall marking the direction of prayer, which is toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Another feature is the pulpit (*minbar*), which is located to the right (when looking toward the pulpit) of the mihrab. This is where the leader of the congregation stands to deliver a sermon during Friday or holiday (*eid*) prayer. Mosque interiors are simple, with no seats or pews. Instead, a carpet or large mat is usually installed for sitting and prostration. Muslims take off their shoes when they enter the mosque. Given

23. Al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, book 5, hadith 54.

that one of the postures of the prayer is prostration, the cleanliness of the carpet or mat is important.

Congregational Friday Prayer: Juma

An aspect of Islam that is similar to the Sunday service in the Christian tradition or the Sabbath service in the Jewish tradition is the Friday (Juma) prayer. The Qur'an enjoins the believers to take a break from their worldly affairs in order to participate in the Friday congregational prayer: "Believers! When you are called to the congregational prayer, hasten for the remembrance of God and leave off business—that is far better for you, if only you knew."²⁴

However, unlike in the Christian and Jewish traditions, Friday is not a day of prescribed rest. The Qur'an allows the believers to continue their work after prayer: "Then when the prayer is completed, disperse in the land and seek the bounty of God. Remember God often so that you may succeed."²⁵ However, many modern Muslim nations including Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates still observe Fridays as part of their weekend.

While Muslim men are required to observe Friday prayer, women are free to decide to attend Friday prayer or not. Many women opt out, since around the world, women often need to tend to their children or other important duties. Still, in many Muslim countries, women attend Friday prayers if they can. The prayer includes a sermon delivered by an imam, followed by two cycles of prayer. In addition to the Friday prayer, the funeral prayer and the holiday prayer are also offered communally. There are two major holidays in Islam. The first one is Eid al-Fitr, which is celebrated at the end of the month of Ramadan. The other one is Eid al-Adha, which marks the end of the annual hajj pilgrimage and commemorates the prophet Abraham's intention to sacrifice his beloved son.

Spiritual Dimensions of *Salat*

The ritual of five daily prayers is the most comprehensive form of worship in Islamic piety, and Muslims regard it as the index of all kinds of prayers. *Salat* involves

24. Qur'an 62:9.

25. Qur'an 62:10.

heart, tongue, and body. It also includes the other pillars of Islam: the profession of faith, fasting, alms, and pilgrimage. During *salat*, the believer repeatedly utters the *shahada*. Since it is not permissible to eat or drink during prayer, it is a form of fasting. As the body with all its special faculties is dedicated to God, *salat* is also a form of charity—surrendering and giving your body to God. During prayer, believers turn to the Kaaba along with millions of fellow Muslims. In this regard, it is an imaginary form of the pilgrimage.

Salat is a daily spiritual reorientation toward God. In a way, prayer responds to the qur'anic teachings of "I created humankind only that they might worship Me" and "Glorify God in the evening, in the morning—praise is due to Him in the heavens and the earth—in the late afternoon, and when the day begins to decline."²⁶ The times of the prayer are determined according to the astronomical positions of the sun in its daily movements. Accordingly, they vary from one place to another. In light of this, through the five daily prayers, Muslims around the world are praying twenty-four hours a day without cessation.

The beginning of each prayer time overlaps with major cosmic transformations, such as the change of day into night, thus mirroring divine power, grace, and blessings. By practicing ritual prayer, believers acknowledge these constant transformations in the universe as part of the divine work and offer glorification, thanks, and praise to the creator. The time of prayer also gives believers the opportunity to reflect on not only the manifestations of God in the universe but also the self. A daily cycle of the prayer is a reminder for people to reflect on the seasons in relation to their life span. The time of the morning prayer, between dawn and sunrise, reminds the believers of the early spring stage of life, beginning with conception in their mother's womb. The noon prayer, which begins when the sun reaches its zenith, is akin to midsummer and the prime of youth. The time of the afternoon prayer resembles the fall season and old age. The time of evening prayer, sunset, reminds believers of the departure of many creatures, including humans, from this world. It is the time when they can reflect on their own death and resurrection. The time of the night prayer resembles the winter season, when all beings are put to rest in a white shroud. This is the time when everything is shut down and humans are reminded of their accountability after death. The dawn prayer of the

26. Qur'an 51:56; 30:17–18.

next day is a new cycle, new life, and new resurrection. It reminds the believers of the hereafter.²⁷

Salat is an invitation from God to be in his presence five times a day. Rumi (d. 1273) said that people who are full of love for God should always look forward to the time of prayer, as *salat* is a time of union with the divine. Rumi then said that believers should make clear their intention, glorify God, and stand still in prayer. During prayer, they should free themselves from all worldly affairs and the self. When it is time for prayer, people should rush to stand before God, as this is the way of salvation.²⁸ By accepting the invitation, the believers acknowledge the constant blessings they are receiving from God. They also recognize their weakness and shortcomings. Human needs are endless, and God's compassion and generosity are similarly infinite. By bowing down and prostrating themselves in deep humility during prayer, believers seek refuge in God and place their trust in him.²⁹

During prayer, believers prostrate themselves before the divine with great love and admiration. The Prophet said that the believer is closest to God during prostration. With this fundamental act, believers acknowledge their lowliness compared to God's sovereignty over all things. Human beings are weak, while God is almighty. They are sustained because God is the sustainer.

According to the Qur'an, *salat* protects the believers from evil conduct.³⁰ It mentions the deep sense of peace and tranquility that comes from being occupied with the remembrance of God.³¹ In Islamic piety, *salat* is one of the most effective ways of remembering God, since it is enacted five times throughout the day. *Salat* can also have a positive impact on the mental well-being of Muslim believers. Particularly during trying times such as illness, *salat* becomes a source of strength.

Social Dimensions of *Salat*

I have had the opportunity to offer the five daily prayers in various places around the world including Turkey, Egypt, Estonia, Tanzania, Jordan, Syria, Germany, the

27. Nursi, *Words*, 51–52.

28. Ali Fahri Doğan, "Tasavvuf Ehlinin Namaz Hakkındaki Görüşleri ve İki Örnek," *Bingöl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (2013): 69–95.

29. Nursi, *Words*, 52.

30. Qur'an 29:45.

31. Qur'an 13:28.

Netherlands, and the United States. Observing the five daily prayers in various contexts was not a strange experience for a traveling Muslim like me for two main reasons. First, the form and content of the prayer are mainly based on the Qur'an and the prophetic example, or Sunna. Second, the language of the prayer is Arabic. These aspects make *salat* a unifying force for Muslims around the world.

Even if they pray individually, knowing that millions of their fellow Muslims join them in prayer creates a sense of spiritual solidarity and deepens the bonds of faith. From the early years of Islam, one of the appealing aspects of its message was that everyone is equal before God: "The most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you."³² Believers stand shoulder to shoulder, foot to foot, on the same line to glorify, praise, and thank God in prayer regardless of their rank, status, and race.

Even sharing grief and happiness is centered on *salat*. The funeral prayer is usually offered following one of the daily prayers at a mosque. Weddings also can take place in the mosque after the observance of the prayer. Daily prayers at the mosque are occasions for believers to socialize and exchange news.

***Salat* in the United States**

Salat in the United States dates back to colonial and antebellum times. Many slaves brought to the New World belonged to the religion of Islam. Omar bin Said, for example, a Muslim from Senegal, was captured and enslaved in the early 1800s and brought to South Carolina to be sold. Like many other Muslim slaves, Omar was an observant Muslim in his home country. In his memoir, he noted, "Before I came to the Christian country—my religion was the religion of Mohammed, the Apostle of God—may God have mercy upon him and give him peace. I walked to the mosque before daybreak, washed my face and head and hands and feet. I prayed at noon, prayed in the afternoon, prayed at sunset, prayed in the evening."³³ Like Omar bin Said, many of the Muslim slaves in the nascent and still-expanding United States continued to practice the five daily prayers whenever they had a chance. In his

32. Qur'an 49:13.

33. Omar bin Said, "Oh Ye Americans": *The Autobiography of Omar ibn Said, an Enslaved Muslim in the United States*, 1831. National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox, The Making of African American Identity, vol. 1, 1500–1865, 2007, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/community/text3/religionomaribnsaid.pdf>.

memoir, Job Ben Solomon—an Islamic scholar who was brought to Kent Island, Maryland, in the 1730s as a slave—remarked that he would regularly withdraw into the woods for his daily prayer.³⁴

Considering that Muslims in the United States are a minority, their experience of *salat* is distinct. In this sense, the most important aspect of practicing *salat* in the United States is finding an appropriate place for washing rituals and prayer. Many Muslims have to find a space at their workplace, since their work hours overlap with the times of *salat*. The practice of *salat* creates a different dynamic in public spaces. Being performed five times a day makes *salat* a more visible practice compared to the rituals of other US religious traditions.

In addition, Muslims must do washing rituals (*wudu*) before the *salat*. Washing the feet is part of the ritual and may require a designated space. Consider a Muslim making an ablution in a regular public bathroom. This may even require putting the feet into the sink to meet one of the requirements of the ablution. This creates a bizarre scene for those unfamiliar with this ritual. In addition, it may not be comfortable for Muslims, especially older ones, as the sinks are too high to make an ablution. This is why there is a special place designated for ablution in Muslim countries and many international airports.³⁵

Because they are still religious minorities in the United States, many Muslims practice their *salat* in interfaith prayer spaces such as chapels in airports, in hospitals, and on university campuses. These interfaith setups give Muslims the opportunity to acquaint themselves with people of other faiths and their practices. Perhaps because of not having enough space, many places of worship, such as churches and synagogues in the United States, host Muslim communities so they can observe their weekly congregational Friday prayer. The All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center, one of the largest Muslim congregations in the United States, for example, uses space in churches and synagogues in the Washington, DC,

34. Job Ben Solomon, "A Slave about Two Years in Maryland": *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa*. . . . Compiled by Thomas Bluett, 1734, Excerpts. National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox, *Becoming American: The British Atlantic Colonies, 1690–1763*, 2009, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/growth/text5/diallo.pdf>.

35. A good example is the modern *wudu* place at the Frankfurt Airport. Among the universities that installed ablution places in the United States are George Mason University, George Washington University, Miami University, University of Michigan–Dearborn, Elon University, and Eastern Michigan University. Among the airports, one can mention San Francisco International Airport, Orlando International Airport, and Kansas City International Airport.

area for prayer services. Muslim communities who cannot afford to have their own space are often welcomed at churches and synagogues for their prayers and events.³⁶ The Immanuel Church on the Hill, an Episcopal church in Alexandria, Virginia, has been hosting a primarily Pakistani Muslim community for more than a decade. This community performs their Friday prayer at the community hall of the church every week as well as their *tarawih* prayer every day during the month of Ramadan. Similarly, Fairlington Methodist Church in Arlington, Virginia, has been hosting the Muslim community for Friday prayer in their fellowship hall for more than thirty years. When the ADAMS Center was looking for a larger venue to offer the Friday prayer for its members, the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation opened its doors to the Muslim community. The US capitol has been hosting Friday prayer for many years. Also, fire departments in Virginia have been accommodating the Muslim community with space to offer their weekly Friday prayer for a number of years.

While Muslims enjoy great freedom and support in the United States, they have also experienced challenges. In some cases, the community has faced objections to requests for zoning permits needed to build a mosque. In these situations, some of the cases have been taken to the courts. Bernards Township in New Jersey is a good illustration. In 2015, following thirty-nine public hearings over four years, the planning board of the town denied the Muslim community's application to build a mosque. In response, the community filed a lawsuit against the town and eventually won the case in 2017. To settle the suit, the town's administration agreed to pay the Muslim organization \$3.25 million and give permission to the community to build a mosque at its original proposed location. As part of the settlement, the officials of Bernards Township agreed to train all members of its planning board and township committee in diversity and inclusion, with an emphasis on Islam and Muslims.³⁷

Another interesting case of practicing *salat* in the United States occurred at Duke University. In 2015, the university announced that on Fridays, right before Muslim congregational prayer time, the community could have an amplified call to

36. The Immanuel Church on the Hill in Alexandria, Virginia, has been hosting a primarily Pakistani Muslim community for more than a decade now. This community establishes its Friday prayers at the church's hall every week and their *tarawih* prayers every day during Ramadan.

37. See Mike Deak, "N.J. Officials to Pay \$3.5M to Settle Mosque Lawsuit," *USA Today*, May 31, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/05/31/mosque-lawsuit-settlement/357349001/>.

prayer (*adhan*) from the bell tower of the university's chapel. The decision sparked major controversy at the university and nationwide. While those who supported the gesture regarded it as an expression of religious freedom and pluralism in the United States, others saw it as a promotion of sharia in the disguise of religious pluralism. The university quickly reversed its decision.³⁸

In other places, Muslims and their supporters have faced criticism for setting aside places for washing rituals. At Minneapolis Community and Technical College, for example, the college's Muslim students were doing their *wudu* in a regular bathroom. When one of the students slipped and hurt herself during the ritual, the college's administration decided to build a more appropriate space for them. Some members of the college community, however, opposed the decision, arguing that the school was favoring a particular religious group, which was unconstitutional. After a legal briefing, the college's board concluded that installing the washing baths would not violate the constitution.³⁹

38. For more details about the story, see Sari Horwitz, Susan Svrluga, and Pamela Constable, "Muslim Call to Prayer Sounds at Duke University, but Not from Chapel Tower," *Washington Post*, January 16, 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/4ap87bmk>.

39. See Tamar Lewin, "Some U.S. Universities Install Foot Baths for Muslim Students," *New York Times*, August 7, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/world/americas/07iht-muslims.4.7022566.html>.