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Salat

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Salat (prayer) is either obligatory (*wajib*) or supererogatory (*mandub*).The most important of prayers are the obligatory prayers performed daily five times, and there is consensus among Muslims that a person who denies or doubts their *wujub* is not a Muslim, even if he recites the *shahadah*, for these prayers are among the 'pillars' (*arkan*) of Islam. They are the established necessity of the faith (*al-Din*) that does not need any *ijtihad* or study, *taqlid* or questioning.

The schools differ regarding a person who does not perform the *salat* (*tarik al-salat*) due to laziness or neglect though believes in its *wujub*. The Shafi'is, Malikis and Hanbalis observe: He will be killed.

The Hanafis state: He will get perpetual imprisonment unless he starts performing the *salat*.

The Imamis state: Whoever neglects any *wajib* duty such as *salat, zakat, khums, hajj* and *sawm*, will be chastened by the *hakim* in a manner deemed appropriate by him. If he does not yield to remonstrance, he will be chastened a second time, and if he does not turn penitent, a third time. And if he continues in the same manner, he will be killed the fourth time (al-Shaykh al-Kabir, *Kashf al-Ghita*, 1317 ed., p79).

The Daily Supererogatory Prayers (Rawatib)

Supererogatory prayers are of various kinds, and among them are those which are performed along with the obligatory daily prayers (*fara'id*). The schools differ regarding the number of their *rak'ahs*. The Shafi'is consider them to be eleven *rak'ahs*: two before the morning (*subh*) prayer, two before the noon (*zuhr*) prayer and two after it, two after the sunset (*maghrib*) prayer,two after the night ('*isha'*) prayer and a single *rak'ah* called *'al-watirah.'*

The Hanbalis consider them to be ten *rak'ahs*; two *rak'ahs* before and after the noon prayer, two after the sunset and the night prayer, and two *rak'ahs* before the morning prayer.

According to the Malikis there is no fixed number for the supererogatory (*nawafil*) prayers performed with the obligatory *salat*, though it is best to offer four *rak'ahs* before the *zuhr* and six after the *maghrib* prayer.

The Hanafis classify the *nawafil* performed along with the *fara'id* into '*masnunah'* and '*mandubah'*.[1] The '*masnunah'* are five: two *rak'ahs* before the *subh*; four before the *zuhr*, and two after it, except on Friday; two after the *maghrib* and two after the '*isha'* prayer.

The '*mandubah'* are four: four –or two– *rak'ahs* before the '*asr*, six after the *maghrib*, and four before and after the '*isha'* prayer.

The Imamis observe: The *rawatib* are 34 *rak'ahs*: eight before the *zuhr*, eight before the '*asr*, four after the *maghrib*, two after the '*isha'* (recited while sitting and counted as a single *rak'ah*; it is called *'al-watirah'*), eight *rak'ahs* of the midnight prayer (*salat al-layl*), two *rak'ahs* of *al-shaf'*, a single of *al-watr*,[2] and two *rak'ahs* before the morning prayer, called '*salat al-fajr'*.

The Time of Zuhr and 'Asr Prayers

The *fuqaha'* begin with *salat al-zuhr*, because it was the first *salat* to be declared obligatory, followed by the '*asr*, the *maghrib*, the '*isha'*and the *subh* prayer, in that order. All the five prayers were made obligatory on the night of the Prophet's cosmic journey (*al-Isra'*), nine years after the beginning of his mission (*bi'thah*). Those who hold this opinion cite as proof verse 78 of the *Surat al-Isra'* which stipulates all the five prayers:

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

***"Perform salat from the declining of the sun to the darkening of the night and the recital of the dawn; surely the recital of the dawn is witnessed."*(*Qur'an 17:78*)**

The schools concur that *salat* is not valid if performed before its appointed time and that the time of the *zuhr* prayer sets in when the sun passes the meridian. They differ concerning its duration.

The Imamis say: The specific period of the *zuhr* prayer extends from the moment the sun crosses the meridian up to a period required to perform it, and the specific period of the '*asr* prayer is the duration required to perform it just before sunset. The time between these two specific periods is the common period for the two *salats*.

This is the reason they consider it valid to perform both the prayers successively during their common period.[3] But if the time remaining for the end of the day is sufficient only for performing the *zuhr* prayer, the '*asr* prayer will be offered first with the *niyyah* of *ada'* and later the *zuhr* prayer will be performed as *qada'*.

The four Sunni schools observe: The time of the *zuhr* prayer begins when the sun crosses the meridian and continues till the shadow of an object becomes as long as its height; and when the length of the shadow exceeds the height of the object, the time for the *zuhr* prayer comes to an end. Here the Shafi'is and the Malikis add: These limits are for an unconstrained person (*mukhtar*); and for one who is constrained (*mudtarr*), the time for *zuhr* prayer extends even after an object's shadow equals its height. The Imamis consider the time when an object's shadow equals its height as the end of the time of *fadilah* (honor) for the *zuhr*, and when it equals twice the height of the object as the time of *fadilah* for the '*asr* prayer.

The Hanafis and the Shafi'is state: The time of '*asr* prayer begins when the length of an object's shadow exceeds its height and continues upto sunset.

The Malikis say: For the '*asr* prayer there are two times, the first for ordinary circumstances and the second for exigencies. The former begins with an object's shadow exceeding its height and lasts until the sun turns pale. The latter begins from when the sun turns pale and continues until sunset.

The Hanbalis observe: One who delays offering the '*asr* prayer till after an object's shadow exceeds twice its height, his *salat* will be considered *ada'* if performed before sunset, though he will have sinned because it is *haram* to delay it until this time. They are alone in all the schools in holding this opinion.

The Time of Maghrib and 'Isha' Prayers

The Shafi'i and the Hanbali schools (in accordance with the view of their respective Imams) state: The time for the *maghrib* prayer begins when the sun sets and ends when the reddish afterglow on the western horizon vanishes.

The Malikis say: The duration for the *maghrib* prayer is narrow and confined to the time required after sunset to perform the *maghrib* prayer along with its preliminaries of *taharah* and *adhan*, and it is not permissible to delay it voluntarily. But in an emergency, the time for the *maghrib* prayer extends until dawn. The Malikis are alone in considering it impermissible to delay the *maghrib* prayer beyond its initial time.

The Imamis observe: The period specific to the *maghrib* prayer extends from sunset[4] for a duration required to perform it, and the specific period of the '*isha'* prayer is the duration required to finish it before midnight. The time between these two specific periods is the common time for both *maghrib* and '*isha'* prayers. Hence they allow the joint performance of these two *salats* during this common time.

That was with respect to someone who is in a position to act out of free choice (*mukhtar*), but as to a person constrained by sleep or forgetfulness, the time for these two *salats* extend until dawn, with the period specific for the '*isha'* prayer becoming the time required to perform it just before dawn and the specific period for the *maghrib* prayer becoming the time required to perform it just after midnight.

The Time of Subh Prayer

There is consensus among the schools, with the exception of the Maliki, that the time for the morning prayer begins at day-break (*al fajral-sadiq*) and lasts until sunrise. The Malikis say: The *subh* prayer has two times: for one in a position to act out of free choice it begins with daybreak and lasts until there is enough twilight for faces to be recognized; for one in constrained circumstances it begins from the time when faces are recognizable and continues up to sunrise.

1. The Hanafis use two terms ('fard' and 'wajib') for something whose performance is obligatory and whose omission is impermissible. Hence they divide obligation into two kinds: fard and wajib. 'Fard 'is a duty for which there is definite proof, such as Qur'anic text, mutawatir sunnah, and ijma' (consensus).'Wajib' is a duty for which there is a Dhanni (non-definite) proof, such as qiyas (analogy) and khabar al-wahid (isolated tradition). That whose performance is preferable to its omission is also of two kinds: 'masnun' and 'mandub'. 'Masnun' is an act which the Prophet (S) and the 'Rashidun' caliphs performed regularly, and 'mandub' is an act ordered by the Prophet (S) though not performed regularly by him (S). That which it is wajib to avoid and whose performance is not permissible is 'muharram' if it is established by a definite proof. If based on a Dhanni proof, it is 'makruh', whose performance is forbidden.
2. According to the Hanafis, the salat al-watr consists of three rak'ahs with a single salam. Its time extends from the disappearance of twilight after sunset to dawn. The Hanbalis and Shafi'is say: At minimum it is one rak'ah and at maximum eleven rak'ahs, and its time is after the 'isha' prayer. The Malikis observe: It has only one rak'ah.
3. There are among 'ulama' of the Sunni schools those who agree with the Imamis on performing the two salats together even when one is not travelling. Al-Shaykh Ahmad al-Siddiq al-Ghumari has written a book on this topic, Izalat al khatar 'amman jama'a bayn al-salatayn fi al-hadar.
4. There is no difference regarding the definition of sunset between the Imamis and the other four schools. But the Imamis say that the setting of the sun is not ascertained simply by the vanishing of the sun from sight, but on the vanishing of the reddish afterglow from the eastern horizon, for the east overlooks the west and the eastern afterglow, which is a reflection of sun's light, pales away as the sun recedes.

That which is rumored regarding Shi'is that they do not break their fast during Ramadan until the stars become visible, has no basis. In fact they denounce this opinion in their books on fiqh with the argument that the stars may be visible before sunset, at the time of sunset or after it, and declare that "one who delays the maghrib prayer till the stars appear is an accursed man (mal'un ibn mal'un).”

They have said this in condemnation of the Khattabiyyah (an extremist sect which deviated from Shi’a), the followers of Abu al-Khattab, who held this belief. Thanks to God that they are now one of the extinct sects. Imam al-Sadiq a.s. was told that the people of Iraq delay the maghrib prayer until the stars become visible. He answered, "That is on account of Abu al-Khattab, enemy of Allah."

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