

Joining Prayers and Other related Issues

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

One of the issues, among many others, that the Sunnis quarrel with the Shi'a about is the form, method, and time of the Prayer (Salat) prescribed on every male and female believer. Indeed, they make a mockery of the Shi'i prayer!

The Shi'a acknowledge five daily prayers. However, they are allowed to pray them in three distinct times, not five; the five prayers are: Fajr (Morning), Zuhr (Noon), `Asr (Afternoon), Maghrib (Sunset), and Isha (Night).

The Fajr (morning) is prayed at the same time as the Sunnis do; however, the Shi'a usually wait 10 minutes before they consider it to be time for Fajr.

We are allowed to pray noon and afternoon prayer one after another (without a lot of delay between the two). Similarly we are allowed to pray sunset prayer and night prayer one after another.

Actually it is better to pray in their own specific time (close to what Sunnis do), but it is not necessary. Thus instead of five separate times, we can pray all the five daily prayers only in three separate times.

(Note: The prayers in all cases are distinct (separate), it's not that they (the Shi'a) pray eight Raka't (for Zuhr and `Asr) straight, or seven Raka't (for Maghrib and Isha) straight, as part of one prayer. It is the SAME regular form of prayer, but combined into one time, not one prayer.)

It should also be noted that the Sunnis agree to the combining of prayers in the case of Rain, Travel, Fear, or other emergencies. Two forms are allowed: Jam'a Taqdeem (Early Combination) or Jam'a Takheer (Late Combination). An example of Early combination is the combining of Zuhr and `Asr to be prayed in the time of Zuhr. An example of Late Combination is the combining of the Zuhr and `Asr to be prayed in the time of `Asr. The exception among the Sunni schools are the Hanifites (Followers of Abu Hanifa): They contend that you cannot combine the prayers at any time, not even if you're traveling.

This clearly violated the other Sunni schools of thought, but it was and still is tolerated. The Maliki's, Shafeei's, and Hanbali's all agree to the combining of prayers when one is traveling, but are in conflict on other times. The Shi'a said that one can combine the prayers anytime without any cause of fear, rain, or whatever. Nonetheless, the Shi'a also contend that if you want to pray them separately, it is acceptable as well.

Now, let's question why the Shi'a perform the Prayers as described above, and who is more accurate in their Prayer, the Sunnis or the Shi'a? Here is what Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Establish regular prayers at the Sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the recital of the Qur'an in the morning prayer; for the recital of the dawn is Witnessed. (Qur'an 17:78)"

How many prayer times are mentioned? Three, not five. Count them: the "Sun's Decline, Darkness of the Night, and the Morning Prayer." That's three, not five.

Now, what did the Prophet (S) do? Here's what Ibn Abbas, one of the most famous narrators, says according to the Musnad of Ibn Hanbal (One of the books of tradition):

"The Prophet (S) prayed in Madina, while residing there, not travelling, seven and eight (this is an indication to the seven Raka't of Maghrib and Isha combined, and the eight Raka't of Zuhr and `Asr combined)."

Musnad al-Imam Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, page 221.

Also, in the Muwatta' of Malik (Imam of Maliki sect), vol. 1, page 161, Ibn Abbas says:

"The Prophet (S) prayed Zuhr and `Asr in combination and Maghrib and Isha in combination without a reason for fear or travel."

As for Sahih Muslim, see the following under the chapter of "Combination of prayers, when one is resident":

Ibn Abbas reported: The messenger of Allah(may peace be upon him) observed the noon and the afternoon prayers together, and the sunset and Isha prayers together without being in a state of fear or in a state of journey

Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter 250, Tradition #1515

Ibn Abbas reported that the messenger of Allah(may peace be upon him) combined the noon prayer with the afternoon prayer and the sunset prayer with the Isha prayer in Medina without being in a state of danger or rainfall. And in the hadith transmitted by Waki(the words are): "I said to Ibn Abbas: What prompted him to do that? He said: So that his(prophet's)Ummah should not be put to (unnecessary) hardship."

Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter 250, Tradition #1520

Abdullah b. Shaqiq reported: Ibn Abbas one day addressed us in the afternoon(after the afternoon prayer) till the sun disappeared, and the stars appeared, and the people began to say: Prayer, prayer. A person from Banu Tamim came there. He neither slackened nor turned away, but (continued crying): Prayer, prayer. Ibn Abbas said: May you be deprived of your mother, do you teach me sunnah? And then he said:

I saw the messenger of Allah(may peace be upon him) combining the noon and afternoon prayers and the sunset and Isha prayers. Abdullah b. Shaqiq said: Some doubt was created in my mind about it. So I came to Abu Huraira and asked him(about it) and he testified his assertion.

Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter 250, Tradition #1523

Abdullah b. Shaqiq al-Uqaili reported: A person said to Ibn Abbas(as he delayed the prayer): Prayer. He kept silent. He again said: Prayer.

He again kept silent, and he cried: Prayer. He again kept silent and said: May you be deprived of your mother, do you teach us about prayer? We used to combine two prayers during the lifetime of the messenger of Allah(may peace be upon him).

Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter 250, Tradition #1524

Ibn Abbas reported: The messenger of Allah(may peace be upon him) observed the noon and afternoon prayers together in Medina without being in a state of fear or in a state of journey. Abu Zubair said: I asked Sa'id(one of the narrators) why he did that. He said: I asked

Ibn Abbas as you have asked me, and he replied that he(the Holy prophet) wanted that no one among his Ummah should be put to (unnecessary) hardship.

Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter 250, Tradition #1516

Ibn Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah(may peace be upon him) observed in Medina seven (rakahs) and eight(rakahs), i.e., (he combined) the noon and afternoon prayers(eight rakahs) and the sunset and Isha prayers(seven Rakahs).

Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter 250, Tradition #1522

Now, who is it that follows the customs and tradition of the Prophet (S)??? The Shi'a who follow it to the letter, or the Sunnis who don't even acknowledge the traditions in their own books? This is a SIGN for those who reflect!

Furthermore, Allah (SWT) continually reminds us in the Qur'an that Islam was revealed to make your life easier, not more difficult. How then, can one work, eat, sleep, study, etc... with five prayers a day in five

different times? You pray Maghrib, and an hour later, you pray Isha. Is this convenient, say for doctors in a surgery room? Believe me, if the Sunnis followed what the Prophet (S) did (five prayers in three times a day), many people would be praying today.

I witnessed this myself in this holy month of Ramadan. My Sunni friends pray Zuhr, then sleep. They then wake up about 30 minutes before Iftar (the time to break the fast), and pray `Asr. Many also miss the prayer! Is this really convenient???

Question and ask for the truth, and if you are honest and sincere, Allah (SWT) will guide you.

There is another aspect which the Sunnis make a mockery of when they see a Shii praying: The Shi'a will only pray on natural rock (not cement), the ground (if it is not planted something that is either edible and/or something of which clothe can be made to be worn by humans), rugs made of Palm tree leaves, or rugs made of dry grasslike material (the same stuff as that used in building huts). The Shi'a will not pray on regular carpet.

That's why, if you see a Shii praying, you will notice that he is praying on a piece of mud that is about the size of matchbox. The Sunnis mock the Shi'a and say that the Shi'a worship the rock!

It should also be noted that the piece of mud that the Shi'a pray on is from the mud of Karbala, the place in Iraq where al-Imam al-Hussein (as) was slaughtered by Yazid's army. Nonetheless, this is not a mandatory requirement; the mud can be from any place on Earth as long as it is clean and, as I mentioned earlier, is not planted edible foods or materials which can be made into clothe that humans can wear.

Now, let's question why the Shi'a pray on the above materials only, and, again, who is wrong or right?

First, carpets are not allowed, nor is cement because the ingredients that they are made up of are not known. They may contain materials which are Haram (Islamically illegal) to prostrate one's head on (make sujud).

Second, the prostration on the ground is more humble and modest when one is between the Hands of Allah (SWT). It is a form of eliminating pride, arrogance, and flamboyance.

Third, the Shi'a pray on the rock, not for the rock. We do not worship rocks.

Note: The Sunnis allow the prostration on anything that is clean, but they do favor rugs made from Palm tree leaves.

But what did the Prophet (S) do?

Sahih Muslim, v1, p168, under the chapter of "A Menstruating Woman's

Eligibility to Wash Her Husband's Head" narrates that the Prophet (S) had a special rug made of Palm

tree leaves that he (SAAS) used to pray on.

Sahih al-Bukhari, v2, p256, under the chapter of "Retreating to

Prayer in the last ten days (of Ramadan)"narrates at the end of a long tradition that when the Prophet (S) raised his (SAAS) head from prayer, the companions saw the marks of mud and water on his (SAAS) forehead. This indicates that he (SAAS) prayed on the ground.

Sahih al-Bukhari, v1, p86, under the chapter of "Tayamum"narrates that the Prophet (S) said: "The GROUND has been cleansed and made a masjid for me."

Do I need to comment? Who, now, is it that follows the custom of the Prophet (S)?

Some of the other differences between the Shi'a and Sunnis are: The Shi'a pray with their hands hanging down the sides (like the Sunni Malikis), not clasped above their navel. Also, the Shi'a don't say "Ameen"after the recitation of the first Surah (chapter) in prayer is completed. The reason is that there is no proof to support the notion that this kind of behavior was performed by the Prophet (S).

Again, there is a difference in the Azan (Call to Prayer) among the Shi'a and the Sunnis. The Shi'a add one line to the Azan, which they consider to be a mandatory component of the Azan. This line, repeated twice, is: "Haya `ala Khair al-'amal -- Rise Up For The Best of Works."It comes right after the line: "Haya `ala al-Falah -- Rise Up For Salvation."Another addition by the Shi'a, which is NOT a mandatory part of the Azan, is the affirmation: "Ash-hadoo Ana 'Ali-yan Walayo Allah -- I witness that 'Ali is the Vicegerent of Allah."This line is repeated twice and follows the line:

"Ash-hadoo Ana Muhamadan Rasool Allah -- I witness that Muhamad is the Messenger of Allah."As I mentioned, the latter line is not considered mandatory, and any Shii individual that argues otherwise, has invalidated the Azan. The origin of this assertion and addition goes back to the days of the Umayyads and the political environment during those days. The Umayyads attempted wholeheartedly to eliminate the memory of al-Imam 'Ali (as) from among his (as) followers.

This effort reached astronomical proportions, that during and after the days of Muawiyah's ruling, it became customary to curse al-Imam 'Ali (as) whenever his (as) name was mentioned (May Allah (SWT) forgive us).

As such, the followers of al-Imam 'Ali (as) chose to oppose the corrupt Umayyad government, and assert that 'Ali (as) was truly the Vicegerent of Allah (SWT). That served as both an annoyance to the authorities, and a reminder to the posterity that al-Imam 'Ali (as) was indeed the Agent and Vicegerent of Allah (SWT).

In conclusion, I simply appeal to all believing individuals to engage in a serious soul-searching effort to find the truth for themselves. May Allah (SWT) forgive us our sins, and guide us to that which pleases Him (SWT).

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