

Series of the Writings of His Eminence Shaykh (41)

A Treatise on the Times of Prayer

Written by His Eminence Shaykh

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May Allah forgive him, his parents, and all Muslims.

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Introduction

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him, seek His help and forgiveness, and repent to Him.

We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our souls and from our bad deeds.

Whoever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whoever He leads astray, none can guide.

I bear witness that there is no true god but Allah, alone, with no partner,

and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his family and Companions, and those who follow them rightly until the Day of Judgment.

To proceed:

Allah Almighty ordained on His servants five daily prayers in a day and night, to be performed at certain times entailed by the wisdom of Allah Almighty

so that people would be connected to their Lord in these prayers for the duration of all these times. Prayer to the heart is like water to the tree, which comes to it time after time, not all at once and then it gets cut off.

Part of the wisdom behind prescribing these prayers at different times is to avoid the feeling of boredom and burden if people were to offer them all at the same time. Blessed is Allah, the Wisest of Judges.

This is a short treatise in which we will talk about the times of prayers in the following chapters:

Chapter One: The times of prayers.

Chapter Two: The obligation to offer prayer on time and the ruling on offering it early or late within its time.

Chapter Three: Catching up with prayer time (right before it ends) and the resulting consequences.

Chapter Four: The ruling on combining two prayers at the time of either.

In preparing this treatise, I have turned to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and referred to the relevant proofs, so that the believer would proceed with awareness and increased confidence and reassurance.

We ask Allah Almighty to reward us for this effort and to render it blessed and useful for us and all Muslims; He is Most Generous Most Bountiful.

The Author

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Chapter One: The times of prayers

Allah Almighty says: {And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.} [Al-Nahl: 44] And Allah Almighty says: {And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims.} [Al-Nahl: 89] If there is anything that people need to know the ruling on, whether in their religious or worldly affairs, they will find it clarified by Allah Almighty in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). The Sunnah clarifies the Qur'an and interprets it, specifies what is general in it, and restricts what is absolute. Also, parts of the Qur'an clarify and interpret other parts, specify what is general, and restrict what is absolute. Both of them have come from Allah Almighty; the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Indeed, I have been given the Book and the like of it along with it." ¹ [Narrated by Ahmad and Abu Dāwūd with an authentic chain of narrators]

An example of this general comprehensive rule is the clarification of the times of the five prayers; the physical acts of worship which are the most obligatory and the most beloved to Allah Almighty. He has clarified their times most adequately in His Book and through the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him).

In the Qur'an, Allah Almighty says: {Establish prayer at the decline of the sun until the darkness of the night and the Qur'an of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.} [Al-Isrā': 78] So, Allah Almighty commanded His Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) - and the command to him is addressed to all Muslims as well - to perform prayer from the time when the sun declines from its zenith at midday till the darkest part of the night, which is at midnight. Then He gave details by saying: {and the Qur'an of dawn}; i.e. the Fajr prayer. He referred to it as "the Qur'an" because recitation is longer in this prayer. Thus, His statement {at the decline of the sun until the darkness of the night} comprises the times of four prayers, namely Zhuhr and 'Asr - which are two day prayers, during the second half of daytime - and Maghrib and 'Ishā' - which are two night prayers, during the first half of the night. As for the time of Fajr prayer, He refers to it in His statement {and the Qur'an of dawn}, specifying the exact time which occurs when sunlight appears in the horizon. The reason Allah Almighty combined the times of the four prayers together in the verse is that they are all consecutive and none of their times ends except when the time of the following prayer begins. In contrast, He mentions the time of Fajr prayer separately because it is not connected to the time of another prayer before or after it. The second half of the night separates the time of 'Ishā' and the time of Fajr, and the first half of daytime separates Fajr from Zhuhr. This will be further clarified in the Sunnah section, Allah willing. As for the Sunnah, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Ās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The time of the Zhuhr prayer is when the sun passes its zenith and a man's shadow is the same (length) as his height, (and it lasts) as long as the time for the 'Asr prayer has not come; the time for the 'Asr prayer is as long as the sun has not become pale; the time of the Maghrib prayer is as long as the twilight has not disappeared; the time of the 'Ishā' prayer is until the exact middle of the night; and the time of the Fajr prayer is from the rise of dawn, as long as the sun has not risen." Another version reads: "The time of 'Ishā' prayer is until the middle of the night," ² and he did not restrict it with the adjective "exact".

In another Hadīth also narrated by Muslim, Abu Mūsa al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "A person came to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) inquiring about the times of prayers. He gave him no reply. He then announced Iqāmah (second call to prayer) for the Fajr prayer when it was daybreak, when the people could hardly recognize one

¹ Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book: The Sunnah; Chapter: On Adhering to the Sunnah; no. (4604).

Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi; Chapters on Knowledge; Chapter: What is forbidden to be said upon hearing a Hadīth from the Prophet; no. (2664). Narrated by Ibn Mājah in the Introduction; Chapter: Holding the Prophet's Hadīth in high regard and the stern warning to those who oppose it; no. (12). Narrated by Ahmad (4/130). Reported by Al-Miqdām ibn Ma'di Karib (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: The times of the five prayers; no. (612). Reported by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

another. He then commanded him (meaning Bilāl, as in the version of Al-Nasā'i) and Iqāmah for the Zhuhr prayer was announced when the sun had passed its zenith and one would say that it was midday, but he knew better than them. He then commanded him and Iqāmah for the 'Asr prayer was announced when the sun was high in the sky. He then commanded him and Iqāmah for the Maghrib prayer was announced when the sun had sunk - in Al-Nasā'i's version: when the sun had set.³ He then commanded him and Iqāmah for the 'Ishā' prayer was announced when the twilight had disappeared. On the next day, he delayed the Fajr prayer (so much so) that after completing it, one would say that the sun had risen or was about to rise. He then delayed the Zhuhr prayer till it was near the time the 'Asr prayer was performed on the day before. He then delayed the 'Asr prayer till one after completing it would say that the sun had turned red. He then delayed the Maghrib prayer till the twilight was about to disappear. He then delayed the 'Ishā' prayer till the elapse of one third of the night. The next morning, he called the inquirer and said: 'The time for prayers is between these two (extremes).'⁴

Hence, it is quite clear that the times of the five prayers are defined most adequately by the Qur'anic verse cited above and the Prophet's Sunnah in words and actions; and they are as follows:

1. The time of Zhuhr prayer extends from the time the sun passes the meridian till the shadow of everything becomes equal to its height.

Explanation: When the sun rises, every object above ground level begins to have a long shadow which keeps getting shorter until the sun passes the meridian. When it has passed it, the shadow begins to become longer again and the time of Zhuhr prayer starts. So, we can measure from the time the shadow begins to become longer again. When it becomes equal to the object in length, the time of Zhuhr prayer ends.

2. The time of 'Asr prayer extends from the time the shadow becomes equal to the object in length till the sun becomes pale or red.

The time of 'Asr prayer extends to sunset, as indicated in a Hadīth where Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever catches up with one Rak'ah of the Fajr prayer before sunrise has caught up with the Fajr prayer, and whoever catches up with one Rak'ah of the 'Asr prayer before sunset has caught up with the 'Asr prayer."⁵ [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

3. The time of Maghrib prayer extends from sunset till the disappearance of the twilight, which is the redness.

4. The time of 'Ishā' prayer extends from the disappearance of the twilight till the middle of the night.

Its time does not extend to daybreak, as this would contradict the explicit indications of the Qur'an and the Sunnah; Allah Almighty says: {Establish prayer at the decline of the sun until the darkness of the night} [Al-Isrā': 78] He did not say "until daybreak". Likewise, the Sunnah states that the time of 'Ishā' prayer ends at the middle of the night, as indicated in the Hadīth reported by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

5. The time of Fajr prayer extends from the rise of the second dawn - which is the white light along the eastern horizon that is not followed by darkness - till sunrise.

These prescribed times are to be followed at a place that sees night and day over 24 hours, whether the day and night are equal in length or one of them is a little longer or much longer than the other.

³ Narrated by Al-Nasā'i; Book of the Times [of prayer]; Chapter: The latest time of Maghrib; no. (523). Reported by Abu Mūsa (may Allah be pleased with him).

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⁵ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever catches up with one Rak'ah of the Fajr prayer; no. (579). Narrated by Muslim; Book: Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever catches up with one Rak'ah has caught up with that prayer; no. (608). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

As for places that do not see the rotation of night and day over 24 hours, this either happens in a steady manner throughout the year or for a few days thereof.

If this occurs only for a few days of the year, like when the place witnesses day and night over 24 hours throughout the four seasons of the year but during some seasons, the night lasts for 24 hours or more and so does the day, in such a case:

§ Either there is a live phenomenon in the horizon whereby time can be determined, such as that light starts to increase, for example, or totally disappears, in which case the ruling is based on that phenomenon.

§ Or such a phenomenon does not exist, in which case the times of prayer should be estimated according to what they were on the last day before the night or the day continued for 24 hours.

If we estimate that the night, before it continued for 24 hours, was 20 hours, and the day was the remainder of the 24 hours, then we will consider the continued night to be 20 hours and the remainder as the day, in which case we should apply the aforementioned method in determining the times of prayer.

But if the place does not witness the day and night over 24 hours throughout the year and during all seasons, we should then determine the times of prayer in a proportionate manner, based on the following report by Al-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān (may Allah be pleased with him): The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) mentioned the Antichrist who would appear at the end of time. The people asked him how long he would stay on earth and he replied: “Forty days; a day like a year, a day like a month, a day like a week, and the remaining days are like your days.” They said: “O Messenger of Allah, on that day which would be like a year, would the prayers of one day be sufficient?” He said: “No, estimate them proportionately.”⁶

So, the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) pointed out that offering the usual prayers of a day would not be sufficient on that long day; rather, people should estimate the times of prayer in a proportionate manner.

Now that it is proved that prayers are to be estimated in a place where night and day do not rotate, how do we make that estimate?

Some scholars held that the times of prayer should be estimated according to what is average, thus considering the night as 12 hours and the day likewise. Since it is not possible to make the estimate based on the place itself, we refer to an average place, just like the case of a woman who experiences prolonged non-menstrual bleeding while her menstrual cycle is irregular and she cannot differentiate between menstrual and non-menstrual blood [so she calculates the length of her cycle according to the average length].

Other scholars held that the times of prayer should be estimated according to the nearest place where there is night and day during the year. Since it is not possible to make the estimate based on the place itself, we refer to the most similar place to it which is the nearest place that sees day and night in the course of 24 hours.

This view is stronger, as it is more convincing and closer to reality; and Allah Almighty knows best.

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Chapter Two: The obligation to offer prayer on time and the ruling on offering it early at the beginning of its time or beyond it

⁶ Narrated by Muslim; Book of the Trials and the Signs of the Hour; Chapter: Mention of the Antichrist and his description and what he will bring with him; no. (2937). Reported by Al-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān (may Allah be pleased with him).

Each prayer should be performed at its appointed time as Allah Almighty says: {Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers at specified times} [Al-Nisā': 103]; i.e. an obligation with a fixed time. Allah Almighty also says: {Establish prayer at the decline of the sun until the darkness of the night and the Qur'an of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.} [Al-Isrā': 78] The imperative tense in the verse denotes obligation.

'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) mentioned prayer one day and said: 'Whoever observes it regularly, it will be for him a light, an argument in his favor, and salvation on the Day of Judgment; and whoever does not observe it regularly, he will have no light, no argument in his favor, and no salvation, and he will be on the Day of Judgment with Qārūn (Korah), Pharaoh, Hamān, and Ubayy ibn Khalaf.'" ⁷ Al-Mundhiri said: Ahmad narrated it with a good chain of narrators. ⁸

A Muslim may not offer a prayer, or part of it, before its time is due, for this would constitute transgression against the bounds set by Allah Almighty and mockery of His verses.

If he excusably does so due to ignorance, forgetfulness, or heedlessness, there is no sin on him and he will get the reward for what he has prayed. Yet when the prayer time comes, he is required to perform it again, because it is only then that it becomes due. If he performs it before its time, it will not be accepted from him, and he has not discharged his obligation yet. 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever does a deed that is not in accordance with our way, it will be rejected." ⁹

Likewise, a Muslim may not delay a prayer beyond its time, for this would constitute transgression against the bounds set by Allah Almighty and mockery of His verses. If he does so without an excuse, he will incur a sin, his prayer will not be accepted, and his obligation remains unfulfilled, based on the above Hadīth reported by 'Ā'ishah. He must repent to Allah Almighty and reform his actions afterwards. If, however, he delays prayer beyond its time due to some excuse, like sleep, forgetfulness, or some activity which he believes allows such delay, he should perform it once the excuse is no longer there. Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever forgets a prayer should perform it when he remembers it. There is no expiation for it but this." In another version: "Whoever forgets a prayer or sleeps and misses it..." ¹⁰ [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

If a person misses a number of prayers for an excuse, he should offer them in the proper order when the excuse is no longer there, and he should not delay them to their equivalent times on the following days. Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) performed ablution during the battle of the Trench after sunset and offered the 'Asr prayer then he offered the Maghrib prayer." ¹¹ [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

⁷ Narrated by Ahmad (2/169) and Al-Dārimi in his Sunan, no. (2763). Reported by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

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⁹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Judicial Decisions; Chapter: Revoking incorrect rulings and rejecting newly introduced matters; no. (1718). Reported by 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). Also narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Financial Transactions; Chapter: Najsh and those who say: "Such a transaction is not permissible".

¹⁰ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever forgets a prayer should pray when he remembers... ; no. (597). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Making up for missed prayers; no. (684). Reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).

¹¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: The one who leads people in prayer... ; no. (596). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: The evidence cited by those who say: "The middle prayer..." ; no. (631). Reported by Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him).

Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "We were kept during the battle of the Trench from offering the prayer till a little after sunset... So the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) called Bilāl, who announced Iqāmah for the Zhuhr prayer, and he (the Prophet) performed it as properly as he would offer it on its time. Then, he ordered him to announce Iqāmah for the 'Asr prayer, and he performed it as properly as he would offer it on its time. Then, he ordered him to announce Iqāmah for the Maghrib prayer, and he performed it likewise." ¹² [Narrated by Ahmad]

This Hadīth indicates that a missed prayer should be performed as it would be performed at its appointed time. This is supported by another Hadīth reported by Abu Qatādah (may Allah be pleased with him), which relates their story as they slept while traveling with the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and they all missed the Fajr prayer until the sun had risen. He said: "Then Bilāl announced Adhān for prayer and the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) performed two Rak'ahs then he offered the morning prayer, performing it as he used to every day..." ¹³ [Narrated by Muslim]

Accordingly, if a person performs during the day a night prayer that he has missed, he should recite the Qur'an in it audibly; and if he performs during the night a day prayer that he has missed, he should make the recitation inaudible. The first case is indicated by the Hadīth of Abu Qatādah and the second by the Hadīth of Abu Sa'īd.

If he offers the missed prayers not in the proper order for some excuse, there is no blame on him; and if he does not know that a missed prayer is due on him and he performs the next prayer, after which he comes to know about the missed prayer, he may offer it without repeating the next prayer. If he forgets a missed prayer and offers the next one and then remembers the missed prayer, he may perform it without repeating the next one; since Allah Almighty says: {Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred} [Al-Baqarah: 286]

The scholars said that if a missed prayer is due on him and he remembers it or becomes aware of it shortly before the time of the present prayer ends, he should offer the present prayer first and then the missed one lest the time of the present prayer ends before he offers it and thus both prayers would be missed.

It is better to offer the prayer at its earliest appointed time, for this was the Prophet's practice. It is quicker in doing good and fulfilling one's obligation.

Abu Barzah al-Aslami (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he was asked how the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to offer the obligatory prayers, and he replied: "He used to perform the Zhuhr prayer, which you call the first, when the sun had just declined - in another version: when the sun had passed its zenith ¹⁴ - and he used to offer the 'Asr prayer then one of us could go back to his home in the farthest part of Madīnah while the sun was still bright." ¹⁵

In another Hadīth, Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to offer the 'Asr prayer when the sun was still hot and high, and if a person went to Al-'Awāli of Madīnah (after prayer), he would reach there while the sun was still high. Parts of Al-'Awāli are about four miles or so from Madīnah." ¹⁶ In another version: "We used to perform

¹² Narrated by Ahmad (49, 3/25).

¹³ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Making up for missed prayers; no. (681). Reported by Abu Qatādah (may Allah be pleased with him).

¹⁴ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: The time of Zhuhr prayer is when the sun declines from its zenith; no. (541). Reported by Abu Barzah (may Allah be pleased with him).

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¹⁶ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: The time of 'Asr prayer; no. (550). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; no. (621). Reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).

the 'Asr prayer and then one of us would go to Qubā' and reach there while the sun was still high. I forgot what he said about the Maghrib prayer." ¹⁷

But in another narration by Muslim, Salamah ibn al-Akwa' reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to perform the Maghrib prayer after the sun had set and disappeared into the veil (of darkness). ¹⁸And Rāfi' ibn Khadīj reported: "We used to offer the Maghrib prayer with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and then the one of us would leave while he could see the place where his arrow would fall." ¹⁹And he preferred to delay the 'Ishā' prayer, which you call the 'Atamah [darkness] prayer, and he disliked to sleep before it or engage in conversation after it. And he used to finish the Fajr prayer when a man could recognize the one sitting next to him, and he used to recite (in it) between sixty and one hundred verses." ²⁰

In another Hadīth narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) would sometimes offer the 'Ishā' prayer at its earliest time and delay it at other times. If he saw the people gathered, he would offer it early; and if he saw that they were late in coming, he would delay it. As for the Fajr prayer, they or the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to perform it when it was still dark. ²¹

Al-Bukhāri narrated that 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported: "The believing women used to attend the Fajr prayer with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) wrapped in their mantles; and after the prayer, they would return to their homes and nobody could recognize them because of the darkness." ²²

Muslim narrated that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported: "One night, we kept waiting for the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) to offer the 'Ishā' prayer, and he came out to us when a third of the night or more had passed..." and he related the rest of the Hadīth, which includes: "Were it not that it would impose a burden on my followers, I would normally lead them in prayer at this time." Then, he ordered the Muezzin to announce the Iqāmah and he prayed. ²³

Al-Bukhāri narrated that Abu Dharr al-Ghifāri (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "We were with the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) on a journey and the Muezzin wanted to announce the Adhān for the Zhuhr prayer, but the Prophet said to him: 'Wait until it is cooler.' Then he again wanted to announce the Adhān, but the Prophet again said to him: 'Wait until it is cooler.' This continued till we saw the shadows of the mounds." In another version: "till the shadows of the mounds

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¹⁸ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: The time of Maghrib prayer; no. (561). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: The time of Maghrib prayer; no. (636). Reported by Salamah ibn al-Akwa' (may Allah be pleased with him).

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²¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: The time of Maghrib prayer; no. (560). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Desirability of offering the Fajr prayer at its earliest time and clarifying the amount of recitation therein; no. (646). Reported by Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him).

²² Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Adhān [Call to Prayer]; Chapter: Women going to mosques in the night and at dawn; no. (867). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Desirability of offering the Fajr prayer at its earliest time and clarifying the amount of recitation therein; no. (645). Reported by 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

²³ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: Sleeping before 'Ishā' prayer for the one overcome by sleep; no. (570). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: The time of 'Ishā' prayer and delaying offering it; no. (639). This wording is the narration of Muslim as reported by Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

became equal to their sizes.”²⁴The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) then said: “Severe heat is from the raging of Hellfire. So, if it is too hot, delay the prayer till it is cooler.”²⁵

These Hadīths indicate that it is Sunnah to offer the prayer at its earliest time, except for two prayers:

First: The Zhuhr prayer when it is extremely hot, in which case it may be delayed until it is cooler and shadows are extended.

Second: The ‘Ishā’ prayer; it may be delayed till after the elapse of one third of the night, unless this constitutes a burden on worshipers. So, the Imām should consider their condition; if he sees them gathered, he should hasten to perform the prayer; otherwise, he may delay it.

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Chapter Three: What makes one catch up with prayer time and the resulting consequences

One catches up with the time of a prayer by catching up with one Rak’ah thereof before its time ends. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of a prayer has indeed caught up with that prayer.”²⁶ [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

In another version: “Whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of the Fajr prayer before the sun rises has indeed caught up with the Fajr prayer, and whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of the ‘Asr prayer before the sun sets has indeed caught up with the ‘Asr prayer.”²⁷ In another version narrated by Al-Bukhāri: “If anyone of you catches up with one prostration of the ‘Asr prayer before the sun sets, let him complete the prayer; and if he catches up with one prostration of the Fajr prayer before the sun rises, let him complete the prayer.”²⁸

These versions literally state that if a person catches up with one Rak’ah, with its two prostrations, within the prayer’s time, he has thus caught up with the time; and they implicitly indicate that if he catches up with less than a Rak’ah, he has not caught up with the time.

This entails two consequences:

First: If a person catches up with one Rak’ah of a prayer during its time, he has thus caught up with the whole prayer in its time [i.e. he is performing it, not making up for it]; but this does not mean that he may delay part of the prayer beyond its time because he is required to perform the entire prayer within its time. Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: “I heard the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) say: ‘That is the prayer of the hypocrite; as he sits watching

²⁴ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Adhān; Chapter: The Adhān and Iqāmah for travelers if they are a group and also at ‘Arafah and Muzdalifah, and the Muezzin’s announcement: “Pray in your dwellings” on cold or rainy nights; no. (629). Reported by Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him).

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²⁶ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of the prayer; no. (580). And narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of the prayer has caught up with that prayer; no. (607). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

²⁷ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of the Times of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of the Fajr prayer; no. (579). And narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Whoever catches up with one Rak’ah of the morning prayer; no. (608). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

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the sun, until when it is between the horns of a devil, he stands and pecks out four (Rak'ahs), not remembering Allah in them but a little.”²⁹

Second: If a person catches up with one Rak'ah before the time of the prayer ends, that prayer becomes due on him, whether this occurs at the start of its time or near its end.

Example of the start of its time: if a woman gets her menses after sunset by as much as the time of one Rak'ah or more and she had not performed the Maghrib prayer, it becomes due on her, and she is required to make up for it when she becomes pure.

Example of near the end of its time: if a woman becomes pure from menses before sunrise by as much as the time of one Rak'ah or more, the Fajr prayer becomes due on her; and if she becomes pure before sunset by as much as the time of one Rak'ah, the 'Asr prayer becomes due on her.

So, if she gets her menses after sunset by less than the time of one Rak'ah or becomes pure before sunrise by less than the time of one Rak'ah, neither the Maghrib prayer in the former case nor the Fajr prayer in the latter becomes due on her, for the time she catches up with is less than one Rak'ah.

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Chapter Four: The ruling on combining two prayers at the time of either

We have already illustrated in Chapter Two the obligation to perform each prayer at its appointed time, and this is the basic rule; but if there are cases that require combining two prayers, this becomes permissible or, rather, recommended and beloved to Allah Almighty, for it accords with the Islamic rule referred to in the following verses: {Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship} [Al-Baqarah: 185]{He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty} [Al-Hajj: 78]Al-Bukhāri narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Indeed, religion is easy, and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not go to extremes, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded."³⁰Al-Bukhāri and Muslim narrated that Abu Mūsa (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that when the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) sent him and Mu'ādh to Yemen, he said to them: "Make things easy for people, not difficult; give them glad tidings and do not make them averse; and work in cooperation, not in disagreement."³¹In another version narrated by Muslim, Abu Mūsa (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "Whenever the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) sent any of his Companions on a mission, he would say: 'Give people glad tidings and do not make them averse; and make things easy for them, not difficult.'"³²In another version narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim: Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Make things easy for people, not difficult; and give them glad tidings and do not make them averse."Another version reads: "Make people tranquil and do not make them averse."³³

As the foregoing has become clear, we say that the Sunnah provides for combining the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers at the time of either of them and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' at the time of either. This occurs in a number of situations:

²⁹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer; Chapter: Desirability of offering the 'Asr prayer at its earliest time; no. (622). Reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).

³⁰ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Faith; Chapter: The religion is easy; no. (39). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

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First: When traveling, whether one is moving or stopping somewhere. Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to combine the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers when traveling." [34] Muslim narrated that Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "Whenever the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) wanted to combine the two prayers while traveling, he would delay the Zhuhr prayer till the earliest time of the 'Asr prayer and then combine the two." [35] Muslim also narrated that Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) combined two prayers on a journey he made during the battle of Tabūk. He combined the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' together." [36] In another narration by Muslim, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "We set out with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) for the battle of Tabūk, and he would perform the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' together." [37]

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In another narration by Muslim, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "We set out with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) for the battle of Tabūk, and he would perform the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' together." ³⁴³⁵

In a narration by Al-Bukhāri, Abu Juhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he went to the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) while he was at Al-Abtah in Makkah at noon (resting in a tent). Abu Juhayfah said: "Bilāl came out (of the tent) and announced the Adhān for the prayer, and, entering again, he brought out the water which was left over after the Prophet's ablution. The people rushed to take some of the water. Bilāl again went in and brought out the Prophet's spear-headed stick, and then the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) came out. As if I were now looking at the whiteness of his legs. Bilāl fixed the stick in the ground then he (the Prophet) offered the Zhuhr prayer as two Rak'ahs and the 'Asr prayer as two Rak'ahs." ³⁶

The apparent indication of these Hadīths is that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to combine two prayers while stopping at some place during travel, either to demonstrate the permissibility of doing so or due to some necessity entailing combination of prayers. This is because the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did not combine prayers during his Hajj while staying at Mina. Accordingly, we say: It is better for a traveler staying at some place not to combine prayers, and there is no harm if he does. However, if there is need for combining prayers, like when he needs rest due to fatigue or it is hard for him to find water at the time of each prayer and similar situations; in such cases, it is better for him to combine prayers and use the dispensation. As for a moving traveler, it is better for him to combine the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers together, either at the time of the first or second prayer, whichever is easier for him. In a Hadīth narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "Whenever the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon

³⁴ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Shortening Prayers; Chapter: Combining the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers while traveling; no. (1108).

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³⁶ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Merits (of the Prophet and his Companions); Chapter: Description of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him); no. (3566). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Prayer; Chapter: The Sutra (screen) for a praying person; no. (503). Reported by Abu Juhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him).

him) set out on a journey before the sun had passed its zenith (i.e. before time of Zhuhr prayer starts), he would delay the Zhuhr prayer to the time of 'Asr prayer and then he would dismount and combine the two prayers. If the sun had passed its zenith before he set out, he would offer the Zhuhr prayer and then ride." [39]

This is because the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did not combine prayers during his Hajj while staying at Mina. Accordingly, we say: It is better for a traveler staying at some place not to combine prayers, and there is no harm if he does. However, if there is need for combining prayers, like when he needs rest due to fatigue or it is hard for him to find water at the time of each prayer and similar situations; in such cases, it is better for him to combine prayers and use the dispensation.

As for a moving traveler, it is better for him to combine the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers together, either at the time of the first or second prayer, whichever is easier for him.

In a Hadīth narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "Whenever the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) set out on a journey before the sun had passed its zenith (i.e. before time of Zhuhr prayer starts), he would delay the Zhuhr prayer to the time of 'Asr prayer and then he would dismount and combine the two prayers. If the sun had passed its zenith before he set out, he would offer the Zhuhr prayer and then ride." ³⁷

Al-Bukhāri mentioned in his book *Fat-h al-Bāri* that Is-hāq ibn Rāhwayh narrated this Hadīth from Shabābah. He said: "Whenever he was traveling and the sun passed its zenith, he would offer the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and then proceed." He said: "Only Is-hāq narrated it from Shabābah, and only Ja'far al-Firyābi narrated it from Is-hāq." He added: "This does not detract from the Hadīth, for both are Hāfiz (most trustworthy) Imāms." ³⁸

Second: When there is a need for combining prayers such that he would face hardship if he does not combine them, whether he is a traveler or resident. In a narration by Muslim, Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) combined the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers together and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers together in Madīnah without any fear of danger or rain." He was asked: "Why did he do that?" He replied: "In order not to put his followers to hardship." [41] Muslim also narrated that Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) combined the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers and the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers during the battle of Tabūk. It was asked: "Why did he do that?" He said: "He wanted not to put his followers to hardship." [42]

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³⁷ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Shortening Prayers; Chapter: What prompts delaying Zhuhr prayer until 'Asr when setting out on a journey; no. (1111). Narrated by Muslim; Book of the Prayer of Travelers; Chapter: Permissibility of combining two prayers while traveling; no. (704). Reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).

³⁸ *Fat-h al-Bāri* (2/583).

³⁹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of the Prayer of Travelers; Chapter: Combining two prayers by non-travelers; no. (705). Reported by Ibn Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

These two Hadīths indicate that whenever the need arises for combining two prayers - and refraining from combining them causes hardship - it becomes permissible to combine them in the case of both a traveler or a non-traveler.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: "All Hadīths indicate that he combined prayers to remove hardship from his followers. So, it is permissible to combine prayers if the lack of combining causes hardship that Allah otherwise removed from the Ummah. This also points to the permissibility of combining prayers with greater reason for a sick person, if his illness causes hardship when he offers the prayers separately. Combining prayers is also permissible for a person who finds difficulty to maintain his purification at two times, like a woman having prolonged non-menstrual bleeding and similar cases." [43]

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Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah is also quoted in *Al-Insāf* to have said that it is permissible for a person to combine prayers to join the congregation, which he would not otherwise attend if he prayed at the appointed time. ⁴²

I say: Proof of this is evident in the Hadīth reported by Ibn 'Abbās which points to the permissibility of combining prayers due to rain. The only purpose of this is to attend the congregational prayer; otherwise, everyone could offer the prayer separately at its time without suffering the hardship caused by rain.

Third: Combining prayers at 'Arafah and Muzdalifah during the days of Hajj (pilgrimage).

In the course of a Hadīth narrated by Muslim describing the Hajj of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "... the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) traveled until he came to 'Arafah, where he found that the tent had been pitched for him at Namirah. He stayed therein until the sun had passed its zenith. Then he called for Al-Qaswā' (his mount) so it was saddled for him. When he reached the bottom of the valley, he addressed the people. Then Bilāl called the Adhān, then he called the Iqāmah and he (the Prophet) prayed Zhuhr, and then he called the Iqāmah and he (the Prophet) prayed 'Asr, and he did not offer any other prayer in between." ⁴³

In a narration by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, Usāmah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him), who was riding behind the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) from 'Arafah to Muzdalifah, reported: "... and as he approached the creek of a hill, he dismounted and urinated, and then performed ablution quickly. I said to him: 'Prayer!' whereupon he said: 'Prayer awaits you.' So he rode again, and as he came to Muzdalifah, he dismounted and performed ablution thoroughly. Then Iqāmah was announced for prayer and he performed the Maghrib prayer. Then every person made his camel kneel down there and then Iqāmah was announced for the 'Ishā' prayer and he performed it, and he did not offer any prayer between them." ⁴⁴

⁴¹ Majmū' al-Fatāwa (24/84).

⁴² *Al-Insāf* (5/98).

⁴³ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Hajj; Chapter: The Prophet's Hajj; no. (1218). Reported by Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him).

⁴⁴ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Ablution; Chapter: Performing ablution thoroughly; no. (139). And narrated by Muslim; Book of Hajj; Chapter: Proceeding from 'Arafah to Muzdalifah and the desirability of offering the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers together in Muzdalifah on this night; no. (1280). Reported by Usāmah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him).

The Hadīth reported by Jābir and narrated by Muslim states that he (the Prophet) performed the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers in Muzdalifah with one Adhān and two Iqāmahs. ⁴⁵

These two Hadīths indicate that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) combined the Zhuhr and 'Asr prayers at 'Arafah at the time of Zhuhr and combined the Maghrib and 'Ishā' prayers at Muzdalifah at the time of 'Ishā'. We have cited these two Hadīths separately because the scholars differed over the reason for the combining of prayers mentioned in them. Some said it was due to traveling, but this is debatable, because the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did not combine prayers at Mina, neither before 'Arafah nor when he came back. Other scholars held that this was due to the Hajj rituals, which is debatable as well, because if this had been the case, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) would have combined prayers from the moment he assumed Ihrām. It was also said that the reason was to serve the interest and need, which is the more likely view, for he combined prayers at 'Arafah due to the long period of standing and supplication and because people disperse there, for which reason it would be hard for them to gather for prayer, and if they prayed separately, the benefit of the large congregation would be lost.

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As for Muzdalifah, pilgrims there are in greater need for combining prayers because people depart from 'Arafah after sunset, and if they were kept to offer the Maghrib prayer there, they would perform it without concentration, and if they were to stop to perform it on the way, this would be more difficult for them. Hence the need arose for delaying the performance of the Maghrib prayer to be combined with 'Ishā' prayer at Muzdalifah.

This approach is quite correct and as it serves the interest perfectly, and it preserves concentration in prayer and takes into consideration the condition of the people.

Glory be to Allah, the All-Wise, the Most Merciful. We ask Him to bestow mercy and wisdom upon us; verily, He is The Bestower.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, by Whose grace good things are completed; and peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his Companions, and those who follow them rightly until the Day of Judgment.

Written by

Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn

15/3/1400 A.H.

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⁴⁵ Refer to the Hadīth before the last one.

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