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Dialogue on prayer (2)

While we were still on the subject of prayer, in this part two of the dialogue, I wanted to test my memory as to the information I had acquired.

So, before my father resumed the talk, I asked him if I could say isha prayer by doing two rukus only.

- No, didn't I tell you it is a four-ruku prayer.
- * The reason why I asked is that I saw you once perform it as such.
- On that occasion, were we on a journey?
- * Yes.
- It is true. The reason being that there is a concession for the believers, in that when they are on a journey, they are required to do only two rukus, i.e. qasr prayer of the four-raka' prayers of dhuhr, asr, and isha prayers, provided that certain requirements are met. These are:
- 1. The distance covered by any trip, from the home of the mukallaf, must be at least forty four kilometres, be it one way or return.
- * What is the point of calculating the distance?
- If you satisfy what is generally accepted as travel, the point starts from the last building on the periphery of the town you live in.
- 2. The continuity of the purpose of travel, i.e. if you change your mind and abort your journey, say half way, you should perform your prayer in full. That is, if the distance covered in both directions was less than forty four kilometres. If, however, the distance of the outgoing journey and the return one was more than the stipulated minimum, you should say your prayer gasr.
- 3. The aim behind the travel must be legitimate, i.e. not aiming at committing a haraam act, such as stealing, or the travel was unauthorized, as in the case of a wife embarking on a trip without the

permission of her husband. Travel for fun, such as going on a hunting expedition, does not yield qasr prayer.

- 4. Travellers who do not intend to stop at their home town, those who do not intend to stay a minimum of ten days, and those who remain undecided as to the length of their stay for a period of thirty days qualify for qasr prayer.
- * And if a) The intention to stay in one's home town ten days and over, b) intention to stay for ten days in the destination, and c) they remain undecided for thirty days?
- The people in the first two examples should say their prayer in full (tamam). For the undecided, they should say tamam prayer after the thirtieth day for the duration of their stay thereafter.
- 5. If someone's job involves travel, such as a driver, or their work entails frequent travel, they should say their prayer in full.
- * What about, say, a businessman, a student, or an employee who live in a town, more than twenty two kilometres away from their respective place of work or university, and need to cover that distance, more or less, on daily basis?
- They must say their prayer in full (tamam).
- 6. Those who have no permanent abode, such as roving tourist, should say their prayer in full.
- * If, during the journey, it was time for prayer, yet I did not say prayer there and then, until I returned to my hometown, what sort of prayer should I say?
- You should say your prayer in full.
- * And if it was the other way round, i.e. I was in my hometown when it was time for prayer but could not say it there and then, and set out on a journey that qualifies for the minimum distance of forty four kilometres?
- You should say your prayer gasr.
- * Some times, I see a group of believers say prayer collectively.
- Yes, this is called congregational prayer (salatul jamaa').
- * How is it said?
- If there are two or more people, they can conduct congregational prayer. The important requirement here is that the person who is going to lead the prayer (imam) must fulfil certain conditions. Those taking part in congregational prayer shall receive added thawab (reward from God).

- * Does this mean that conducting it is a mustahab act?
- Yes, particularly when the imam is a learned man. Also, the more people were praying congregationally, the more thawab there will be for them.
- * You mentioned the qualifications that must be present in the person who lead the prayer. What are they?
- He must be adult, sane, devout, just, and not rebellious against the injunctions of God; he should also be of a legitimate birth, and male, where the worshippers are male.
- * What is the criterion of identifying a person with these qualities so that I could pray behind them?
- Their appearance should suggest that.
- * Are there any other conditions that the imam must meet?
- Yes, [It is imperative that he was not convicted according to the Islamic penal code]. He must be ablebodied so that he can execute the movements of prayer in full, especially when the person who is praying behind him is able-bodied too. As far as the direction of the qiblah is concerned, both the imam and the person praying behind him should be in agreement as to its right direction. The person who is going to be led in congregational prayer has to satisfy himself with the knowledge that the prayer of the imam be in order. For example, if the person taking part in congregational prayer knew for sure that the wudhu of the imam was not in order because he unknowingly used water that was najis, it is not permissible for them to pray behind the imam.
- * How should I go about performing congregational prayer?
- If there were two of you, one should stand to the right, and lightly behind, the one who leads the prayer. If, however, there are more than two, the rest must stand behind the imam without a barrier such as a wall separating them from the imam. The place where the prayer is conducted should be even. The imam's position should not be higher than the position of those following him in prayer. The gap between the imam and the rest of the congregation must not be great. Nor should the gap separating the worshippers, standing side by side in prayer.
- * Can I say that the gap between the imam and each one of the rows of worshippers be a meter or so?
- [Yes, approximately one meter]. To achieve linkage between the imam and the rest of the congregation, it suffices that it be done through one worshipper in any direction.
- * And what else?
- The worshippers must follow the imam in what he says and does from takiratul ihram to tasleem, i.e. they must not say or do anything before him. The only difference is that the worshippers could choose

not to recite the two chapters, for the imam's recitation makes up for theirs.

- * Suppose I was a bit late in joining the congregation. When can I join in?
- You may join in while the imam is either in a standing position or during a ruku. Should you join in during a ruku, you need not worry about the recitation of the two chapters.
- * If I happened to join in while the imam was uttering the tasbihat in either the third or fourth ruku'?
- You should utter takbiratul ihram and recite the two chapters in a low voice, and if there is not sufficient time for both the chapters, it suffices to recite al-Fatiha.
- * Suppose the congregation were conducting asr prayer, and I want to say dhuhr. Would it still be all right if I join in?
- Yes, there are no restriction on joining congregational prayer, irrespective of the form of difference between the prayer you intend to say and that the congregation is engaged in. Matters such as the nature of recitation (inaudible or audible), gasr and tamam prayers, and gadha' or ada' are overlooked.
- * Can women conduct congregational prayer?
- Yes, it is permissible for women to join in congregational prayer behind a male imam. A woman can also lead the prayer for other women. However, when a woman leads the prayer for other woman, [she must not stand ahead of them; rather she must stand in the same line].

When women take part in a congregational prayer with men, they must occupy the rear lines, or to the side, but with a barrier, such as a screen.

- * I hear of another prayer called Juma (Friday) prayer. Is it different from congregational prayer?
- Yes, it consists of two ruku, like subh prayer. However, where it differs is that in Juma prayer the imam gives two sermons before the performance of the prayer.

The minimum content of the first sermon is to praise Allah [in Arabic]. He could remind the worshippers to be fearful of God. He, then, should recite a short chapter from the Holy Qur'an. After that, he should sit for a moment and stand for the second sermon to glorify the Lord, and pray for God's blessings to be with Mohammad (s.a.w.) and his Pure Progeny (a.s.). It is advisable that he should ask God's forgiveness for the believers.

- * Are there any conditions to be observed when Juma becomes mandatory?
- -. Yes, it should be held when the time for dhuhr prayer becomes due. There must be five people present, including the imam, provided that the imam meets the requirements for an imam of congregational prayer (salatul jamaa'a) discussed earlier.

If Juma Prayer was held in a place, that satisfies the conditions of holding it, by the Infallible Imam or his deputy, it is incumbent on all men, living within a radius of approximately eleven kilometres, of that town to attend it. Those who are exempt from attending are men who cannot do so because of severe weather conditions, sickness, old age, blindness, or because they are travelling.

If it was held by any other person, attending it does not become compulsory; and it is permissible to perform dhuhr prayer instead.

If the worshipper performed Juma prayer, that satisfied the conditions, there shall be no need for him to say dhuhr prayer, because Juma prayer makes up for it.

There remain two important issues to which I must draw your attention:

- 1. Juma prayer is wajib as a matter of choice, i.e. the mukallaf is free to perform it or say dhuhr prayer. Here I must hasten to add that performing Juma prayer is more preferable.
- 2. The distance between any two places where Juma prayer is held should not be less than approximately 5.5 km.
- * I have a question I wanted to ask for some time, but I feel embarrassed to ask.
- Go ahead and ask, as there is no shame in asking about matters of religion.
- * Sometimes I miss out on saying some compulsory daily prayer for a variety of reasons that could be due to forgetfulness, apathy, or ignorance; at other times it has dawned on me that I did not say some prayers properly. What should I do?
- You have to say them again with the niyya of qadha'. You should, though, pay attention to the manner in which each prayer is said, i.e. if you were supposed to carry out the recitation in an audible voice, such as in the case of Subh, Maghrib, and Isha prayers, you should do so; if the prayer you were saying was to make up for another one that was qasr, you should execute it in kind.
- * Do I have to wait for the corresponding times of every prayer I missed out in order to say them on time?
- No, you can say any qadha' prayer any time you want.
- * Suppose I do not know how many prayers I missed. How many prayers should I say?
- You have to compensate for those prayers you were sure you missed. As for those prayers you were in doubt whether or not you missed, you should ignore.
- * Could you give me an example?

- If, for example, you were sure that you did not say Subh prayer for a month, it becomes compulsory on you to perform it qadha' for a month. If, however, you were in doubt as to whether or not this was the case, you need not worry, i.e. there will be no need to say compensatory prayers.
- If, however, you were sure that you did not say Subh prayer for some time, yet you were undecided as to whether the period you missed out on this prayer was one month or forty days, you should assume that it is one month not forty days you should cater for.
- * Is it incumbent on us to immediately make up for prayers we missed out?
- No, delaying compensatory prayer can be tolerated, provided it is not done out of indifference.
 However, I should advise that it is much better if you say any prayer you missed on the same day, so that such prayers do not accumulate and become a burden on you.
- * Can I take you back to the first Dialogue on Prayer? You mentioned to me a type of compulsory prayer. It is the one that should be said by the son on behalf of his father, if the father did not perform it in his lifetime.
- Yes, [it becomes incumbent on the eldest son to make amends for any mandatory prayers] his father did not fulfil in his lifetime, provided that the eldest son was not minor at the time of his father's death, and that he was not denied the inheritance of the father. The son, however, could hire someone else to make up for the outstanding prayers.
- * You also mentioned salatul ayaat. (prayer for signs or natural phenomena)
- Yes, this prayer is mandatory on every mukallaf, except women who are in haydh or nifas. Salatul ayaat must be held when there is an eclipse of the sun or the moon, [earthquakes], any other natural occurrence that happens in the sky, such as thunderbolt, or on earth, such as landslide, provided that these phenomena cause most people to be fearful and scared. This prayer could be said individually. During the eclipse, however, it could be said collectively.
- * What is the best time for holding salatul ayaat?
- At the start of the eclipse until the disc of either the sun or the moon is fully seen again.
- * And the rest?
- The prayers for other natural phenomena have no assigned time. Prayers could be said at the times of the occurrence of the phenomena, and throughout the duration thereof.
- * What form does it take?
- It comprises two ruku', each of which has five ruku'. After sounding takbiratul ihram, you should recite al-Fatiha and another full chapter and go for ruku (bowing), then back to the standing upright posture.

For the second time, you should recite al–Fatiha and another chapter, then go for bowing and so on until you complete five ruku. After the fifth ruku, you should go for the two sujoods, precisely as you do in your daily prayer. Standing up for the second ruku, you should do the same number of bowings as you did in the first ruku. Having completed the tenth bowing, you have to perform the two sujoods, then say tashahhud and tasleem.

- * Suppose an eclipse of either the sun or the moon happened, yet I did not know of it until it was over, do I still have to say salatul ayaat?
- If the eclipse was complete, you have to say salatul ayaat qadha'. If, however, it was partial, you need not say it.
- * And if it was another natural phenomenon, such as earthquake?
- If the time of happening had passed and you did not say the prayer for any reason, you need not say it gadha'.
- * Do I have to say salatul ayaat for the eclipse wherever it takes place?
- No, you have to say the prayer when the eclipse is visible in your own country.
- * You said to me that prayer is of two kinds, wajib and mustahab. However, you have not given me any insight into mustahab prayer.
- O! there are many types of mustahab prayers. However, I will only mention a few of them:
- 1. Salatul Lail (night prayer)

It is preferable to say it during the last third of night, closer to the time of dawn. It consists of eight ruku'. It should be said in two-ruku segments, in exactly the same way you say subh prayer. After you have completed the eighth ruku', you say shafi' prayer of two ruku, followed by watr which consists of one ruku. Thus, the total will be eleven ruku'.

- * Could you show me how watr prayer is performed?
- After takbiratul ihram, you should recite al-Fatiha followed by al-Ikhlas, three times, an-Naas, and al-Falaq. You should, then, raise your hands in supplication, which may include the following:

While supplication is being performed, it is mustahab to weep for fear of God. You may ask forgiveness for forty of your fellow devout Muslims, by their names. You may say, seventy times, "Astaghfirul Laha Rabbi, wa Atoubu Ilaih: I seek God's forgiveness and repent to Him", seven times, "Hatha Maqaamul 'A'ithi Bika Minan Nar: This is the place of your bondsman who seeks refuge with You from Hellfire", three hundred times, "Al Afu: Pardon me". Having completed the supplication, you should do ruku, sujood, tashahhud, and tasleem in the same way you go about these acts in your daily prayer.

You may confine the prayer to shafi' and watr, even the latter alone, especially when there is not enough time.

- * What is the merit of salatul lail?
- It has a great merit, for it was related from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said, "In his will to Ali (a.s.), the Prophet (s.a.w.) said to him, take to salatul lail, take to salatul lail, take to salatul lail." The Prophet (s.a.w.) was also quoted as saying, "Performance of a two-ruku prayer at the middle of night is closer to my heart than this world and all that is in it".
- 2. Salatul Wahsha (The prayer of the first night of the burial of a beloved one):

It consists of two ruku'. In the first ruku', after suratul Fatiha, Ayatul (verse of) Kursi could be recited [up to the words of The Sublime, "Wahum Fiha Khalidoon: and they are in it (Fire) for eternity"]. In the second ruku', you may recite, after al–Fatiha, suratul Qadr, ten times. On completion of tashahhud and tasleem, you may say, (Allahuma Salli Ala Mohamdadiw Wa'ali Mohammad: May peace be with Mohammad and his Pure Progeny; O Lord make the reward (of this prayer) go to (the name of the deceased). There is, however, another format of this prayer. You may consult jurisprudence books if you so wish.

3. Salatul Ghufaila: An interlude between Maghrib and Isha prayers, consisting of two ruku'. After al–Fatiha of the first ruku, you may recite this verse, "Wathannouni Ith Thahaba Mughadhiban etc.: And Yunus, when he went away in wrath, so he thought that We would not straighten him, so he called out among afflictions: There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee; surely I am of those who make themselves to suffer loss. So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief, and thus do We deliver the believers ". (21/87,88).

In the second ruku', after al-Fatiha, you may recite, (Wa indahu mafatihul ghaib etc.: And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasure – none know them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea; and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book". (6/59).

You, then, raise your hands in supplication and say, (Allahumma Inni As'aluka Bimafatihil Ghaybil Lati La Ya'lamuha, Illa Ant, An Tussaliya Ala Mohammadinw Wa'ali Mohammad: O God! I ask You with the keys of the unseen, that no one save You know, to bestow peace on Mohammad and his Pure Progeny; then make your request. You carry on saying, "Allahumma Anta Waliyyu Ni'mati, Wal Qadiru Ala Talibati, Ta'lamu Hajati, Fa'asaluka Bihaqi Mohammadiw Wa'alihi Alaihi Wa Alaihimus Salam Lamma Qadhaytaha Lee: O God! You are the Bestower of my boon; You alone are capable of granting my wish; You know my need. So, I pray to You by the right of Mohammad and his Pure Progeny, may peace be with them, to answer my prayer and facilitate my need. You should then state precisely what you want.

4. The Prayer at the Beginning of Each Month:

It consists of two ruku'. In the first ruku, after al-Fatiha, you could recite surutut Tawhid thirty times. In the second, after al-Fatiha, you may recite Al-Qadr thirty times. On completion of the prayer, you may give something in alms.

5. Special Prayer to Facilitate Difficult Matters:

It comprises two ruku. Should you think that you are in dire straits, say this prayer. In the first ruku', you should read, after al-Fatiha and al-Ikhlas, the first three verses of al-Fath, (Chapter No. 48), thirty times. In the second ruku', you should recite al-Fatiha, al-Ikhlas, and al-Inshirah (Chapter No. 94)

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