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O believers! Do not approach prayer while intoxicated1 until you are aware of what you say, nor in a state of ´full` impurity2—unless you merely pass through ´the mosque`—until you have bathed. But if you are ill, on a journey, or have relieved yourselves, or been intimate with your wives and cannot find water, then purify yourselves with clean earth, wiping your faces and hands.3 And Allah is Ever-Pardoning, All-Forgiving. The Prohibition of Approaching Prayer When Drunk Allah subhaanhu wa ta'ala forbade His believing servants from praying while drunk, for one does not know the meaning of what he is saying in that state. Similarly, He forbade them from attending the Masjids while sexually impure, except when one is just passing through the Masjid from one door to another. In this Ayah, He says, يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ "O you who believe! Do not approach Salah while you are in a drunken state until you know what you are saying consumption was completely prohibited. After the revelation of this ayah, the Arabs would not drink alcohol close to the time of prayer. Then Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala completely forbid the act when He revealed Surah Maaida ayah 90, يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ "O you who believe! alcoholic drinks, gambling, Al-Ansab, and Al-Azlam are an abomination of Shayatan's handiwork. So avoid that in order that you may be successful." In a r Nisa was revealed, at the time of prayer, the Muslim would have someone proclaim; حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ "…until you know what you are saying" is the best description for when one is intoxicated, that is when he does not know the meaning of what he is saying. When a person is drunk, he makes obvious mistakes in the recitation and will not be able to be humble during the prayer. Imam Ahmad recorded that Ana anhu said that the Messenger of Allah sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam said: "If one feels sleepy while he is praying, let him sleep for a while so that he knows the meaning of what he is saying." This was also recorded by Al-Bukhari and An-Nasa'i. In some of the narrations of this hadith, the Messenger sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam said, "….For he might want to ask for forgiveness, but instead curses himself!" Passing Through the Masjid When Unclean Further in this ayah, Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala says, وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا "nor while Junub (sexually impure), except while passing through, until you bathe (your entire body)…" Ibn Abi Hatim recorded that Ibn Abbas said that this statement means, "Do not enter the Masjid when you are Junub, unless you are just passing by, in which case, you pass through without sitting down." Ibn Jarir recorded that Yazid bin Abi Habib commented on this statement that when some men from the Ansar, whose doors literally opened into the Masjid, were sexually impure, and they did not have water, their only way to get water was to pass through the Masjid. So, Allah sent down, this ayah. What supports this statement by Yazid bin Abi Habib, may Allah have mercy upon him, is al-Bukhari's report in his Saheeh, that the Messenger of Allah sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam said, "Close all the small doors in this Masjid, except that of Abu Bakr." This is what the Prophet commanded at the end of his life, knowing that Abu Bakr will be the Khalifah after him, and that he would need to enter the Masjid on numerous occasions to manage the important affairs of the Muslims. In his Sahih, Muslim recorded that A'ishah radhiAllahu anha said, "The Messenger of Allah sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam said to me, 'Bring me the garment from the Masjid.' I said, `I am having my period.' He said, 'Your period is not in your hand.' Muslim also collected a similar narration from Abu Hurayrah. This Hadith indicates that the woman is allowed to pass through the Masjid during menses or post-natal bleeding, and Allah knows best. Description of Tayammum Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala said, وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا "And if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]. Indeed, Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving." As for the type of illness wh aggravated by using water, which could be detrimental to a part of the body, or when doing so would prolong an illness. Some scholars said that any type of illness warrants Tayammum, because of the general indications of the Ayah. As for travelling on a journey, it is known, regardless of its length. Allah's statement, أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ "or you Lamastum women" refers to sexual intercourse. Allah said, فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا "but you do not find water,them perform Tayammum with clean ear recorded that Imran bin Husayn said, "Allah's Messenger saw a person sitting away from the people and not praying with them. He asked him, `O so-and-so! What prevented you from offering the prayer with the people, are not you Muslim?' He replied, `Yes, O Allah's Messenger! I am Junub and there is no water.' The Prophet said, `Perform Tayammum with clean earth and that will be sufficient for you.' Clean earth' means dust. In his Saheeh, Muslim recorded that Hudhayfah bin Al-Yaman said that the Messenger of Allah sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam said: "We were given preference over people in three things. Our lines (in prayer) were arranged in rows to resemble the rows of the angels, all of the earth was made a Masjid for us, and its dust was made clean for us when there is no water." The Messenger mentioned the favor of making dust a purifier for us, and if there were any other substance to replace it for Tayammum, he would have mentioned it. Imam Ahmad and the collectors of Sunan, with the exception of Ibn Majah, recorded that Abu Dharr said that the Messenger of Allah sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam said: "Clean earth is pure for the Muslim, even if he does not find water for ten years. When he finds water, let him use it for his skin, for this is better." At-Tirmidhi said, "Hasan Sahih". Allah's statement, فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ "rubbing your faces and hands (Tayammum)" indicates that Tayammum is a substitute for normal ablution, not that it inv parts that normal ablution does. Therefore, it is sufficient in Tayammum to just wipe the face and hands, as the consensus concurs. The face and hands are wiped with one strike on the sand. Imam Ahmad recorded that Abdur-Rahman bin Abza said that a man came to Umar and asked him, "I am Junub, but there is no water." Umar said, "Then, do not pray." Ammar said, "Do you not remember, O Leader of the Faithful! You and I were on a military expedition when we became Junub and did not find water. You did not pray, but I rolled myself in the sand and then prayed. When we went back to the Prophet sallAllahu aalyhi wa sallam, we mentioned to him what had happened. He said to me, "This would have been sufficient for you." and the Prophet stroked his hand on the earth once, blew into it and wiped his face and hands." The Muslim Ummah, rather than all other nations, was favored with the allowance of Tayammum. In the two Sahihs, it is recorded that Jabir bin `Abdullah said that the Messenger of Allah said, "أُعْطِيتُ خَمْسًا لَمْ يُعْطَهُنَّ أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي: نُصِرْتُ بِالرُّعْبِ مَسِيرَةَ شَهْرٍ، وَجُعِلَتْ لِيَ الْأَرْضُ مَسْجِدًا وَطَهُورًا، فَأَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَدْرَكَتْهُ الصَّلَاةُ فَلْيُصَلِّ، وَأُحِلَّتْ لِيَ الْغَنَائِمُ، وَلَمْ تَحِلَّ لِأَحَدٍ قَبْلِي، وَأُعْطِيتُ الشَّفَاعَةَ، وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ يُبْعَثُ إِلَى قَوْمِهِ، وَبُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ كَافَّةً" (I have been given five things which were not given to any (Prophet) before me: Allah made me victorious with fright that covers a month's distance. The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying and an object to perform purification with. Therefore let my followers pray wherever the time of a prayer is due – and in another narration – he will have his means of purity and his Masjid. The spoils of war have been made lawful for me and it was not made so for anyone else before me. I have been given the right of intercession (on the Day of Resurrection.) Every Prophet used to be sent to his nation exclusively, but I have been sent to all mankind." We also mentioned the Hadith of Hudhayfah that Muslim recorded; «وَجُعِلَتْ لَنَا الْأَرْضُ مَسْجِدًا، وَتُرْبَتُهَا لَنَا طَهُورًا، إِذَا لَمْ نَجِدِ الْمَاءَ» (We were preferred with three things over people.Our lines (in prayer) were arranged in rows to resemble the rows of the angels, all of the earth was made a Masjid for us, and its dust was made clean for us when there is no water.) Allah said in this Ayah, فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا (rubbing your faces and hands.Truly, Allah is Ever Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving.) meaning, a part of His pardoning and forgiving is that He allows you to use Tayammum and to pray after using it when there is no water, to make things easy for you. This Ayah sanctifies the position of the prayer, it being too sacred than to be performed in a defecient manner, like in a state of drunkenness, until one becomes aware of what he is saying, or sexually impure, until he bathes (Ghusl), or after answering the call of nature, until he performs ablution. There are exceptions when one is ill or when there is no water. In this case, Allah allows us to use Tayammum, out of His mercy and kindness for His servants, and to facilitate them, all praise is due to Allah. Overview (Verse 43) One Step Towards Forbidding Drinking As we have seen, this passage started with the commands to worship God alone, associating no partners with Him. Prayer is the closest of all rituals to the central concept of worship. The following verse outlines some of the rulings connected with prayer and the purification which is required for its validity: "Believers, do not attempt to pray when you are drunk, [but wait] until you know what you are saying; nor when you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, except if are on your way, until you have bathed. But if you are ill, or travelling, or if one of you has come from the toilet, or if you have cohabited with a woman and can find no water, then have recourse to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your faces and your hands. God is indeed Most Lenient, Much-Forgiving." (Verse 43) This verse represents one aspect of the Qur'ānic method for cultivating the Muslim community, enhancing its moral sense and refining its values. We should remember here that Islam picked up the Muslim community from the depths of ignorance, when drinking was a well-established social institution, as it is in almost all ignorant societies, ancient and modern. Drinking was a common habit in Roman, Byzantine and Persian societies, when they were at the zenith of their civilisation. It is also characteristic of contemporary European and American societies which are at the same stage. Similarly, it is very common in backward African societies. In Sweden, which is considered one of the most civilised of contemporary societies, it used to be the case during the first half of the 19th century that every family brewed its own wine and other alcohol. On average, an individual consumed 20 litres. The Swedish Government recognised the seriousness of this state of affairs, and that it led to major alcohol addiction. It, therefore, monopolised the production of intoxicants, thereby limiting individual consumption, and also restricted drinking in public places. More recently these restrictions have been relaxed. Drinking was then allowed in restaurants, provided that wine was taken with a meal. Later, drinking was allowed in a limited number of public places until midnight. Thereafter, people could only drink beer and similar beverages with a lower alcohol content. Nevertheless, the number of alcoholics among teenagers is growing steadily. In America, the Government once tried to abolish drinking altogether, and promulgated a law to this effect in 1919, which was ridiculed as the "dry" law. It remained in force for 14 years until the American government found itself compelled to abolish it in 1933. All methods of enhancing public awareness of the harmful effects of drinking were utilised, including publications, the radio, cinema and public lectures. It is estimated that altogether the American administrations spent over 60 million dollars in campaigning against drink; a very large sum indeed by the standards of that period. Millions of pages were written against drinking in the form of books, pamphlets and the like. Moreover, at least 250 million dollars were spent on enforcing the law during those 14 years. Three hundred people were executed and more than half a million were imprisoned and fines exceeding 16 million dollars were imposed. The Government also confiscated properties worth more than 400 million dollars. In spite of all this, the pressure was too great for the American administrations and they were finally forced to cancel their prohibition laws. Islam, on the other hand, was able to successfully eradicate this well- entrenched habit, deploying only a few verses of the Qur'ān to do so. This is a striking example of the difference between Divine and human methods in dealing with man and in treating social ills. Pre-Islamic poetry is full of descriptions by Arab poets which show that drinking was a firmly rooted social habit in Arabia. Moreover, certain events took place in the early days of Islam, involving personalities from among the best renowned of the Prophet's Companions, such as `Umar, `Alī, Ḥamzah and `Abd al-Raḥmān ibn `Awf. These again indicate how deeply entrenched the drinking of intoxicants was in Arabian society. It is sufficient for our purposes here to give only a few examples. `Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab begins his report of how he became a Muslim by saying: "I used to drink heavily in my pre-Islamic days. I once decided to go to a particular public house to drink… "`Umar continued to drink when he became a Muslim until the revelation of the Qur'ānic verse stating: "They ask you about drinking and gambling. Say: `In both there is great evil although they have some benefits for people, but their evil far exceeds their benefit.'" (2: 219) When `Umar heard this Qur'ānic verse he said: "My Lord, give us a clear, categorical statement on wines." He continued to drink and uttered the same prayer when the Qur'ānic verse, which is the subject of this commentary was revealed. When the express prohibition stated in Sūrah 5, entitled The Repast, or Al-Mā'idah was given, `Umar declared his submission and stopped drinking. There are two reports involving `Alī, `Abd al-Raḥmān ibn `Awf [both from the Muhājirīn] and Sa`d ibn Mu`ādh [from the Anṣār] which give the reasons behind the revelation of the present Qur'ānic verse. The first report quotes Sa`d as saying: "Four verses were revealed on my account. A man from the Anṣār invited a number of the Muhājirīn and a number of the Anṣār to a meal. We all ate and drank heavily. Some of us began boasting about our tribes. One man took the chin bone of a camel and pierced it into Sa`d's nose. Since then, Sa`d has had a pierced nose. This was prior to the prohibition of intoxicants. Shortly afterwards, the verse saying, `Believers, do not attempt to pray when you are drunk'" (Verse 43), was revealed. The other report is attributed to `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib who is quoted as saying: "`Abd al-Raḥmān ibn `Awf invited us to a meal and gave us a great deal to drink. We were under the influence of drink when it was time for prayer. One person was asked to lead us in prayer and he recited the sūrah entitled The Unbelievers, or al-Kāfirūn, changing its text so as to mean: `Unbelievers, I do not worship what you worship, but we do worship what you worship.' (This is the opposite of its meaning.) God then revealed this verse: "Believers, do not attempt to pray when you are drunk, [but wait] until you know what you are saying.'" (Verse 43) We do not need any more examples or stories to tell us how common the habit of drinking was in ignorant Arabian society. Both drinking and gambling were well- established social habits. How did the Islamic method deal with these phenomena? How did it combat this evil which makes it impossible to establish a good healthy society? We have to remember that social traditions and economic interests are involved in the promotion of such phenomena. As we have already said, the Divine method dealt with these evils by simply using a few verses of the Qur'ān. Its approach was easy and gradual. It managed to win the battle without any need to fight, shed blood or sacrifice. The only thing that was shed was the wine itself. All barrels and other containers were spilt. Indeed, some of the Prophet's Companions were in the process of drinking when they heard of the prohibition and they spat out what was in their mouths. Gradual Eradication of Evil Social Habits In Madinah, however, Islam established a state which wielded proper authority. Nevertheless, intoxicants were not forbidden by the authority of the state and the force of law. The Islamic approach relied on the Qur'ān, working its gentle, steady and firm way, to make use of the Divine insight into man and his social realities. Incidents like the ones quoted above took place. Hence, the verse we are now discussing was revealed to tell the believers: "Do not attempt to pray when you are drunk, [but wait] until you know what you are saying." (Verse 43) Here we find the wise, gentle approach in action, the verse representing the middle stage between showing drink as repugnant because its harm is greater than its benefit and a state of total prohibition where drink is seen as an impurity of Satan's work. The purpose of this middle stage being to break the habit of drinking by prohibiting it near prayer times, which span the whole day. Some prayers are too close to each other to allow anyone who is given to alcohol time to take one or two drinks and regain enough sobriety to be fully aware of what he is saying. Besides, there were special times for drinking, either early in the day or in the evening. Plus there were prayers that must be offered both in between these times and following them. Hence, a person with an Islamic sense was sure to weigh up the enjoyment he derives from drinking against neglecting his duty of prayer. At this stage, a good Muslim would not abandon his prayers for anything. Nevertheless, `Umar repeated his prayer: "My Lord, give us a clear, categorical statement on wines." Time passed and events took place, and the moment arrived when the gradual approach would give its final verdict. Two verses in the next sūrah, The Repast, or Al- Mā'idah, were revealed to state: "Believers: intoxicants, gambling, idolatrous practices and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing. Keep away from them so that you may prosper. By means of intoxicants and gambling Satan seeks only to sow the seeds of enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist?" (5: 90-1) All Muslims stopped drinking. Once the commandment was given, all wine containers were emptied and broken throughout Madinah. Indeed, those who were in the process of drinking did not swallow what was in their mouths when they were informed of the prohibition. It was, thus, a great triumph for the Qur'ān and its approach. How did it all happen? How was this miracle, unparalleled in human history, achieved? It was all made possible because the Islamic approach works on man in a unique way. Essentially, it employs God's authority and a Muslim's keenness to please Him. To a Muslim, God oversees him at all times. Hence, he cannot lose sight of his top priority of trying to please God. Moreover, Islam gives its followers greater concerns to spend their time on, and these replace that time which was wasted on drinking and any pleasure derived from it. Any sense of loss, which weighs heavily on people in un-Islamic societies, is replaced with a pleasant feeling of fulfilment in the light of Islam, its freedom, and its sense of openness which unites this life with the life to come. More importantly, Islam gives man the sense of fulfilment generated by faith. To a Muslim, this life becomes pleasant, happy, forward looking, enlightened with a sense of intimacy with God. Intoxicants, which work on the imagination and generate false feelings of happiness and also cause a real headache, no longer present any temptation for a Muslim. Like gambling and other such fun, drinking is a craze, which is not really different from any other craze, such as sporting events, speed races, cinema, fashion and bull fighting. These are simply a manifestation of a spiritual emptiness reflected in the absence of faith and a lack of high concerns consuming one's energy. They are, in themselves, evidence of the bankruptcy of modern civilisation that finds itself unable to fulfil natural needs and to tap the natural resources of man in a clean, healthy way. It is such emptiness and bankruptcy that leads people to fill the vacuum they feel in their lives with wine and gambling. What is more, these social diseases are not only the cause of perversion but also of mental and nervous disorders. That miracle, which remains unique in the history of man, was not the result of mere words. It was the result of a complete approach defined by those words and formulated by the Lord of mankind, not by ordinary human beings. This is what distinguishes this approach from all man-made approaches, which, generally speaking, achieve very little. Today, we see that the United Nations is trying to implement its own rules and regulations in its attempt to control the use of narcotics. It is also trying to implement its own rules and regulations in its attempt to control the use of alcohol. It is also trying to implement its own rules and regulations in its attempt to control the use of tobacco. It is also trying to implement its own rules and regulations in its attempt to control the use of gambling. It is also trying to implement its own rules and regulations in its attempt to control the use of prostitution. Will it succeed? The answer is clear in people's minds, they will stop formulating for themselves systems of laws and rules which are different from those given to us by God, the Lord of mankind. Only He knows what is suitable for man and only His wisdom and ability are limitless. Yet people's conceit still prevents them from recognising these facts. But if you are ill, or travelling, or if one of you has come from the toilet, or if you have cohabited with a woman and can find no water, then have recourse to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your faces and your hands. God is indeed Most Lenient, Much-Forgiving. (Verse 43) Islamic Worship Made Easy Let us now look at this verse in detail: "Believers, do not attempt to pray when you are drunk, [but wait] until you know what you are saying; nor when you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, except if you are on your way, until you have bathed" (Verse 43) This stage of prohibiting intoxicants forbids the believers from even trying to pray when they are drunk, until they know fully what they are saying. Furthermore, this verse forbids believers from praying when they are in a state of ceremonial impurity, or janābah, before they have removed it by washing themselves, except in situations when they are "on their way". Different interpretations have been given to the expression translated here as, "on your way". Similarly, different views are expressed with regard to the meaning of "attempting to pray" which may be rendered in a strictly literal translation as "do not come near to prayer", which this verse forbids. Some scholars say that a person who is in a state of ceremonial impurity, i.e. after sexual intercourse or seminal discharge, must not enter a mosque or stay in it until he has taken a bath. An exception is made in the case of a person who is unable to pass through the mosque without staying. A number of the Prophet's Companions had their houses surrounding the Prophet's mosque, with their doors opening onto it. They had to go through the mosque when they wanted to go out or when they came back home. A concession, then, is given to those people to pass through the mosque when they are in a state of ceremonial impurity, provided that they do not stay in the mosque or pray. Until they have had a bath. Other scholars suggest that what is meant by the prohibition is the prayer itself. Muslims are not allowed to pray when they are in a state of ceremonial impurity without washing themselves first, unless they are travelling. In this case, a traveller is allowed to go to the mosque and pray, without having had a bath first, provided that he has had dry ablution, i.e. tayammum, which, in this case, replaces both lesser ablution, i.e. wudū' and full ablution, i.e. ghusl. The first view seems to be the sounder one, because travelling is mentioned later on in the same verse. To say that the verse forbids only "cohabitation with a woman", while some scholars interpret it as "touching a woman". Some scholars believe that it refers to sexual intercourse, which makes it necessary for both partners to have a full bath. Another view explains touching women in any simple body contact. According to some schools of thought, such contact requires simple ablution, i.e. wudū'. Other schools of thought do not make such a requirement. The case is discussed in great detail in books of Fiqh. We sum up these different views as follows: (1) touching a woman in any situation or any place requires ablution; (2) a touch requires ablution if the man who touches her is normally excited by such a touch and if she is one to excite a man when touched; (3) a touch requires ablution only if that particular touch stirs some feeling within the man, as he himself determines in every case; (4) a touch does not require ablution in every situation, not, for example, when it involves embracing or kissing one's wife. Each of these views is supported by evidence from actions or statements attributed to the Prophet. Such differences are common in matters of detail. We are more inclined to the view that states "if you have touched women" signifies an action requiring full ablution, i.e. a bath, which is cohabitation. In opting for this view, we bypass all differences of opinion with regard to simple ablution or wudū In all the cases mentioned in this verse, whether they require full ablution or a simple one before one prays, tayammum or dry ablution is considered adequate compensation when water is not available, or when it is available but harmful to use. This is what is meant by the statement "then have recourse to pure dust". (Verse 43) We are thus instructed to find a place, where we can have pure dust, whether it is soil, stone, a wall, or indeed dust which settles on the body of a horse or a donkey or on a bed or a piece of furniture. If we strike such a surface with our hands and dust appears, then it is suitable for use as a means of dry ablution. The way to do this is to strike that dusty surface once with both hands, and to shake the dust off before passing one's hands over our faces and over our hands up to the elbows. Some scholars require two strikes, then passing their hands over our faces after the first strike. We then follow the second strike by passing each of our palms over our opposite hand up to each elbow. There is no need to speak about the whole hand in this case, because the hand is used here as a symbolic of the ease with which God wants us to follow the rules of the religion. Indeed, God is indeed Most Lenient, Much-Forgiving." (Verse 43) This comment is made in the context of the rulings of the religion. We have to be sure that God gives us the rulings of the religion because He knows what is good for us and what is harmful to us. We have to be sure that God forgives us our failings. Purpose of Islamic Legislation Before we conclude this discussion of the present passage we need to reflect a little on certain points, and to try to understand the wisdom behind tayammum, or dry ablution. Sometimes people who try to explain what lies behind certain Islamic legislation or aspects of Islamic worship, put their points of view very forcefully, implying that they have understood everything there is to understand. This is not the proper way to explain Qur'ānic statements and Islamic legislation, except where the reasons for such legislation are expressly stated in the Qur'ān or the Sunnah. It is always preferable to state our point of view adding that it is all that we have been able to understand of the wisdom behind a certain piece of legislation. The possibility cannot be excluded that there may be other reasons behind it which we have not been able to determine. In this way, we assign our human mind to its proper position, vis-a-vis Qur'ānic statements and Divine legislation. What motivates me to say this is that some of us, who may have the best of intentions, try to present such statements and legislation to people within the context of a definite purpose which they may determine according to human knowledge or scientific analysis. This is fine provided that it is put in the right perspective to which I have just alluded in the preceding paragraph. It has often been said that the purpose of having ablution before prayer is to maintain cleanliness. It may be true that cleanliness is intended through ablution, but to emphasise that it is the only reason why ablution is required before prayer is to follow an approach which is neither correct nor safe. Indeed, there came a time when some people suggested that there was no longer any need for this "primitive" method of cleanliness when we live in a clean environment, with people taking care of their daily cleanliness. If ablution had been legislated for this purpose, then it would no longer be necessary before prayer. Indeed, there is no longer any need for prayer itself. People have often tried to identify the wisdom behind prayer. At times it has been described in terms of a series of exercises which benefit the whole body, and at other times as providing a good training to maintain discipline, in timing, movement and lining up in congregation. Some people have also suggested that it provides a direct relationship with God with what contains of recitation and supplication. All these may be intended in prayer, but to stress that any of them, or indeed all of them put together are the only reasons behind the requirement of prayer, is to depart from the correct and safe approach. There were times when some people suggested that we no longer need physical exercise which prayers provide, since physical exercise has become much more sophisticated. Other people suggested that the army provides a better place to achieve better systems for training and discipline. Another group suggested that the need to impose limits on prayer times has become redundant because people have invented clocks and watches. Some people suggested that we no longer need prayer because the relationship with God could be better maintained with a more direct personal and spiritual communion with Him, which could be achieved through meditation. In short, if we have the wisdom to determine the wisdom behind the rulings of worship or the rulings of legislation, we may be tempted to make our own hypotheses in line with what contemporary science may reveal, stressing always that this is the only reason for it, we move away from the proper method of understanding religious statements and Divine legislation. We, thus, open the way to sophistry and futile argument. In addition, we leave ourselves open to mistakes, especially when our analysis is based on what contemporary science and research reveal, when it is always changing or amending what it used to consider a proven fact. With respect to the subject we are discussing, namely, tayammum or dry ablution, it seems to me that ablution of both types, simple and full, was not ordered simply for the maintenance of cleanliness. Otherwise, the alternative for either type does not serve the same purpose. There must be some other purpose which is served by simple ablution [wudū'], full ablution [ghusl] as well as by dry ablution [tayammum]. We do not wish to make the same mistake and categorically affirm that our view provides the complete answer. We wish merely to say that perhaps ablution has been ordered as an intermediate step taking us away from our daily preoccupation in order to prepare us psychologically for prayer, which is a great meeting with God. Taken in this light, tayammum appears to serve the same purpose as simple or full ablution. Having said that, we realise that God's knowledge is absolute. He knows our inner selves as we do not know them. It behoves us well to learn how to think or speak of God the Almighty and how to view His commandments. We should also reflect a little on the place of prayer in Islam. We realise that it is so important to attend to prayers, despite any reasons or circumstances which may prevent us from praying. Islam gives us every facility to offer our prayers on time, removing all obstacles that may lie in our way. This is particularly apparent in replacing dry ablution for either or both types of ablution when water is not available or when it is harmful to use, or when the quantity of water available is needed for drinking and other essentials, as well as when we are travelling. Later on in this sūrah, we will speak of how prayers are offered in the battlefield, when soldiers fear a treacherous attack by the enemy. All these aspects emphasise how Islam views prayer as a most essential duty, which should not be neglected for any reason. This is again reflected when one is ill and cannot stand up or sit down. Such a person can pray seated, reclining, or lying down. They can even pray by signalling the direction with their eyes only, if they cannot do more than that. Prayer is a communion between the worshipper and his Creator, who knows what he is saying and what he means. Prayer is not a physical exercise which benefits the body, or a training in discipline, or a means of keeping time. It does not need the worshipper to be able to stand up or sit down. Such a person can pray seated, reclining, or lying down. They can even pray by signalling the direction with their eyes only, if they cannot do more than that. Prayer is a communion between the worshipper and his Creator, who knows what he is saying and what he means. Prayer is not a physical exercise which benefits the body, or a training in discipline, or a means of keeping time. It does not need the worshipper to be able to stand up or sit down. Such a person can pray seated, reclining, or lying down