

The Prayer of the Eclipses

The four Sunni schools observe: The solar– and lunar– eclipse prayer is an emphasized *sunnah*, but not *wajib*. The Imamis state: It is obligatory for every *mukallaf* (sane mature person).

It does not have a special form in the opinion of the Hanafis; rather it is to be performed in two *rak'ahs* like a *naflah* prayer, each *rak'ah* comprising a single *qiyam* and *ruku'*. The *musalli* is free to perform it in two, four, or more *rak'ahs*.

According to the Hanbalis, Shafi'is and Malikis, it has two *rak'ahs*, with each *rak'ah* having two *qiyams* and two *ruku's*. After the *takbirat al-ihram*, *al-Fatihah* and another *surah* will be recited, followed by *ruku'*: After rising from the *ruku'al-Fatihah* and another *surah* will be recited, followed by *ruku'* and *sujud*. Then standing up for the second *rak'ah*, it will be performed like the first, and the *salat* completed. It is also valid to perform it in the manner of a *naflah salat*.

There is consensus that it can be performed singly as well as in *jama'ah*, except that the Hanafis observe regarding the lunar eclipse prayer: It has not been enacted for *jama'ah*, and has to be performed singly, at home.

As to its time, all the schools excepting the Malikis concur that it begins and ends with the eclipse. The Malikis say: Its time begins when the sun is at a spear's height above the horizon and continues until noon.

The Hanafis and the Malikis say: A two-*rak'ah salat* is recommended at the time of any fearsome incident, such as an earthquake, thunderbolt, unusual darkness, epidemic, etc.

According to the Hanbalis, it is recommended only for earthquakes. The schools concur that this *salat* does not have an *adhan* and *iqamah*, though an announcer will call out "*al-salat*" three times according to the Imamis, and "*al-salat jami'ah*" according to the other schools.

The Imamis observe: The *salat* is *wajib* upon every individual during solar and lunar eclipses, earthquakes, and on the occurrence of all unsettling celestial phenomena such as the sky's darkening or becoming extraordinarily red, strong winds, big sounds, etc.

If performed in *jama'ah*, the imam will recite only the *surahs* on behalf of those following him, just as in the daily prayers. The time for performing the *salat* for solar and lunar eclipses is the period of their occurrence, and one who does not perform them at that time will perform them later as *qada'*.

There is no specific time for *salats* to be performed consequent to earthquakes and similar fearsome incidents; rather, it is *wajib* to perform these *salats* as soon as they occur, though in the event of delay they can be performed as *ada'* as long as one is alive.

Its mode of performance is that after *takbirat al-ihram*, *al-Fatihah* and another *surah* are recited, followed by *ruku'*. Upon rising from the *ruku'*, *al-Fatihah* and a *surah* will be repeated, followed again by *ruku'*. This will continue until five *ruku's* are performed, and they will be followed by two *sajdahs*. On standing up for the second *rak'ah*, *al-Fatihah* and another *surah* will be recited, followed by a *ruku'*; this will be repeated till five *ruku's* are performed in the second *rak'ah* as well. Then will follow two *sajdahs*, *tashahhud*, and *tasleem*.

Thus altogether there are ten *ruku's*, and every five of them is followed by two *sajdahs*, both in the first and the second *rak'ahs*.

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