The Hadīth of the one harming his prayer as reported by Rifā‘ah (may Allah be pleased with him)

Rifā‘ah ibn Rāfi‘ Az-Zuraqi, a Companion of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), reported: The Messenger of Allah (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) was sitting in the mosque when a man came in and prayed near him. When the man moved toward the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) to greet him after the prayer, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Go back and pray again, for you have not prayed." The man went back and prayed as he had prayed before and he came to the Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) who said: "Go back and pray again, for you have not prayed." The man said: "O Messenger of Allah, teach me how to do it." He said: "When you stand facing the Qiblah, say the Takbīr and recite the Mother of the Qur’an (Sūrat al-Fātihah), then recite whatever you like of the Qur’an. Then bow with your palms resting on your knees and your back unbent for enough time. When you rise your head, stand up straight until the bones fit well in their joints. Then prostrate until you are at ease in prostration, and when you raise your head, sit on your left thigh. Then do that in every bowing and prostration." In another narration, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: “The prayer of any one of you is not complete until he performs ablution perfectly, as Allah, the Almighty, has ordered. He should wash his face and then his hands up to the elbows, wipe his head and (wash) his feet up to the ankles. Then he should say the Takbīr and praise Allah, the Almighty. He should then recite the Qur'an as much as it is convenient for him.” He said: “He then says the Takbīr and prostrates himself, so his face or forehead is at rest on the ground and his joints return to their places and are loosened. Then he should say the Takbīr and sit to the right on his hips and keep his back erect.” He described the nature of prayer in this way by offering four Rak‘ahs until he finished it. Then he said: “The prayer of any of you is not complete unless he does this.” In another version, he said: “Perform ablution as Allah, the Almighty, ordered you to, then utter the two testimonies of faith, announce the Iqāmah, and say the Takbīr. If you have memorized some parts of the Qur’an, recite them, otherwise, busy yourself praising and exalting Allah.”

[Good hadith] [Narrated by Abu Daoud]

This Hadīth is known as “The Hadīth of the one harming his prayer”. Commentators quote this Hadīth when describing the obligatory acts and conditions of the prayer. In this Hadīth, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) taught perfectly the components of the prayer that must be present. Anything that is not mentioned in this Hadīth is not considered obligatory. In general, this Hadīth relates an incident where a Companion called Khallad ibn Rāfi‘ entered the mosque after the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and performed prayer without perfecting its actions and words. When the man had

finished his prayer, he came to greet the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) with the greeting of peace. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) replied to him and said: “Go back and pray again, for you have not prayed.” The man returned and prayed in the same way he had done before. He then went to the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) who told him to go back and pray again, for he had not prayed. On the third time, the man said: “I swear by the One who sent you with the Truth, I cannot pray better than this! Please, teach me how to do it.” As the man had a thirst for knowledge and was still prepared to gain it after going back and forth, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said to him: “When you want to pray, say the Takbīr of Ihrām (to initiate the prayer) and recite whatever is convenient to you from the Qur’an after Sūrat al-Fātihah. Then bow until you are at ease in bowing and then rise until you are standing up straight. Then prostrate until you are at ease in prostration and then sit up until you are at ease in sitting. Then do that throughout the whole prayer, except for the Takbīr of Ihrām, which is only said in the first Rak‘ah. The other versions of the Hadīth listed a couple of other conditions for prayer, such as facing the Qibla (prayer direction) and performing ablution.

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