Simultaneous Performance of Prayers

One of the issues, which is of great attention to the observers and is especially evident in places of pilgrimage like Mecca and Medina, is that most of the Sunnis, even their travelers, perform the five prayers at five distinct times and the Shi'a perform them as Jam' Taqdim1 or Jam' Ta'khir.2 This difference is very astonishing for the public who are unaware of the traditional and jurisprudential issues and also for most of the Sunnis who are used to differentiating between the five times.

During the hajj pilgrimage, I met a young salesman in Medina who was originally Turkish. He asked me, "Why do Iranians miss their Evening Prayer?" The simplest answer to persuade him in that short time was that at least they are travelers and it is permissible for them to delay the Evening Prayer and perform the Evening and Night Prayers together.3 Further elaboration was not possible in that short period, but it can be deeply discussed with the scholars to inform people of it and hence eradicate some false opinions. This is of course possible if the scholars are not affected by the common habit and the status quo in the society, which unfortunately sometimes happens. Fossilization of ideas in the people's minds has basically been one of the major problems of the Prophets in the course of history. The disbelievers are quoted in the Holy Qur'an as saying:

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَى أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ مُهْتَدُونَ.

Nay! They say: We found our fathers on a course, and surely we are guided by their footsteps. (44:22)

Both the Shi'a and the Sunnis should therefore know that some of their habitual rules, which are taken for granted, are not really self-evident in Islam; rather they have no true document. The reason for the existence of these common habits has been the verdict of great scholars in some cases, and political considerations in most others, while the same rules had not been common previously and had just been some alternatives beside others. Surprisingly, these habitual rules are evident even in case of everyday duties of the Muslims, like ablution, prayer, etc.

So painful it is! Muslims who have seen the Prophet's ablution and prayer everyday, have so much disagreement even in a tangible issue like the crossed position of hands in prayers. Some prohibit it, others know it undesirable and others permissible and still some others know

it desirable. Some say the hands should be placed above the navel, others believe they should be beneath the navel and so on, while the Prophet performed prayer five times everyday, before all the Muslims and said:

صَلُّوا كَما رَأَيْتُمونِي أُصَلّي.

Pray as you see me pray.[4]

Whatever the reason for these controversies be, and regardless of their justifiability or unjustifiability, it is evident that clarity of an issue for a certain group in by no means the proof of it according to the Qur'an and tradition. In this discussion, we are to discuss, based on what was mentioned, performing the prayers together and their exact time to make it clear that simultaneous performance of prayers is permissible in all conditions, according to authentic traditions of the Sunnis. In fact, the Noon and Afternoon Prayers and also the Evening and Night Prayers have the same time.

Prayer Times According to the Holy Qur'an

God, the Exalted, states in the Holy Qur'an:

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

Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; surely the morning recitation is witnessed. (18:78).

In this honorable verse, Almighty God orders the prayers from the declining of the sun until the darkness of the night and also orders of performing the Morning Prayer, stating that the Morning Prayer is witnessed by the angels of night and day. Considering the lexicon, traditions, exegesis of the verse and the common sense, it is understood that the All-Wise God has ordered the five prayers in this verse, determining their times. Ibn Faris says about the meaning of duluk (declining):

The word has a root meaning 'declining' or 'removing something from something else in a general way.' When it is said, 'It declined,' it means that it disappeared. Also, it means moving something in a way that it does not remain in one place.[5]

Ibn Athir, in Nihayah, supports this meaning, too. Azhari believes that declining of the sun is its inclination from the center of the sky in the middle of the day. This way, the verse contains all

the five prayers and it means:

O Muhammad! “Set up prayers!” That is keeping up praying from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night. So, up to this part of the verse, four prayers are contained, i.e. Noon, meaning ,”وقــرآن الفجــر“ Afternoon, Evening and Night Prayers. The fifth prayer is included in perform the Morning Prayer. Therefore, these are the five prayers Allah has considered obligatory for His Prophet and the ummah. If we regard duluk as meaning the sunset, the verse means ‘declining,’ that is when the sun passes دلـوك ,will refer only to three prayers.6 In Arabic the longitude and when it rises or sets, because in sunrise and sunset, the sunlight declines, too. In (the book entitled) Nawadir Al-I’rab too, the word means the height of the sun. Mubarrid has also confirmed that duluk refers to the inclination of the sun toward west up to sunset.7 As a result, even though duluk may mean the setting of the sun, in this honorable verse, the most suitable meaning is the declining of the sun from the center of the sky. Beside what was narrated from Azhari and others in proving this meaning, various other traditions have also been narrated in this regard, two of which we bring here:

عِن ابنِ مِسعود رصي الله عنه قال: قالَ رَسولُ الله صلّى اللهُ عليهِ وسلَّم : أتاني جِبرئِيلُ عَليهِ السَّلامُ لِدُلوكِ الشَّمسِ حِينَ زالَتْ فَصَلّى بِيَ الظُّهْرَ.

Ibn Mas’ud - may Allah be pleased with him - said: The Messenger of Allah (a.s) said: “(Archangel) Gabriel (a.s) came to me at the time of (duluk) declining of the sun and performed the Noon Prayer with me.”

The same concept is narrated from other people such as Ibn Abbas, Anas, Umar, Ibn Umar, Abu Barza and others. It is also narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s) that duluk means declining, not sunset.

(دُلوكُ الشَّمْسِ) زَوالُها، (غَسَقُ اللّيلِ) انتِصافُهُ، (قُرْآنُ الفَجْرِ) رَكْعَتا الفَجْرِ.

*Declining of the sun’ is its inclination toward the west and ‘the darkness of the night’ is the‘ middle of the night and ‘Qur’an Al-Fajr’ is the two-unit Morning Prayer.*8

With regard to these various traditions, we cannot regard the two traditions narrated by Suyuti from Ibn Mas’ud and Ali (a.s), implying that duluk means the sunset. Furthermore, these two types of traditions are in contrast. Supposing that the first group of traditions are not preferable and the invalidity of both types is proven, it undoubtedly becomes clear that we should refer to the Holy Qur’an’s lexical level, which made it obvious that duluk in the honorable verse means

declining of the sun. That is why Shafi'i stipulates, "Duluk, in the verse, stands for the declining of the sun."

About the word غسق (ghasaq) in the honorable verse, the author of Mu'jam Maqayis Al-Lughah says, "The root of ghasaq (darkness of the night) is (gh-s-q), which is grammatically perfect (sahih) meaning 'darkness.' The meaning of ghasaq is hence 'darkness.'9 Raghib says in Mufradat, "ghasaq stands for the intensity of the darkness." It is also quoted from Ibn Abbas that the word means the appearance of night and its darkness.10

Anyway, it seems that غســق الليــل means the middle of the night and this is more compatible with what Raghib said in Mufradat previously quoted. So, it is very unlikely that غسق الليل refers to sunset or the beginning of the night, because sunset is neither the intensity of the darkness nor the appearance of the night. It is neither the darkness of the night nor the time for the Night Prayer.

Examining the Honorable Verse

Now that the meanings of duluk, ghasaq and qur'an al-fajr are clear, we understand that God, the Almighty, has ordered the performance of five prayers in this verse, mentioning the time of these prayers. The verse states: perform prayers from the noon up to the middle of the night and perform the Morning Prayer, too. Accordingly, the time of the four prayers begins from the noon until the midnight. If we did not have enough evidence that we should perform the Noon and Afternoon Prayers before the sunset and the Evening and Night Prayers after the sunset, we could conclude from the verse that the common time of these four prayers is from the Noon up to the midnight.

However, since there is firm evidence on the fact that the Noon and Afternoon Prayers should be performed before the sunset and the Evening and Night Prayers after it, we have to restrict the general significance of the honorable verse. In other cases, however, we can resort to the verse and conclude: From the beginning of the noon until the sunset is the common time for the Noon and Afternoon Prayers11 and from the sunset to the first half (or the first one-third) of the night, according to different views, is the common time for the Evening and Night Prayers.

That is why when Imam Baqir (a.s) was asked about the Prayers ordered by Almighty God, he said: "They are five prayers a day." He was asked again: "Has Allah mentioned them in His Book?" Imam Baqir (a.s) stated:

نَعَمْ! قالَ اللهُ تَبارَكَ وَتَعالى لِنَبِيِّهِ:"أَقِمِ الصَّلَوٰةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ." (دَلُوكُها) زَوالُها، فَفيما بَينَ دُلوكِ الشَّمْسِ إلى غَسَقِ اللّيلِ أَرْبَعُ صَلواتٍ سَمّاهُنَّ اللهُ وَبَيَّنَهُنَّ وَوَقَّتَهُنَّ. (غَسَقُ اللّيلِ) هُو انْتِصافُهُ. ثمَّ قالَ: "وَقُرآنَ الفَجْرِ إنَّ قُرْآنَ الفَجْرِ كانَ مَشْهوداً."

Yes, Almighty God said to His Prophet: "Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun until the darkness of the night". Duluk is the declining of the sun so, He has obliged the performance of five prayers between the time of decline of the sun and midnight; and has determined the time of them. ghasaq is midnight.12 He, the Almighty, then said, "…and the morning recitation. Surely, the morning recitation is witnessed."

Razi acknowledges, in Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir, that the honorable verse implies the common time of the prayers:

"If we interpret ghasaq as intense darkness, we would say that intense darkness appears at the disappearance of the white twilight, which appears at the disappearance of the red twilight until) in the honorable verse shows the end of a period. A rule, which is) إلـــــى itself. The word continued up to an ultimate period, would be permissible up to the end of that period. As a result, performing all the prayers is permissible before the appearance of the white twilight."13

Furthermore, Razi says:

"If we take ghasaq as meaning the beginning of the darkness of the night, we can still get the meaning of common time for all the prayers. If we interpret ghasaq as the beginning of appearance of darkness, it would mean the sunset. So, what is mentioned in this verse would include three times: the decline of the sun, the beginning of sunset and before the sunrise. This requires that, first, the decline of the sun be the common time for the Noon and Afternoon Prayers and, second, the beginning of sunset be the common time for the Evening and Night Prayers. Therefore, interpreting gahsaq as the beginning of the darkness requires that the performance of the Noon and Afternoon Prayers or Evening and Night Prayers (simultaneously) be permissible, unconditionally (whether in travel or not)."14

He then continues:

"But external evidences prove that simultaneous performance of prayers, while not being in travel and with no special problem, is not permissible."

We will soon show you that traditions prove the permissibility of simultaneous performance of prayers while not in travel and unconditionally.

Alusi, in spite of his extreme bias, has implicitly acknowledged this meaning for the honorable verse, saying:

"The permissibility of simultaneous performance of the prayers is something confirmed by true traditions."15

Simultaneous Performance of Prayers according to Traditions

This issue is so much taken for granted in the traditions that Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, the most reliable Sunni reference books of traditions, have frequently cited it. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has mentioned some of these traditions in his Musnad, which are also narrated in other sources.

Traditions in Sahih Muslim

:In Sahih Muslim, there is a chapter entitled

بابُ: الجَمْع بَينَ الصّلاتَينِ في الحَضَر

Section: Simultaneous Performance of the Two Prayers while not being in Travel16

:We hereinafter quote some of the traditions mentioned therein

... صَلّى رَسولُ اللهِ صلّى اللهُ عليهِ وسلَّم الظُّهْرَ وَالعَصرَ جَميعاً وَالمَغْرِبَ وَالعَشاءَ جمِيعاً في غَيرِ خَوفٍ ولا سَفرٍ.

*The Messenger of Allah (a.s) performed the Noon and Afternoon Prayers simultaneously and the Evening and Night Prayers too, while he was not in travel nor was he in danger or fear.*17

صَلّى رَسولُ اللهِ صلّى اللهُ عليهِ وسلَّم الظّهرَ والعصْرَ جميعاً بِالمَدينَةِ في غَيرِ خَوفٍ ولا سَفَرٍ... أرادَ أنْ لا يُحرِجَ أحداً مِن أمَّتِه.

*Abu Zubayr said: Sa'id narrated from Ibn `Abbas that The Prophet (a.s) performed the Noon and Afternoon Prayers together in Medina, and not in travel, without any fear. I asked Sa'id, "Why did the Prophet (a.s) do so?" He answered, "I asked the same question from Ibn Abbas and he answered, "The Prophet (a.s) did not want to take his nation into trouble.*18

... جَمعَ رَسولُ اللهِ صلّى اللهُ عليهِ وسلَّم بَينَ الظُّهْرِ وَالعَصرِ والمَغرِب وَالعِشاءِ في المَدينَةِ في غَير خَوف ولا مَطر... أرادَ أنْ لا يُحرِجَ أمَّتَهُ.

*Sa'id Ibn Jubayr says that Ibn Abbas said: "The Prophet (a.s) performed the Noon and Afternoon Prayers and Evening and Night Prayers simultaneously in Medina, without any fear nor in the raining conditions... not to take his nation into trouble.*19

...صَلَّيْتُ مَع النّبيِّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم ثَمانِياً جَميعاً وَسَبْعاً جَميعاً. قُلتُ: يا أبا الشّعثاء! أظُنُّه أخَّرَ الظُّهرَ وَعَجَّلَ العَصْر وأخَّرَ المَغرِبَ وَعجَّل العِشاءَ. قال: وأنا أظُنُّ ذاكَ.

Amr narrates from Jabir Ibn Zayd that Ibn Abbas said: "We performed prayers with the Prophet (a.s), once eight units (four units of the Noon Prayer and four units of the Afternoon Prayer) and once seven units (three units of the Evening and four units of Night Prayers)." Amr says: I told Abu Al-Sha'tha', "I think the Prophet (a.s) delayed the Noon Prayer and hurried in the Afternoon Prayer and also delayed the Evening prayer, hurrying in the Night Prayer." He said, "I think so."[20]

The second half of the previous tradition is not more than conjectures of the narrator himself; yet, conjecture does not avail against the truth, as stipulated in the Holy Qur'an.

إنَّ رَسولَ اللهِ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم صَلّى بِالمَدينَةِ سَبْعاً وَثمانِيَةً؛ الظّهْر وَالعَصرَ وَالمَغرِبَ وَالعشاءَ.

The Prophet (a.s) performed seven units and eight units of prayer in Medina - the Noon and Afternoon Prayers, and the Evening and Night Prayers.[21]

In this tradition, disordered involution and evolution[22] is used, i.e. seven units of the Evening and Night Prayers and eight units of the Noon and Afternoon Prayers.

... رَأيْتُ رَسولَ اللهِ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم جَمعَ بَينَ الظُّهرِ وَالعَصْرِ وَالمَغرِبِ وَالعَشاءِ... فَأتَيتُ أبا هُريرَةَ فَسألْتُه فَصَدَّقَ مَقالَتَه. 337

Abdullah Ibn Shaqiq says: One afternoon, Ibn Abbas delivered a sermon until the sun set and the stars appeared. The public said, "Prayer! Prayer!"[23] *A man from Banu Tamim came saying, "Prayer! Prayer!" repeatedly. Ibn Abbas reproached him and said, "Do you want to teach me the Prophet's traditions? I saw him performing the Noon and Afternoon Prayers together and the Evening and Night Prayers simultaneously, too."*

Abdullah Ibn Shaqiq said: I was not satisfied with this claim, so I went to Abu Hurayrah and asked him about it. He confirmed the speech of Ibn Abbas.

...لا أُمَّ لكَ! أتُعَلِّمُنا بِالصَّلاةِ وَكُنّا نَجْمَعُ بَينَ الصَّلاتَينِ عَلى عَهْدِ رَسولِ اللهِصلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم .

A man told Ibn Abbas, "Prayer! Prayer!" Ibn Abbas did not say anything. The man repeated it three times and Ibn Abbas kept quiet. At the third time, Ibn Abbas reproached him and said,

“Do you teach me prayers while we performed prayers simultaneously in the Prophet’s time?”24

The traditions of Sahih Al-Bukhari

Bukhari, who has always attempted not to narrate anything in contrast with the governments’ policies and in accord with the tradition of the Ahl al-Bayt, narrates some of the aforementioned traditions under different subtitles. Though other traditions are true according to this presupposition, he has not narrated them and he himself is aware of the reason. Anyway, some traditions, which stipulate the simultaneous performance of prayers unconditionally and even while not in travel are narrated by Bukhari in his Sahih. In Chapter: Time of the Sunset, we read:

... صَلّى النّبيُّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم سَبعاً جمِيعاً وَثمانِياً جَميعاً.

*Abdullah Ibn Abbas says: The Prophet (a.s) performed seven units (of prayer) once and another eight units together.*25

In Chapter: About The Night Prayer And Its Time And One Who Has Much Time For Performing It, we read:

... صَلّى النّبيُّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم المَغْربَ وَالعِشاءَ.

*Ibn Umar, Abu Ayyub and Ibn Abbas said that the Prophet (a.s) performed the Evening and Night Prayers simultaneously.”*26

In Chapter: About one who doesn’t perform nafilah (optional prayer) after an obligatory prayer, it is written:

...صَلَّيْتُ مَع النّبيِّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم ثَمانِياً جَميعاً وَسَبْعاً جَميعاً. قُلتُ: يا أبا الشّعثاء! أظُنُّه أخَّرَ الظُّهرَ وَعَجَّلَ العَصْر وأخَّرَ المَغرِبَ وَعجَّل العِشاءَ. قال: وأنا أظُنُّ ذاكَ.

Amr narrates from Jabir Ibn Zayd that Ibn Abbas said: “We performed prayers with the Prophet (a.s), once eight units (four units of the Noon Prayer and four units of the Afternoon Prayer) and once seven units (three units of the Evening and four units of Night Prayers).” Amr says: I told Abu Al-Sha’tha’, “I think the Prophet (a.s) delayed the Noon Prayer and hurried in the

*Afternoon Prayer and also delayed the Evening prayer, hurrying in the Night Prayer." He said, "I think so."*27

:In the same chapter, Part: Postponing The Noon Prayer To The Afternoon, we read

... إنَّ النّبيّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم صَلّى بِالمَدينَةِ سَبْعاً وَثَمانِيَةً الظُّهْرَ وَالعَصْرَ وَالمَغْرِبَ وَالعِشاءَ. فقال أيّوب: لَعَلّه في ليلَةٍ مَطِيرةٍ. قال: عَسى.

Ibn Abbas said: The Prophet (a.s) performed seven units of the Noon and Afternoon Prayers and eight units of the Evening and Night Prayers in Medina.
*Ayyub said, "It might have been raining." He said, "Maybe."*28

In Tuhfat Al-Bari, the author acknowledges, in this part, that the title does not fit the theme of the tradition. It was more appropriate to entitle it "Chapter: On The Noon Prayer With The Afternoon One And The Evening And Night Prayers." He then concludes, "In Bukhari's interpretation when naming this chapter, there is fallacy and deficiency."29

In Part: The Afternoon Time, we read:

Abu Umamah says: We performed the Noon Prayer with Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz, the Umayyad caliph, then went to Anas Ibn Malik who was performing the Afternoon Prayer. I told him, 'Uncle! Which prayer were you performing?' He said, 'It was the Afternoon Prayer and this was the Prophet's way of praying.'30

This tradition proves that Anas performed the Noon and Afternoon Prayers simultaneously following the Prophet (a.s). It is very unlikely that Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz had performed the Noon Prayer at the end of the Noon Prayer time since in that case it was not surprising that Anas was praying. Surprisingly, Anas narrates this way of praying from the Messenger of Allah (a.s), using the word 'كنا we were' and the present tense verb 'نصلي praying' which show continuation of an action, as was the case in one of the traditions of Ibn Abbas.

:Also, In Part: The Afternoon Time, we read

عَن عَائشَةَ إنَّ رَسولَ اللّهِ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم صَلّى العَصْرَ وَالشّمْسُ في حُجرَتِها لَمْ يَظْهرِ الفَيءُ مِن حِجْرَتِها.

*Aishah narrated that the Prophet (a.s) performed the Afternoon Prayer while the sun was shining and the afternoon shade had not appeared in his room yet (i.e. the sun was still in the middle of the sky.)*31

عَن عائِشةَ قالَت: كانَ النّبيُّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم يُصَلّي صَلاةَ العَصْرِ وَالشَّمْسُ طالِعَةٌ في حُجرَتي لَم يَظْهَر الفَيءُ بَعدُ.

*The Prophet (a.s) performed the Afternoon Prayer when the sun was still shining in my room and there was no sign of the afternoon shade yet.*32

Muslim has narrated this tradition somehow differently. In any event, this tradition of Aishah as well as the other traditions show that the Prophet (a.s) did not delay his Afternoon Prayer to a time when the shade of objects is the same height or double the height of them; otherwise it was meaningless for Aishah to say, "The sun was shining in my room and the afternoon shade had not appeared yet." Further, the room was small and even if its walls were low, the shade still appeared very soon. I am certain that these traditions are the strongest arguments for proving the common time of the Noon and Afternoon Prayers. Also, because there is a sense of continuation, some may deduce from these traditions the early performance of the Afternoon Prayer. Anyhow, they at least prove the permissibility of simultaneous performance of prayers.

The traditions of Musnad Ahmad

In Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, we read:

...صَلَّيْتُ مَع النّبيِّ صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم ثَمانِياً جَميعاً وَسَبْعاً جَميعاً. قُلتُ: يا أبا الشّعثاء! أظُنُّه أخَّرَ الظُّهرَ وَعَجَّلَ العَصْر وأخَّرَ المَغرِبَ وَعجَّل العِشاءَ. قال: وأنا أظُنُّ ذاكَ.

*Amr narrates from Jabir Ibn Zayd that Ibn Abbas said: "We performed prayers with the Prophet (a.s), once eight units (four units of the Noon Prayer and four units of the Afternoon Prayer) and once seven units (three units of the Evening and four units of Night Prayers)." Amr says: I told Abu Al-Sha'tha', "I think the Prophet (a.s) delayed the Noon Prayer and hurried in the Afternoon Prayer and also delayed the Evening prayer, hurrying in the Night Prayer." He said, "I think so."*33

... صَلّى رَسولُ الله صلّى اللّهُ عليهِ وسلَّم في المَدينَةِ مُقيماً غَيرَ مُسافِرٍ سَبعاً وَثمانِياً.

*The Prophet (a.s) prayed seven units together and an eight unit in Medina, while he was not a traveler.*34

The traditions of other Books

:It is also narrated from Ibn Mas'ud

جَمَعَ النّبيُّ صلّى اللهُ عليهِ وسلَّم (يَعني في المَدينَةِ) بَينَ الظُّهرِ وَالعَصْرِ وبَينَ المَغرِبِ وَالعِشاءِ... صَنَعتُ هذا لِئَلاّ تُحْرَجَ أمَّتي.

*The Prophet (a.s) performed the Noon and Afternoon Prayers simultaneously and also the Evening and Night Prayers in Medina. He was asked about it and he said: "I did it (performed prayers like this) so that I will not take my nation in trouble.*35

:It is also narrated from Ibn Umar

جَمعَ لنا رَسولُ اللهِ صلّى اللهُ عليهِ وسلَّم مُقيماً غَيرَ مُسافِرٍ بَينَ الظُّهرِ وَالعَصرِ وَالمَغرِبِ... لأنْ لا يُحرِجَ أمَّتَهُ إنْ جمَعَ رَجُلٌ.

*The Prophet (a.s) performed the Noon, Afternoon and Evening Prayers together, while he was not traveler. Ibn Umar was asked: "Why did the Prophet do so?" He replied: "Not to take his nation into trouble, in case someone performed the prayers together."*36

No contrasting tradition, containing the Prophet's forbidding the simultaneous performance has been ever narrated except what Hanash narrates from Ikramah and from Ibn Abbas. Hanash has been criticized by Bukhari, Ahmad and others. Narrating his tradition, Tirmidhi says, "He has been weakened by narrators like Ahmad and others."37 Ikrimah, too, has been decided as doubtful. Two other traditions have been narrated from Umar without being attributed to the honorable Prophet (a.s) both of which have been denied by Bayhaqi. In short, none of the narrators have doubted the validity of the traditions stipulating the simultaneous performance of prayers by the Messenger of Allah (a.s).

Besides the mentioned traditions, there are various other traditions proving the permissibility of simultaneous performance of prayers narrated from the Prophet on special occasions, like the Arafah Day,38 and Muzdalifah Night,39 in travel and when raining. Also, other traditions prove that the Noon and Afternoon Prayers and also the Evening and Night Prayers have common times.40

Misinterpretations of the Traditions of the Simultaneous Performance of the Prayers

It is surprising that in spite of these clear and true traditions, habits were so much fossilized in

the minds of some people that they began misinterpreting the Prophet's Traditions. The dear readers have witnessed some of these misinterpretations in narrating the aforementioned traditions. Surprisingly, having quoted the tradition of Ibn Abbas about the permissibility of simultaneous performance of prayers - without any fear or condition of raining - Tirmidhi says, "People have discarded this tradition." Nawawi has stipulated, in his Tafsir,41 that there has never been a consensus on discarding this tradition.

In order to perform in contrast with the tradition, some people have misinterpreted it. Of course, each group denies the interpretation of the others and they are all invalid indeed. Nawawi says:

"Some of the early master scholars have misinterpreted the tradition saying that simultaneous performance of prayers have been due to the probability of rain, but this is so weak an interpretation because another tradition includes, 'without fear or condition of raining.' Others have misinterpreted that the simultaneous performance was practiced in the cloudy weather when the Prophet (a.s) performed the Noon Prayer. When the clouds have gone and it became clear and it was the time for the Afternoon Prayer, the Prophet performed the Afternoon Prayer. This interpretation is invalid too, since it cannot be true about the Evening and Night Prayers. Still, others have said that the Prophet (a.s) delayed the first prayer, performing it at the end of its time and afterwards performed the next prayer at the beginning of its time. So, it has been simultaneous performance in appearance, not in reality.

This interpretation is weak or rather invalid due to the fact that it is in contrast with the appearance of the tradition in a way that it is so improbable. Also, the deed of Ibn Abbas, his justification of it and the confirmation of Abu Hurayrah - all these discard this interpretation. Another group has interpreted the tradition as applying to the probability of illness and other legal excuses. This is the idea of our companions like Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Qazi Husayn. Khattabi, Mutawalli and Ruwyani have accepted it. I accept this interpretation as it agrees with the explicit significance of the tradition, the deed of Ibn Abbas, Abu Hurayrah's approval and also because the trouble of illness is more intense than that of rain."42

It is strange to understand how the explicit significance of Ibn Abbas's tradition allows the simultaneous performance of prayers in illness! Were all the people ill when Ibn Abbas preached the sermon? See how the wrong habits distort people's understanding and lead to such misinterpretations!

As Ibn Hajar Asqalani points out, if the Prophet (a.s) had performed prayers simultaneously due to illness, others could not pray with him, except those who had the same excuse. Yet, it can be said that the Prophet (a.s) prayed along with his Companions, as Ibn Abbas stipulates

the same concept in his tradition.43 It is also surprising that Ibn Hajar himself misinterprets the tradition to the apparent simultaneous performance44 without any proof which is nullified by the aforesaid argument of Nawawi. Ibn Hajar, too, got subject to criticism, in what was written as the interpretation of his book. By the same token, the criticizer of Ibn Hajar was criticized by his predecessors.

This vicious circle is only due to the persistence on denying the tradition of the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s); otherwise, at least one group who narrate from them would accept the unconditional simultaneous performance, not mixing the best times of the prayers with other times. Nawawi says:

Some scholars allow unconditional simultaneous performance of the prayers due to a problem, provided that they do not get used to it, like Ibn Sirin and Ashhab among the companions of Malik. Khattabi has narrated this from Qaffal, Shashi Kabir, a companion of Shafi'i, from Abu Ishaq Maruzi from a group of narrators; and Ibn Mundhir has accepted it. This is proved by Ibn Abbas's saying, "By so doing, the Prophet wanted not to take his nation into trouble," because in his speech there is no reference to illness or any thing else.45

In Al-Mughni and Al-Sharh Al-Kabir, Ibn Shabramah is narrated to have said, "Simultaneous performance of prayers is permissible if there is a problem or something, as long as it does not become a habit."46 Also, Nawawi says in Al-Majmu', "Ibn Mundhir, one of our scholars, believes that simultaneous performance of prayers is permissible while not as a traveler, with no fear or rain or illness."

As you see, Nawawi has not mentioned the condition that it should not become a habit. At the end of the chapter, he brings about a problem entitled "Chapter: Opinions About Simultaneous Performance Of Prayers While Not In Travel, And With No Fear, Rain Or Illness" saying:

According to our opinion (i.e. Shafiite) and those of Abu Hanifah, Malik, Ahmad and most of Sunni scholars, simultaneous performance of prayers is not allowed. Ibn Mundhir has narrated the permissibility of unconditional simultaneous performance from a group of narrators saying, 'Ibn Sirin has allowed simultaneous performance when necessary, but not as a habit.'"47

Yet, Sayf Al-Din Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Shashi Al-Qaffal, in Hilyat Al-Ulama', narrates the permissibility of the unconditional simultaneous performance of the prayers as quoted by Ibn Mundhir from Ibn Sirin.48

Anyway, the condition of not getting a habit is also an unproven misinterpretation added by some people to the traditions. Though the honorable Messenger of Allah (a.s) did not want to take his nation into trouble, some people have habitually added some conditions, taking themselves and others into trouble, while Almighty God states:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعُسْرَ .

Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty. (2:185)

It can also be said that the Messenger of Allah (a.s) performed his prayers simultaneously most of the time, if not always, as is evident from the traditions of Ibn Abbas and Anas in which past continuous was used, and also from the tradition of Aishah and all the traditions stipulating the earliness in performing the prayer. The simultaneous performance of prayers the Prophet (a.s) did most of the time was of course jam' taqdim, not jam' ta'khir, though the latter has been narrated. It should be kept in mind that if simultaneous performance of prayers results in the forsaking of nawafil (supererogatory prayers), it is not preferred. Rather if it leads to weakening the Prophet's traditions, it will be unlawful. Maybe, this is the supposition of those who have deemed permissible the simultaneous performance as long as it does not become a habit, i.e. it does not oppose the tradition of the Prophet (a.s). This reverence is only for denying the weakening of the tanafful tradition – though nawafil themselves are subject to controversy – no more. There remains therefore no problem.

Discussions about the best time of prayers, according to Shi'a jurisprudents, require an opportunity itself, and what has been mentioned was only the Sunni traditions in this regard.

A Summary of Jurisprudents' Opinions

Jurisprudents have had different opinions about the unconditional simultaneous performance of the prayers to be summarized herein:

The Hanafite's Opinion

The Hanafites believe in the unlawfulness of simultaneous performance of prayers, whether in travel or not, with any problems except in two cases – on Arafah Day and at Muzdalifah Night in certain conditions.

The Shafiite's Opinion

The Shafiites believe in the permissibility of simultaneous performance of prayers for the traveler and when raining and snowing under certain conditions. To them, simultaneous performance is not permitted due to intense darkness, wind, fear or illness.

The Malikite's Opinion

The Malikites consider the reasons for the simultaneous performance of prayers as follow:

illness, rain, muddy earth, darkness at the end of lunar month, and on Arafah Day and Muzdalifah Night for the hajjis under certain conditions.

The Hanbalite's Opinion

The Hanbalites allow simultaneous performance of prayers on 'Arafah Day and Muzdalifah Night; and for travelers, patients, nursing mothers, a woman with excessive menstruation, the polyuric, one who is unable to purify her/himself, one who is unable to distinguish the time and one who is fearful for his/her property, health or reputation; and also in rainy, snowy, cold, .windy and muddy weathers. They also mention some conditions

Some narrators and Shafiites' Opinion

They think simultaneous performance of prayers is permissible due to any sort of problem, .provided that it does not become a habit

Ibn Shibramah's Opinion

Ibn Shibramah allows the simultaneous performance of prayers due to any reason and even .with no special reason as long as it does not turn to a habit

Ibn Mundhir and Ibn Sirin's Opinion

Ibn Mundhir and Ibn Sirin, according to Qaffal, permit the simultaneous performance of prayers under all circumstances unconditionally.49

As was proved, the latter opinion is the truth and is the same as the stipulation of the Holy Qur'an. Imamiyyah, too, following the Ahl al-Bayt, adopt this opinion.

This chapter was finished on the eighth of Safar, AH 1415 corresponding to twenty-seventh of .Tir, 1373

Notes

1. Jam' taqdim, or early co-performance, is performing the Afternoon Prayer after the Noon one and performing the Night Prayer after the Evening one.
2. Jam' Ta'khir or late co-performance, is performing the Noon and Afternoon Prayer together in the afternoon, and performing the Evening and Night Prayers a little after the sunset.
3. The author of Al-Bahr Al-Ra'iq says: "I saw many people, especially in hajj, who performed two prayers together and did this following Imam Shafi'i: See Vol. 1, p. 267. Of course, the type

of travel, which allows for this, is subject to discussion.

4. Al-Sunan Al-Kubra, Vol. 2, p. 345.

5. Mu'jam Maqayis Al-Lugha, Vol. 2, p. 298.

6. Evening, Night and the Morning Prayers.

7. Majma' Al-Bayan, Vol. 6, p. 433.

8. Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, Abwab Al-Mawaqit, No. 4799.

9. Mu'jam Al-Maqayis Al-Lughah, Vol. 4, p. 425.

10. Al-Durr Al-Manthur, Vol. 4, p. 195.

11. Order should of course be maintained; i.e. first the Noon Prayer should be performed and then the Afternoon Prayer and performing the Afternoon Prayer without performing the Noon Prayer would be meaningless. Also, if there is time only for one prayer, the Afternoon should be performed. The same is the case about the Evening and Night Prayers.

12. Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, Abwab A'dad Al-Fara'iz wa Nawafiliha, section 2.

13. Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir, Vol. 21, p. 27.

14. Ibid.

15. Tafsir Ruh Al-Ma'ani, Vol. 15, p. 132 and 133.

16. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, p. 151. This title is omitted in Sharh Nawawi.

17. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, Kitab Salat Al-Musafirin wa Qasriha, p. 151, No. 1146 (Int'l No.)

18. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, Kitab Salat Al-Musafirin wa Qasriha, p. 151, No. 1147 (Int'l No.).

19. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, Kitab Salat Al-Musafir, p. 152, No. 1152 (Int'l No.)

20. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, Kitab Salat Al-Musafir, p. 152, No. 1152 (Int'l No.).

21. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, Kitab Salat Al-Musafir wa Qasriha, p.152, No.1153 (Int'l No.).

22. A figure of speech in which a number of nouns or subjects mentioned successively are followed or preceded by a corresponding number of adjectives or predicates. (Translator)

23. They meant it is time for the Evening Prayer. To them, the Prophet's tradition necessitates performing the Evening Prayer at the sunset, not delaying it until the Night Prayer's time.

24. Sahih Muslim, Vol. 1, Kitab Salat Al-Musafir, p. 152, No. 1155 (Int'l No.)

25. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Mawaqit Al-Salat, Vol. 1, p. 140, No. 562 in Fat'h Al-Bari (No. 529, Int'l No.)

26. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Mawaqit Al-Salat, Vol. 1, p. 141 (after No. 530).

27. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Al-Jum'a, Vol. 1 (chapter 30, tradition 1174 in Fat'h Al-Bari and No. 1103, Int'l No.)

28. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Mawaqit Al-Salat, Vol. 1, p. 137, No. 543 (No. 510, Int'l No.)

29. Tuhfat Al-Bari, Vol. 2, p. 292 (quoted from Masa'il Fiqhiyya by Imam Sharaf Al-Din, p. 14)

30. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Kitab Mawaqit Al-Salat, p. 183, No. 549 (No. 516, Int'l No.)

31. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Mawaqit Al-Salat, No. 512 (Int'l No.)

32. Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab Mawaqit Al-Salat, No. 513 (Int'l No.).

33. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Bani Hashim, Vol. 1, p 221, No. 1818 (Int'l No.)

34. Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Bani Hashim, Vol. 1, p 221, No. 1828 (Int'l No.)

35. Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat by Tabarani, Vol. 4, p. 252.

36. Abdul Razzaq San'ani, Al-Musannaf, Nashr Al-Majlis Al-Ilmi, Vol. 2, p. 556.

37. Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, Vol. 1, p. 356.

38. Arafah Day is the ninth of Dhu'l-Hajjah (the twelfth lunar month of the Hijri Calendar). On this day, Pilgrims (hajjis) should obligatorily stay on Mount Arafat from noon to the sunset (Editor).

39. Muzdalifah Night is that lying before Eid Al-Adha when the hajjis should stay in Mash'ar Al-Haram (Editor).

40. Al-Sunan Al-Kubra by Bayhaqi, Vol. 3, p. 169.

41. Sharh Nawawi, Vol. 5, p. 218; Tafsir Ruh Al-Ma'ani, Vol. 15, the exegesis of 18:78.

42. The end of the speech of Nawawi. See: Sharh Nawawi, Vol. 5, p. 218.

43. Fat'h Al-Bari, Vol. 2, p. 30.

44. That is delaying the noon Prayer and early performance of the Afternoon Prayer immediately after it.

45. Sharh Nawawi, Vol. 5, p. 219.

46. Al-Mughni and Al-Sharh Al-Kabir, Vol. 2, p. 122, No. 1263.

47. Al-Majmu', Vol. 4, p. 384.

48. Hilya Al-Ulama', Vol. 2, p. 244.

49. For the documents of these opinions, see Al-Fiqh ala Madhahib Al-Arba'ah; Al-Mughni; Al-Sharh Al-Kabir; Al-Majmu'; Hilyat Al-Awlia' and many others.