

28th May 2010

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلّٰهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ
شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ
لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ. وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

All Praise be to اللّٰهُ .

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness within ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one can lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leaves misguided, no one has the power to guide.

I testify that there is no God but اللّٰهُ to whom there is no partner and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is his servant and messenger

وَأَنْتَقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ



“And guard yourselves from the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every soul shall be recompensed what it has earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly” (S2, A281)



Dear Brothers and sisters, ASA. I finished last khutbah with two Dua's that form part of our regular morning and evening "Zikr". Both have been included in the newsletter and you should have access to them in the previous newsletter prints and on the AMA website. My last khutbah should ISA go on the website soon.

Brothers and sisters, I was asked to address today an issue that has been causing some healthy debate within our community and has resulted in slight misunderstanding. This relates to the combining of Maghrib and Isha' prayers during part of spring and summer at our centre. This issue raises its head every year, and it is something that is not restricted to our centre, but is a problem that covers all countries and communities that are situated between the latitudes of 48 and 66 degrees both north and south. Just before I get into that, I like to remind myself and you of an important concept in Islam in that there are legitimate and accepted differences of opinions amongst scholars. Indeed when one studies the Seerah, one will find that there were differences of opinions even amongst the Sahabah at the time of The Prophet(SAAWS).

One classic example is the interpretation of the Sahabah to The Prophet's command as they headed towards Bani Quraytha before Asr prayers. This incident took place after the battle of "Al-Khandaq" otherwise known as the battle of the confederates. Some of the Sahabah understood the command as not to pray Asr until they arrive to Bani Quraytha, while the others understood that they should not arrive to Bani Quraytha without having done Asr. It is as if the command, when it was given, had the potential to be understood in two ways. Was there wisdom in such a command? Was there wisdom in the Prophet(SAAWS) giving a command that can be interpreted in more than one way.

Praise be to Allah for that. When one looks at what happened next, and the lessons learned from such an incident the wisdom comes at us like a flowing river. The Sahabah heard what was said and each understood the command in his way. At the time, it appears that probably everyone assumed that the other understood the command in the same way until Asr time entered and Bani Quraytha were still some distance away. Fearing missing the Asr time a section of the Sahabah stood down and went ahead with praying Asr, while the rest stood back on the grounds that they understood that Asr was not to be prayed until they arrive at Bani Quraytha. They both understood that this is a command from the Prophet(SAAWS) and this needed to be obeyed, but their interpretation influenced the manner of their obedience but not the lack of it.

Once the first group finished their prayers, the Sahabah mounted again as a single unit and carried on with their advance. They arrived at Bani Quraytha after the time of Maghrib had entered and those who have not prayed yet went ahead and prayed Asr then. There was a clear difference of opinion, so who was right and who was wrong. The Prophet(SAAWS) stated that both were correct in the way they understood the command and applied it.

Now for the issue of combining the prayers. I would like to present you with the article on the Fatwa given by the Islamic Fiqh council given in November 2007 when addressing the specific question of prayer times for countries with latitudes between 48 and 66 degrees with attention to answering the questions of the commencement of Isha' time and the best time to pray Isha'.

The one established rule is that Isha' time starts when the twilight disappears, and this is based on Prophetic traditions. One initial problem was that both Muslim and non-Muslim astronomers disagree on the time twilight disappears especially in areas of extreme latitude. As such, in summer, some believe that there are periods when the twilight never disappears in such countries while others believe it does disappear but very late. Another area of disagreement is that while the vast majority of scholars believe that the disappearance of the redness signifies the disappearance of the twilight, Hanafi scholars believe that it is the disappearance of the whiteness. A further area of disagreement is whether one uses the angles of 15, 17 or 19 degrees to define the disappearance of the twilight. Depending on which angle one uses and what colour one chooses, there will be differences in defining the Isha' time for places like ours, and this is only the start of it.

Having said that, it is agreed that the vast majority of scholars believe that there will be periods in the summer where the twilight disappears but very late and periods where it does not disappear at all. The fatwa addressed the three possible opinions to such an issue.

The first opinion is to pray Isha' on time for as long as possible and as long as there is a legal sign for the start of Isha' no matter how late this can be. This opinion is based on the clear evidence that praying on time is the most important condition for performing prayers:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا (١٠٣)

“For prayers are enjoined on the believers at fixed times” (An-Nissa', 4:103)

The Prophet(SAAWS) said “The most beloved of actions to Allah is the prayer at its time”.

This opinion is however not free of criticism. The first problem with this opinion is when twilight persists and the legal sign for the start of Isha' disappears. For those carrying this opinion, they recommend various ways of estimating Isha' prayers time during such a period, but there is disagreement as to how to estimate. Some use a fixed time, some use the nearest country, some use the last definable legal time, which can be 12:30 after

midnight throughout the summer. Others use a standard timetable of 1:30 hours after Maghrib. Another problem with this opinion is when the twilight disappears but this takes place very late, and in some places it is after 12 midnight. This means that according to some scholars, one is praying Isha' after its time has elapsed.

The second of the three opinions is to accept that some of the times for Isha' is unacceptable (whether it be due to no legal sign for its time or because it is extremely late). They recommend the use of estimation of Isha' time as the best solution but recommend that one should avoid combining the prayers on the grounds that the prayers timing during the 24 hour period was intended to spread them, and by combining we are not giving the spread of prayers its rightful address. Combining prayers should only be done when there is a pressing need (examples given from the Seerah), and Muslims should be discouraged from combining prayers as a matter of habit. The scholars favouring this approach state that estimation of Isha' time is a valid approach based on the interpretation of some of the Shafi'i scholars that Isha' time starts after the end of the first seventh of the night and that there is a Hadeeth in Sahih Muslim when the Prophet(SAAWS) said that there will be a time when prayers timing need to be estimated in his famous Hadeeth of the Dajal.

As for the third opinion, there are scholars who believe that the prayers can be combined for the whole period of debate. Their opinion is based on the fact that the disappearance of the legal sign for Isha' leaves no option, and that the late start of Isha' in some countries makes it extremely difficult for the vast majority of people in these countries to pray on time.

This type of difficulty brings forward the established Islamic principle to remove hardship. We heard in last khutbah this ayah from Surat Al-Hajj:

هُوَ أَجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

“He has chosen you and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship” (Al-Hajj, 22:77)

This also brings forward the fact that the Prophet(SAAWS) combined Maghrib and Isha' prayers for no reason. One example of this is the narration of Ibn 'Abbas(RAA), he said; “The Messenger of Allah combined Zhuhr and 'Asr, and Maghrib and Isha' in Madina without (cause of) fear or rain”. Ibn 'Abbas was questioned about this to which he replied, ‘He wanted to not burden his Ummah’.

Most scholars carrying the third opinion believe that the legal reasoning for combining prayers is to remove hardship but this verdict is conditional on not making this act a habit. These scholars disagree with the opinion of estimating the time of Isha' as there is no legitimate basis for such an estimation.

The fatwa then states that all three opinions have justifications but at the same time all three face legitimate criticisms. Because of that, this particular disagreement becomes a legitimate matter of valid Ijtihad. Based on that, the fatwa states that should one ask what shall I do and when do I pray Isha', the following is the answer:

Considering an adult male who is able to attend Jama':

1. Praying in Jama' is compulsory on the able adult male. Some scholars also mention that attending Jama' prayers takes precedence over many other conditions of Salat.
2. The times assigned for Isha' in such countries becomes a matter of Ijtihad. In such cases, the course of action of removing disagreement and maintaining unity takes precedence over individual opinion.
3. The reason for this is that the time of Isha' cannot be confirmed at any specific time which puts it within the area of Ijtihad. Because it is a matter of Ijtihad, the fatwa advises that one should pray with the congregation even if their time does not match his personal Ijtihad.

For those who are not able to join the Jama' or who do not have to join the Jama', he or she should delay Isha' as much as he or she can. The reasons for that is on the one hand praying Isha' on time will cause hardship, but habitual combining of Maghrib and Isha' is not recommended.

The estimation of the timing of Isha' should take into account local considerations as there is **"no solid foundation for any of the estimations"**. In doing so, we follow another important principle in Islam:

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ

"So keep your duty to Allah as much (as best) as you can; listen and obey and spend in charity, that is better for yourselves" (At-Taghabun, 64:16)

At the end of the fatwa, a point was mentioned about having the option of two Jama', and it stated that one can chose the latter one but should be careful with the later time in case it is too close to crossing the midnight, and that if this were to be in the same mosque, one needs to consider the potential harm of splitting the Muslims praying in that same mosque.

It was also mentioned that one should be careful with the term "Midnight". Midnight is now accepted as 12:00. But according to the Islamic timing, "midnight" or the middle of the night is half way between Maghrib and Fajr.

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا . أَمَا بَعْدُ :

I have also been asked to remind our brothers and sisters of some of the etiquettes of attending the Juma' prayers. In the newsletter, we started to include a section under the heading: Etiquette of attending the mosque". Allah(SWT) Says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا
إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَدَرُّوا الْبَيْعَ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٩)

"O you who believe, when the call is proclaimed for the prayer on Friday, come to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business, that is better for you if you but did know."
(Al-Jumua', 62:9)

For us, attending for Juma' is one of the highlights of our week. Some basic principles include the fact that the person intending to perform Juma' prayers it is highly encouraged to have ghusl. The majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the ghusl for Juma' prayers is recommended (sunnah) but not obligatory. The ghusl can be performed any time from Fajr. If a person performs ghusl and then later invalidates his ablution, he need not repeat the ghusl and making ablution (wudu) would be enough.

Going early to the masjid: There is great reward in going early to Juma' prayers. By leaving for Juma' prayers, one gets the reward of waiting for the Prayer, making Zikr (remembering Allah) and voluntary prayers during that time. Abu Umamah narrated that the Messenger of Allah(SAAWS) said, "The angels sit at the doors to the Masjids and with them are scrolls in which they record the people [who come]. When the Imam appears, the scrolls are rolled up." Abu Umamah was asked, "Does the one who comes after the Imam still have a Friday Prayer?" he said, "Certainly, but he is not one of those who is recorded [as coming early]." [Ahmad and al-Tabarani]

Dressing well for Juma' prayers: This is a special time that requires Muslims to appear in the best manner possible. One should therefore put on his best cloths for Juma' prayers.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said, "If one has the means, he should buy two pieces of clothing, other than his work clothes or [everyday clothing], to wear on Friday." [Abu Dawud]

Performing Tahiyyat al-Masjid: If a person comes late to the Friday Prayer while the Imam is delivering the khutbah, should he pray the two rak`ahs of Tahiyyat al-Masjid (prayer of greeting the mosque) and then sit or should he simply skip them? The strongest opinion is to perform Tahiyyat al-Masjid based on the Hadeeth of the Prophet(SAAWS): "If one of you comes to the Masjid, he should pray two rak`ahs before he sits" (Bukhari and Muslim). However, Tahiyyat al-Masjid is not required of the person giving the khutbah.

It is also important to recognise that once the khutbah starts, listening to the khutbah is very important. The noise during entering the Masjid, during performing wudu and during the prayers itself, and any noise that distracts from the khutbah is to be avoided.

Other Etiquette of Juma' prayers:

1. Walking to the Masjid whenever feasible as there is a reward for every step taken to the Masjid.
2. Sitting in the front rows and close to the Imam whenever possible.
3. Going to the Masjid in a state of calmness and not being hurried.
4. Remaining quiet while the Imam is delivering the khutbah. This actually includes listening to the Imam and not playing with anything (including clasping one's hands and intertwining one's fingers) while the Imam is speaking.
5. Avoiding stepping over people to get to a particular spot in the Masjid.
6. Avoiding dividing two people who are sitting together.
7. Not making someone stand and taking his place.
8. Reciting surah al-Kahf (surah 18) as an authentic Hadith states: "For whoever recites surah Al-Kahf on Friday, it will be a light for him from that Friday to the next." (Al-Bayahaqi and Al-Hakim). The surah could be read any time of the day.

Indeed, Salat al-Juma' is one of the most important acts of worship in Islam. The Prophet(SAAWS) has described the wonderful blessings and benefits that Allah has bestowed upon the Muslims through this magnificent act. Knowing how important this prayer is in Allah's sight, Muslims must do their best to perform it in the best way possible. They should strive and sacrifice for the sake of this Prayer.