

PRAYER TIMES

أوقات الصلاة

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Review the importance of praying the five daily prayers on time
- Understand the importance and benefits of praying at the prescribed time
- Know what to do in situations of doubt regarding prayer times
- Know the sequence of the prayers and what to do in situations where the time of prayers is limited

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 5

Lesson 1: Prayer Times

In previous years we have learnt about the five obligatory daily prayers and the times at which they are offered. We have also learnt that if we do not or have not offered these prayers, then we have to make them up as Qadhā.

In this lesson, we will focus on the rules regarding the timing of the obligatory daily prayers and situations of doubt regarding the prayer times.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYING WITHIN THE PRIME TIME

There is quite a long time period in which each prayer can be prayed. However, it is always best to pray each prayer at the beginning of its prescribed time. This time is known as 'Waqtul Fadhilah' or the 'prime time'. This window of time differs in length for each prayer. As a general rule, it extends for about an hour from the beginning time of that prayer. This creates the spirit of punctuality and discipline in us, and also reflects our dedication and commitment to communicate with Allah (SWT).

Offering our prayer on time is a highly recommended act. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) has said:



“Whoever performed the obligatory prayers at the beginning of their times and observed their restrictions, the angels would raise them white and pure into heaven.

The prayer would say (to the performer): ‘May Allah (SWT) preserve you as you preserved me and entrust you to a generous angel as you looked after me’. But whoever performed them after the appointed times with no excuse, and did not observe their restrictions, the angels would raise them, black and dark. The prayer would shout at the performer: ‘you have lost me, may Allah (SWT) lose you, and may He not care for you as you did not care for me’.”

It is also related in a Ḥadīth Qudsi:

“And when he (the worshipper) knows that it is time of Prayer but does not pray, he is indeed careless about Me”ⁱ

PRAYER TIMINGS ACCORDING TO THE QUR'ĀN

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

“Undertake the prayer at the time of the declining sun to the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; for indeed the morning recitation is witnessed” (17: 78)

It is clear from the above āyah that the *times* of the obligatory prayers are three:

1. The time of the two obligatory prayers, Ḍuhr (noon) and ‘Aṣr (afternoon), which is shared between the two. This starts from when the sun is at its highest point in the sky, and continues until the sun sets.
2. The time of the two obligatory prayers Maghrib (dusk) and ‘Ishā’ (night) which is also shared between the two. This begins a short time after sunset (when more than half the sky is dark), and ends in the middle point of the night.
3. 3) The time for the Fajr (morning) prayer which is specific to it. This begins when the first horizontal ray of light appears on the horizon, until the sun rises.



RULES REGARDING THE TIME OF PRAYERS:

It is mustaḥab (highly recommended) that we offer our prayers at the prime time prescribed for them. We should not delay our prayers without good reason. Things such as watching television or playing a game are not reasonable excuses for delaying prayer.

There are a few exceptions whereby we are allowed to delay our prayers, including the following:

- waiting to join jamā’ah (congregational) prayers
- situations pertaining to rules of menstruation
- situations where one has no access to water for ghusl or wuḍū’, but may get access to this later
- where one is in doubt of some of the important rules of prayers and needs to learn them before praying,
- other urgent situations



DETERMINING THE TIME FOR PRAYERS

We cannot begin offering prayers until we are certain that the time for prayers has set in. The ways to determine whether the time for prayers has set in are:

- By witnessing the times/sky ourselves
- If two just/trustworthy persons inform us that the time of prayers has set in
- If we hear the adhān for prayers, and this gives us surety that the time for prayer has set in

If we are not certain whether the time for prayers has set in, we should delay prayers until we feel certain that the time for prayers has set in.

SITUATIONS OF ERROR OR DOUBT

If we are certain that the time of prayers had set in and pray, but later realise that we prayed before the time, the prayer is void and must be repeated.

If we were certain that the time of prayers had set in and begin praying then we realise during the prayers that the time has **not** set in, the prayer is void.

If we realise during the prayers that only then (during the prayers) the time **did** set in, the prayer will be valid.

For example, if in the third raka'at of my Dhuhr prayer I realise that the time set in while I was in second raka'at, then the prayer is valid and I can continue.

If we are heedless and do not care to check carefully whether the time for prayers has set in or not and begin to pray, then while praying we realise that the time for prayers only set in then, then the prayer is void and must be repeated.

Review Questions

Q1. The best time to pray is the beginning time for each prayer which is about up to an hour after the adhān. This is called the:

- a) Mustaḥab time
- b) The Faḍīlah time
- c) The Wājib time

Q2. Which surah and āyah in the Holy Qur'an talks about the time of prayers:

- a) 17:78
- b) 103:3
- c) 33:33

Q3. Ja'far thought that the time of Ḍuhr had set in and began to offer his Ḍuhr prayer. However while in ruku' of the second rak'ah he heard the adhān for Ḍuhr. Is his prayer valid or void? What should he do?

Lesson 2: Rules Regarding the Sequence of Prayers

It is important to offer our prayers in the prescribed sequence. This means that we should make sure to pray Ḍuhr before 'Aṣr and Maghreb before 'Ishā'. This is because each prayer is specific for a certain time, as we have learnt in previous years; for example, the time for 'Aṣr prayer begins once Ḍuhr prayer has been completed. In this lesson, we will discuss some rules related to this issue.

- Intentionally offering 'Aṣr before Ḍuhr or 'Ishā' before Maghreb prayers:
 - In this situation, the prayer will be void and must be repeated.
- Intentionally offering 'Aṣr before Ḍuhr:
 - The prayer is valid even if we only realise after we have completed it. However it should be treated as Ḍuhr prayer. We then pray 'Aṣr afterwards.
 - If we begin offering 'Aṣr prayer by mistake before Ḍuhr prayer and realise this before completing the prayer, we should revert our intention to Ḍuhr prayer and complete the prayer as Ḍuhr prayer, then we can offer 'Aṣr prayer afterwards
- Forgetfully praying Ishā' before Maghreb:
 - If we begin 'Ishā' prayer before Maghreb prayer by mistake and realise during the prayer before the ruku' of the fourth rak'ah, we should change our intention to Maghreb and complete the prayer.

- If we begin praying with the intention of 'Ishā' and realise during the prayers that we have not offered Maghreb prayers yet and we have already gone into the ruku' of the fourth rak'ah, then we should complete the prayers with the intention of it being 'Ishā' prayers and then pray Maghreb after it.

LIMITED TIME FOR PRAYER

- If there is not enough time left to pray, we should not perform the Mustahab parts of and we should focus only on the obligatory parts in order to complete the prayers within the correct time. For example, if I have 3 minutes left before the time for 'Aṣr prayer ends, I should pray 'Asr without any recommended acts so I can complete within that time.
- If the time left for prayers is so little that we would only be able to perform one rak'ah of the prayer within the prescribed time, we should offer that prayer with the intention of adā'm (in time). For example, if I begin my Fajr prayer at 5.45 am, while the sunrise time is 5.46am, I should still pray the prayer with the intention of Ada, not the intention of Qaḍā'.
- If we have not offered Ḍuhr and 'Aṣr prayers and it is nearly sunset:
 - if there is enough time for 5 rak'at (i.e. the four rak'at of Ḍuhr and one raka' of 'Asr) then we should pray our Ḍuhr first and then 'Aṣr with the intention of adā'.
 - if there is only enough time for 4 or less (at least one) rak'ah, then we should pray 'Aṣr first with the intention of adā', and Ḍuhr after it with the intention of qaḍā'
- The same rule applies if there little time left for Maghreb and Ishā' prayers.
- In normal circumstances, if we do not offer Maghreb or 'Ishā' prayers till after midnight, as an obligatory precaution we should offer them both in sequenceⁱⁱ before Fajr without making the intention of adā' or Qaḍā'. However, in special situations such if one was ill, or fell asleep, they can pray those prayers

between midnight and Fajr with the intention of adā'.

Review Questions

Q1. Fatima woke up early in the morning for Fajr prayer and saw an eastern light in the horizon. She doubted whether the time for Fajr prayer had set in or not. Can she pray at that time? What should she do in this situation?

Q2. Hasan heard the adhān at Maghreb time and began offering prayers with the intention of 'Ishā' prayer by mistake. While standing up in the third rak'ah he realised that he had not offered Maghreb prayer yet. Is his prayer void or valid? What should he do?

ⁱ (Hadith al Qudsi)

ⁱⁱ References

- ehAWZA: semester 1, course 4, lecture 14
- Sistani.org → Islamic Laws → Chapters 86-91 - <http://www.sistani.org/english/>