

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ وَالْحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ وَصَوْمِ
رَمَضَانَ

“Islam is built upon five [pillars]: testifying that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayers, giving the zakaat, making the pilgrimage to the House and fasting the month of Ramadhaan.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Naafi ibn al-Azraq said to ibn Abbas [the Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him)], “Do you find the five [daily] prayers in the Quran.” He responded, “Yes,” and then recited the verse,

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ

“So (give) glory to Allah, when you reach the evening [for the sunset and the night prayers] and when you rise in the morning; to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline [for the noon prayer]” (*al-Room* 17-18).

In the hadith of the bedouin, he came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and said, “Concerning the prayers, what has Allah made obligatory upon us?” The Messenger of Allah answered, “Five prayers.” The bedouin said, “Are there any other prayers obligatory on us?” He replied, “No, unless you do so voluntarily.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

The prayers that are obligatory upon the community as a whole include the other [obligatory] prayers and aspects [related to the prayers], such as the call to prayer, the eclipse prayer and funeral prayer.

Ordering the Young to Pray

When the youth reach the age of seven, they should be ordered to pray. When they are ten, they should be disciplined by a mild beating if they do not pray. This is based on the hadith,

مُرُوا أَبْنَاءَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ لِسَبْعِ سِنِينَ وَأَضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لِعَشْرِ
سِنِينَ وَفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ

“Order your children to pray at the age of seven and beat them to do so at the age of ten and separate them in their bedding.”
(Recorded by Ahmad and Abu Dawood.¹)

The Ruling Concerning One Who Denies the Obligation of Prayer

Whoever denies the obligatory nature of prayers has committed an act of unbelief—if he was a person who was not ignorant— even if he performs the prayer. This is because he is belying Allah, His Messenger (peace be upon him) and the consensus of the Muslim Nation. The same ruling applies for the one who abandons the prayer due to being lackadaisical or lazy, even if he believes in its obligatory nature. Allah has said,

¹ According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *basan*. See al-Albaani, *Sabeeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, pp. 1021-1022.—JZ

فَاَقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَخْصِرُواهُمْ
وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا
الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Then fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and pay the *zakaat*, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (*al-Taubah* 5). Jaabir (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشِّرْكِ وَالْكَفْرِ تَرْكُ الصَّلَاةِ

“Between a man and polytheism (*al-shirk*) and disbelief (*al-kufr*) is the abandoning of the prayer.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

The Essential Components (*Arkaan*) of the Prayer

There are fourteen essential components or *arkaan* (أركان) of the prayer which may not be left, not intentionally, forgetfully or ignorantly.¹

(1) Standing straight in the obligatory prayer for the one who has the ability to do so.

(2) The opening *takbeer* which is the statement, “*Allahu akbar*,” and nothing else suffices for the beginning of the prayer.

(3) Reciting *soorah al-Faatihah*.

¹ Essential components (*arkaan*) differ from obligatory acts (*waajibaat*). If a person fails to perform the essential components, under most circumstances it will be as if he did not perform the act at all. If a person fails to perform the obligatory acts, under some circumstances he may simply have to make up for those acts in another way.—JZ

- (4) The bow.
- (5) Rising from the bow and standing up straight.
- (6) Prostration.
- (7) Coming up from the prostration.
- (8) Sitting between the two acts of prostration.
- (9) Having calmness and stillness [in each of the acts of the prayer].
- (10) The final *tashahud*.¹
- (11) Sitting for the final *tashahud*.
- (12) Saying the prayers for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- (13) Saying the salutation. This is to say twice, “*Assalaam alaikum wa rahmatullaahi* (peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah).” It is best not to add, “*wa baarakatuhu* (and his blessings)” for in the hadith of ibn Masood, he narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would greet on his right, “*Assalaam alaikum wa rahmatullaahi* (peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah)” and on his left, “*Assalaam alaikum wa rahmatullaahi* (peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah).” (Recorded by Muslim.)
- (14) Performing the above in the correct order.

The Obligatory Acts (*Waajibaaḥ*) of the Prayer

There are eight obligatory or *waajibaat* (واجبات) acts of the prayer:

- (1) The *takbeers* other than the opening *takbeer*.
- (2) Saying, “*Sami-Allaahu liman hamidah* (Allah has heard him who praises Him),” for both the Imam and the one who prays alone.
- (3) Saying, “*Rabbanaa wa lakal-hamd* (Our Lord and to you is the praise).”

¹ These are the first set of words recited while sitting, beginning with the words *al-tahiyaatu-lilaabi*...

(4) Saying, “*Subhanna Rabbiyal-Adheem* (Exalted and perfect is my Lord, the Great),” at least once while bowing.

(5) Saying, “*Subhanna Rabbiyal-Ala* (Exalted and perfect is my Lord, the Most High),” at least once while prostrating.

(6) Saying the first *tashahud*.

(7) Sitting for the first *tashahud*.

The prayer is nullified if any of these are left intentionally. The prayer is not nullified if they are left forgetfully or ignorantly.

The Prerequisites for the Prayer

Shuroot (prerequisites, conditions) lexically means a sign. Technically, it refers to something, say X, that Y cannot exist without; however, the mere existence of X does not necessarily mean that Y will occur.

The prerequisites of the prayer are:

(1) Intention.

(2) Being Muslim.

(3) Being sane.

(4) Being at least of the age of discernment.

(5) The time for the prayer having begun.

(6) Being in a state of purity.

(7) Facing the *qiblah*.

(8) Covering the private parts.

(9) Being free of any physical impurities [on one’s clothing or place where one is praying].

The Timings for the Five Daily Prayers

The timings show the limits for the prayer. The time is a cause mandating the obligation of the prayer and it is one of the prerequisites for the prayer.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) delineated the timings of the five daily prayers in more than one hadith. Ibn Abbaas narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “[The angel] Gabriel led me in the prayers at the House [of Allah] on two [days].” Then he mentioned the timings of the prayers and he then said, “Then Gabriel turned to me and said, ‘O Muhammad, this is the timing of the prophets before you and your timings are between these two [extremes that he had shown the Prophet (peace be upon him)].’” Recorded by Abu Dawood.¹

The five daily prayers are divided between the day and night. If a person gets his portion of sleep such that he is rested and the morning time is approaching, the time for work and seriousness, the time of the Fajr prayer also comes. This is so that humans consciously realize that they are different from the remainder of the creation. He faces his day and his faith has been increased.

When midday comes, he stops again to ponder over his day with his Lord in the Dhuhr Prayer and in order to correct his deeds of the beginning of the day. As mid-afternoon comes, he prays his prayer, facing with it the rest of his day. Then the Maghrib (Sunset) comes. In front of him is the night and the [Sunset and] Isha Prayers during it will carry him through the night, although it is the time of hidden acts, with light and guidance to the sound path. Furthermore, the prayer, in its varied times, is an opportunity to ponder over Allah’s dominion and His perfection concerning everything that encompasses man in his night and day.

The Time of the Dhuhr Prayer. The time of the Dhuhr Prayer begins when the sun passes the meridian or its zenith. The ending of the time for Dhuhr is when the shadow of something is equal to the thing’s length in the afternoon.

¹ According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *hasan sabib*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Sabib Sunan Abi Dawood* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiyyah al-Arabi li-Duwal al-Khaleej, 1989), vol. 1, p. 79.—JZ

The Time of the Asr Prayer. The beginning of the time for the Asr Prayer is when the shadow of something is equal to its length in the afternoon, as such is when the time for the Dhuhr Prayer comes to an end. As for the ending of the time of the Asr Prayer, the choice time by which to pray it is when the shadow of something is twice its own length. However, if necessary, it may be prayed all the way up until [just before] the sun sets.

The Time of the Maghrib Prayer. The beginning of the time for the Maghrib Prayer is when the sun sets. Its final time is when the stars become numerous and form clusters with one another. However, its actual final time, although it is disliked to delay it until this time, is when the twilight is finished.

The Time of the Isha Prayer. Its earliest time is when the twilight has disappeared. Its ending time is when half of the night has passed.

The Time of the Fajr Prayer. Its earliest time is at the second [or true] dawn and its ending time is sunrise.

The Timings for the Prayers in Very Northern or Southern Lands

The lands of extreme latitudes are divided into three categories:

(1) Those lands that are between 45° and 48° north or south of the equator; in these lands, the signs of the day and night are very apparent, of long or short lengths.

(2) Those lands that are between 48° and 66° north or south of the equator; in these lands, some of the signs of the day and night are not apparent during portions of the year. For example, the twilight may continue to exist until nearly the time of Fajr.

(3) Those lands that are from beyond 66° north or south of the equator until the respective poles; in these lands,

the daily signs of night and day are not visible for long periods of the year.

The Rulings Concerning Each of These Lands. As for the lands in category (1), it is obligatory upon their inhabitants to perform the prayers in their specified times, as were described above. As for those lands in category (3), there is no difference of opinion that their inhabitants must estimate or approximate the timings of the prayers. This is analogous to the case of estimating the times of the prayers during the time of the Anti-Messiah (Dajjaal). In the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked how long the anti-Messiah would be on the earth. In the response, he said, “A day like a year.” The Companions asked, “That day which is like a year, is it sufficient for us to pray [the prayer of] a day and night?” He answered, “No, you must estimate [the times for the prayers].” (Recorded by Muslim.) There is a difference of opinion as to how they should approximate the timings. Some say that they should follow the timings of the closest land that has the regular signs of day and night and follow those proper signs for the timings of the prayers. Perhaps that is the strongest opinion. Some say that they should approximate them with the timing of a temperate zone, where the night is treated as twelve hours as is the daytime. Some say that they should estimate the prayers according to the timing of Makkah or Madinah.

As for the lands in the second category, their timings for the prayers other than the *Isha* and *Fajr* Prayers will be the same as those in the first category [that is, they pray according to what they see]. As for the *Isha* and *Fajr* Prayers, their ruling is the same as for those in the third category [that is, they must estimate the times for those prayers].

Topic Two: Congregational Prayer

Wisdom Behind Its Legislation

The congregational prayer is from the most important acts of obedience to Allah and one of the greatest acts of worship. Furthermore, it is a great show of togetherness, mercy and equality between the Muslims, as they gather together in a small convention five times in a day and night, in a noble fashion, under one person's leadership and all facing one direction. The hearts come together and are purified; mercy and relationships are strengthened; and the differences flow away.

The Ruling Concerning Congregational Prayer

The prayer in congregation is obligatory upon the free, capable men, whether resident or traveling. This is based on Allah's statement,

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ
مَعَكَ

“When you (O Messenger) are with them, and stand to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with you” (*al-Nisaa* 102).¹ The command [in the verse] implies obligation. If that is the case while in a state of fear, [the

¹ As is clear from the remainder of this verse that the author did not quote in full, this verse is about praying while on the battlefield. Hence, the conclusion that the author makes above.—JZ

obligation to pray in congregation] must more so be the case in a time of safety.

What Constitutes a Congregational Prayer

A congregational prayer is made up of [as a minimum] an Imam and a follower, even if it be a woman. This is based on the hadith narrated by Abu Musa,

اِثْنَانِ فَمَا فَوْقَهُمَا جَمَاعَةٌ

“Two and any [number] above that are a congregation.”
(Recorded by ibn Maajah.¹)

The Place Where the Congregational Prayer is to Be Held

It is the recommended practice to perform the congregational prayer in the mosque. However, it is permissible to pray it elsewhere if need requires that. The women may also pray in congregation separately from the men, as Aisha and Umm Salamah (as al-Daraqutni recorded) used to do. The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered Umm Waraqah to lead her household in prayer. (Recorded by Abu Dawood.)

¹ According to al-Albaani, this hadith is weak. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Da'eeq al-Jaami al-Sagheer* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1988), p. 22.—JZ