

Topic Three: Shortening and Combining Prayers

The Meaning of Shortening the Prayers

Shortening the prayers while traveling means to perform the four *rakat* prayers as only two *rakahs*. This law is related to the great aspect of the Shareeah of taking into consideration the needs and circumstances of the Muslim and to make things easier upon him. Shortening the prayers is sanctioned in the Book of Allah, sunnah and is permissible according to the agreement of the leading scholars.

Shortening the Prayers Generally, While in a State of Security or Otherwise

The prayer is shortened while traveling, regardless of whether one is in a state of security or fear. The fear that is mentioned in the verse¹ is only referring to the usual case at that time because most of the Prophet's journeys were conducted while there was reason to fear the enemy. Ali once said to Umar, "Do we still shorten the prayer even though we are in a state of security?" Umar said, "I was surprised by the same thing that you are surprised at so I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he said,

صَدَقَةٌ تَصَدَّقَ اللَّهُ بِهَا عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْبَلُوا صَدَقَتَهُ

¹ The verse related to shortening one's prayer while traveling is, "When you travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayers, for fear the unbelievers may attack you: for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies" (*al-Nisaa* 101).—JZ

“This is a charity that Allah has bestowed upon you, so accept His charity.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

The Distance That Allows One to Shorten the Prayer While Traveling

The distance which allows one to shorten one’s prayer while traveling is whatever is termed “traveling” according to the convention of the people and which also involves some form of transportation and taking along one’s provisions.

When One Begins to Shorten the Prayer

The person begins to shorten his prayer as soon as he leaves the buildings of his city [while on a trip that can be considered “traveling”], according to the conventional usage of the term “leaving from”. This is concluded because Allah has tied shortening the prayer with “going out through the land” and one does not “go out through the land” until he leaves the buildings of his area.

Combining the Prayers

Combining the prayers is an exceptional permission that is resorted to upon need. Many scholars recommend not combining the prayers unless there is some clear need to do so because the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not combine his prayers except on a small number of occasions. Everything that allows a person to shorten his prayers allows him to combine his prayers. However, not everything that leads to the permission of combining the prayers means that it is also permissible to shorten the prayers.

Combining at the Earlier or the Later Time

It is best for the person to do what is easier for him with respect to combining at the earlier of the two prayer times or at the later time. This is because the goal of combining the prayers is to make matters easy and simpler upon the person. If the two cases are equivalent [with respect to ease], then it is better to combine the prayers at the time of the later prayer. If a person is stopped at a location, the sunnah is to pray every prayer in its proper time.

[Topic:]

The Prostrations of Forgetfulness¹

Al-sahu in the prayer means forgetfulness. The prostrations of forgetfulness are part of the law, according to the agreement of the leading scholars, for whoever does something [in the prayer] out of forgetfulness. This is based on both the action and the command of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is proper to perform it whenever anyone has added anything, left anything out or became doubtful as to an act that he has performed in the prayer. It can be performed before the salutations or after them. They are two prostrations, without any *tashahud* between them, and one says *Allahu akbar* for every prostration and then makes the salutations after them.

¹ The Arabic text has included this as a subtopic under shortening the prayers but that arrangement has not been followed here as it is a topic on its own, independent of the question of shortening or combining the prayers.—JZ

Topic Four: Voluntary Prayers

The Wisdom Behind Their Legislation

It is from the blessings of Allah upon His servants that He has established for them acts of worship that correspond to their natural human inclination and fulfill what He wants of performing the deeds in the proper manner. Since mankind is always open to mistakes and shortcomings, Allah has sanctioned what will complete their acts and will be a substitute for them. Among such sanctioned acts are the voluntary prayers. It is confirmed from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that the voluntary prayers complete the obligatory prayers when the person has not performed them in their complete sense.

The Best Voluntary Acts

The best act one can perform voluntarily is jihad for the sake of Allah. Next [in virtuousness comes] learning the knowledge of the religion. Allah says,

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

“Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge” (*al-Mujaadilah* 11). Then comes the prayer, which is the most virtuous act of the body. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

اسْتَقِيمُوا وَلَكِنْ تَحْضُوا وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ خَيْرَ أَعْمَالِكُمُ الصَّلَاةَ

“Adhere to the straight path. And you will not be able to do so [in all of your affairs]. And know that the best of your deeds is the prayer.” (Recorded by ibn Maajah.¹)

Some of the Voluntary Prayers:

The Late-Night Prayers

The [voluntary] prayers of the night are better than those of the day. The last half of the night is better than the earlier half. This is based on the Prophet’s statement,

إِذَا مَضَى شَطْرُ اللَّيْلِ أَوْ ثُلُثَاهُ يَنْزِلُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى إِلَى
السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا

“After half of the night or two-thirds of it have passed, our Lord, the Blessed and Exalted, descends to the lowest heaven...” (Recorded by Muslim.)

[This late night prayer is known as *tahajjud*.] The *tahajjud* is what is prayed after one has first slept. Aisha said, “The *tahajjud* is the standing for prayer after first sleeping.”

The Dhuha Prayer

[The Dhuha Prayer is a prayer that is performed sometime after the sun has risen a little bit on the horizon until just before high noon.]

It is preferable to pray the Dhuha prayer on some days and to leave it on others. This is based on the hadith of Abu

¹ According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeb al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 225.—JZ

Saeed who said, “The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray the Dhuha prayer so often that we would say, ‘He does not abandon it.’ [Yet on other occasions] he would leave it so much that we would say, ‘He does not pray it.’” (Recorded by Ahmad and by al-Tirmidhi who said, “It is *hasan ghareeb*.”¹)

As a minimum, it is two *rakats*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed it as four or six or, as a maximum, eight *rakats*. It is not a condition to be persistent in performing this prayer.

The Prayer for “Greeting” the Mosque

It is sunnah to pray what is known as the prayer of “greeting the mosque”. This is based on the hadith from Abu Qataadah in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِذَا دَخَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَسْجِدَ فَلَا يَجْلِسُ حَتَّى يُصَلِّيَ رَكْعَتَيْنِ

“When any of you enters the mosque, he should not sit until he prays two *rakats*.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, ibn Maajah and Ahmad.)

Prostration While Reading [Specific Verses] of the Quran

It is recommended for the one reading the Quran and the one listening to prostrate [after reading specific verses of the Quran] and to say, “*Allaahu akbar*,” upon prostrating and to make the salutations upon rising from the prostration. One should say while prostrating, “*Subhaana Rabbiya-l-Ala*

¹ According to al-Albaani, this hadith is weak. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Dhaeef Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1991), p. 53.—JZ

(Perfect and exalted is my Lord, the Most High)” or the other words that have been recorded.

Prostration of Thankfulness

It is recommended to make the prostration of thankfulness whenever a blessing comes to a person or some evil is repelled. This is based on the hadith from Abu Bakr who said, “Whenever news that pleased the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to him, he would quickly go down in prostration.” (Recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah.¹) Ali prostrated when he found Dhu al-Thidayah of the Khawarij [dead]. (Recorded by Ahmad.) Kaab ibn Maalik prostrated when he received the news of Allah accepting his repentance. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) Its characteristics and rulings are the same as that for the prostration of recitation.

The *Taraweeh* Prayer

The *taraweeh* prayer is an emphasized sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). It is prayed in congregation in the mosque after the Night (*Isha*) Prayer during the month of Ramadhaan. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) established this prayer and Umar ibn al-Khataab revived it [as one congregational prayer] during his time as the caliph. It is best to perform it as eleven *rakats* but there is no harm in praying more than that. During the last ten nights [of Ramadhaan], one should try to increase his efforts in prayer, remembrance and supplications.

¹ According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *basan*. See al-Albaani, *Sabeeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 858.—JZ

The *Witr* Prayer

The *Witr* prayer is an emphasized sunnah that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed and ordered to be performed. As a minimum, it is one *rakah*. However, its minimum for a more complete form is actually three *rakats*. Its maximum is eleven *rakats*.

The time for the Witr Prayer: Its time is from after the Night (*Isha*) Prayer until before the dawn of *Fajr*. It is recommended to make *qunoot* (supplications) after the bowing [of the last *rakah*].

Its description: [It may be prayed in any of the following fashions:]

(1) Praying [all the *rakats*] together, without sitting for the *tashahud* except in the last *rakah*;

(2) Sitting for the *tashahud* [in the next to] last *rakah* and then standing without making the salutations and performing one *rakah* with a *tashahud* and salutations.

(3) Performing every two *rakats* individually, with salutations at the end of them, and then ending them with one *rakah* which contains a *tashahud* and salutations. This manner is manner as it was the one that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed [often] and repeatedly adhered to.

The Regular [Daily] Sunnah Prayers

The best of the daily sunnah prayers is the sunnah before the Dawn (*Fajr*) Prayer. Aisha narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

رَكْعَتَا الْفَجْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا

“The two *rakats* of *Fajr* [before the obligatory *Fajr* Prayer] are better than the world and what it contains.” (Recorded by Muslim and by al-Tirmidhi who declared it authentic.)

The emphasized daily sunnah prayers are twelve in number: four *rakats* before the Noon (*Dhuhr*) Prayer and two after it, two *rakats* after the Sunset (*Maghrib*) Prayer, two *rakats* after the Night (*Isha*) Prayer and the two *rakats* before Fajr.

It is recommended to make up the daily sunnah prayers if one misses them. *Witr* is also to be made up but with an even number of *rakats* during the daytime. However, if a person has missed a lot of obligatory prayers, he must busy himself with making those up first and not the sunnah prayers as it may cause him some hardship to make up both. However, he should also make up the two *rakats* of sunnah for the *Fajr* Prayer due to their importance.

Finally, to perform these prayers in one's house is best, as opposed to the obligatory prayers which should be prayed in congregation [in the mosque].

Topic Five:

The Friday Prayer

The Virtue of Friday

Friday is among the best of days. For that reason, Allah has particularly guided this Nation to it and sanctioned their gathering to be on this day. The wisdom behind that includes an opportunity for the Muslims to get together, know each other, bond together and display mercy and assistance for one another. Friday is like a weekly celebration or festival. It is the best day upon which the sun rises.

The Status of the Friday Prayer

The Friday Prayer is obligatory as Allah has said,
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ
فَاسْعَوْا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ

“O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to pray on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and trade)” (*al-Jumuah* 9).

It consists of two *rakats*. It is recommended to make *ghusl* for it and to leave early for it.

Upon Whom is the Friday Prayer Obligatory

[It is obligatory upon] every legally responsible [that is, adult and sane], free, male Muslim who has no valid excuse not to attend it.

The Timing for the Friday Prayer

It is acceptable to perform it before high noon. However, to perform it afterwards is preferable as such is the time that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would usually perform it.

What Number Can Constitute the Friday Prayer

It is constituted by a number that is conventionally called a large gathering.