Performing Two Prayers Together

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The other point which is exploited to revile the Shi'ah with, being their performing salàt al-zuhr (noon prayers) and salàt al-'asr (afternoon prayers) together, and so also salàt al-maghrib and al-'ishà'. While vilifying the Shi'ah (for the alleged defect), Ahl al-Sunnah, in contrast, assert their being adherent to preserving the salàt, complying to Allah's words when saying: "Verily prayer is (imposed) upon the believers as (a) timed Ordinance." (4:103) Before issuing any judgement for or against them, we have to discuss the subject from all dimensions and aspects, reviewing what the two sects hold in its regard.

There is unanimous agreement among Ahl al-Sunnah concerning the permissibility of performing salàt al-zuhr and al-'asr (noon and afternoon prayers) together at 'Arafàt (Mount), which is called jam' taqdim (precedent joining), and also the permissibility of performing maghrib and 'isha' prayers at the time of 'isha', the act called jam' ta'khir (late joining). This act is unanimously concurred by all Muslims, including the Shi'ah and Sunnis, and rather all the Islamic communities, with no exception.

The disagreement between the Shi'ah and Ahl al-Sunnah lies in the permissibility of performing together the two obligatory prayers of zuhr and 'asr, and also the maghrib and 'isha' prayers, throughout the whole days of the year during settlement, without the presence of excuse of travel. The Hanafi school believes in its impermissibility even during travel, despite the existence of express texts permitting it (jam') especially during trave, contradicting thus the unanimity of the Ummah: Shi'ah and Sunnah.

The Màlikis, Shàfi'is and Hanbalis concur on the permissibility of jam' (performing together) between two obligatory salàts during travel, but disagree concerning its permissibility in the times of (public) panic (khawf), sickness, raining and mud (flood). The Imàmiyyah Shi'ah unanimously concur on its absolute permissibility, without the excuses of travel or raining or panic, following in this respect the guide of Ahl al-Bayt Imams among the Pure Kindred (peace be upon them).

In this point, in particular, we should take an accusative and skeptical standpoint toward them, as whenever the Sunnis argue against the Shi'ah with a proof, they would rebut the argument with saying that the Ahl al-Bayt Imams have taught and explained to them all the unsolvable matters, boasting of following the example of Infallible Imams having full knowledge of the Qur'àn and (Prophetic) Sunnah!

I remember that the first time I performed salàt al-zuhr and salàt al-'asr, was led by the Martyr Muhammad Bàqir al-Sadr (may God be pleased with him). I used to perform the noon and afternoon ('asr) prayers separately, when being in the holy City of Najaf, till the coming of that blessed day. In that day, I went out with al-Sayyid Muhammad Bàqir al-Sadr from his house to the mosque where he used to lead the congregational prayers, before his imitators who welcomed me respectfully, leaving me a room just behind him. When the noon prayers expired and iqàmah was made for the 'asr prayers, I had a presentiment to quit and leave them. But I remained for two reasons, the first being the dignity of al-Sayyid al-Sadr and his profound solemnity in his prayer, that I wished to be prolongated. The second reason was my presence in that place, being the nearest worshipper to him, feeling as if a force majeure pulling me toward him. As we finished performing the 'asr prayers, people accumulated around him putting forth their questions before him, when I stayed behind him listening to the questions and their answers given by him, except for some undisclosed ones. Then he accompanied me home for lunch, where I found myself as honorary guest. I availed myself of the opportunity of that meeting, and asked him about performing two salàts together, thus:

— O master! Can the Muslim perform two obligatory prayers together in case of exigency?

He replied: He can do so in all cases with no necessity of presence of exigency. I said: What is your proof for this? He said: Since the Messenger of Allah (S) has performed two obligatory prayers in al-Madinah with no travel, fear, raining or exigency, but only for keeping us away from troubles. This fact, thanks to God, is confirmed and established for us through the pure Imams, and it is also established for you.

I said: I wonder how could it be established for us while I have never heard of it before, nor seen any Sunni applying it. Rather, on the contrary, the Sunnis believe in the invalidity of the salàt if performed even one minute before the adhàn (call for prayer), so what about that performing prayers hours before (its time) with the noon prayers, or performing the 'isha' prayers together with the maghrib, the act we view to be indecent and invalid.

Al-Sayyid Muhammad Bàqir al-Sadr realized my perplexity and wonder. He whispered in the ear of someone of the attendants, who hurriedly went and brought him two books, which I recognized to be Sahih al-Bukhàri and Sahih-Muslim. Al-Sayyid al-Sadr asked that knowledge-seeker to make me acquainted with the traditions related to performing two prayers together. I myself read in Sahih al-Bukhàri (the traditions showing) how the Prophet (S) performed together the zuhr and 'asr prayers and maghrib and 'isha' prayers. In Sahih Muslim I came across a full chapter on al-jam' bayna al-salàtayn (performing two prayers together) at time of presence (hadar) other than times of fear or raining or travel. I could not hide my

wonder and astonishment, while being doubtful that al-Bukhàri and Muslim with them might be falsified, deciding privately to review these two books in Tunisia.

After that proof, al-Sayyid al-Sadr sought to know my opinion.

I said: You are quite right, and what you say is the very truth. I would like to put forth another question. He said: Please do. I said: Is it permissible to perform together the four salawàt (prayers), as practised by a lot of people who perform the prayers of zuhr, ‘asr, maghrib and ‘isha’ together out of (due) time (qadà’) when returning home at night? He said: This is impermissible.

I said: You yourself said before that the Messenger of Allah (S) used to perform the prayers separately and altogether, the practice through which we recognized the due times (mawàqit), approved by Allah the Glorified.

He said: There is a common time for the two faridahs (obligatory prayers) of zuhr and ‘asr, that starts from the meridian till sunset. And also for the prayers of maghrib and ‘isha’, that starts from sunset till the midnight. While the morning prayer has one time beginning from breaking of dawn till sunrise. Whoever contradicts these fixed times, has in fact contradicted the holy verse: “Verily prayer is (imposed) upon the believers as (a) timed Ordinance.” (4:103). So we cannot, for instance, perform the morning prayer before dawn-breaking, nor after sunrise. Also it is impermissible to perform the zuhr and ‘asr prayers before the meridian or after sunset. And further we are not allowed to perform the maghrib and ‘isha’ prayers before sunset or after midnight.

I then thanked al-Sayyid Muhammad Bàqir al-Sadr. And though I was content with all his words, but I never performed two ordinances together after departing him, till my return to Tunisia, where I engaged myself deliberately in investigation and research till being enlightened. This was my story with Martyr al-Sadr (may God’s mercy be upon him), concerning the performing together of two obligatory prayers, intending from citing them that my brothers, among the Sunnis may realize, first, the morality of the ‘ulamà’ who humbled themselves to deserve the epithet of being the inheritors of the prophets in respect of knowledge and ethics. Second, to show how we be unaware of what our Sihàh contain, while reviling the others on some matters in whose veracity we verily believe, and which are stated in our Sihàh.

In his Musnad,270 Al-’Imàm Ahmad ibn Hanbal reported from Ibn ‘Abbàs that he said: The Messenger of Allah (S) performed seven and eight (rak‘ahs) altogether (i.e. maghrib with ‘isha’, and zuhr with ‘asr prayers) at al-Madinah while being resident not traveller. In al-Muwatta’,271 Al-’Imàm Màlik reported that Ibn ‘Abbàs said: The Messenger of Allah (S) performed the zuhr

with ‘asr prayers, and maghrib with ‘isha’ prayers together, without presence of fear or travelling. The same tradition is reported also by al-’Imàm Muslim, in his Sahih, under the bàb “al-jam‘ bayna al-salàtayn fi al-hadar”.

Muslim also reported from Ibn ‘Abbàs that he said: The Messenger performed together zuhr with ‘asr prayers, and maghrib with ‘isha’ prayers at al-Madinah, with no fear or travel. He (Muslim) said: I asked Ibn ‘Abbàs: Why did he do so? He replied: So that he would never cause any problem for his Ummah.273

The fact indicating that this Prophetic Sunnah was widely known among the Sahàbah, and practised by them, can be sought in the tradition reported by Muslim too in his Sahih, under the same bàb, by saying: Ibn ‘Abbàs addressed us in a sermon after the ‘asr (afternoon), and continued till sunset and appearance of the stars, when people started calling: al-salàt, al-salàt. Thereat a man from Banu Tamim, while perpetually exclaiming: al-salàt, al-salàt., came toward him. Ibn ‘Abbàs said to him: O son of no mother! Do you teach me the Sunnah? Then he said: I have seen the Messenger of Allah (S) performing together the zuhr with ‘asr and maghrib with ‘isha’ prayers. In another narration, Ibn ‘Abbàs said to the man: O motherless man, do you teach us the prayers, and we used to perform two prayers together during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (upon whom be God’s peace and benediction).274

In his Sahih,275 under the bàb “waqt al-maghrib”, al-’Imàm al-Bukhàri said: Adam informed us saying, Shu’bah told us and said, ‘Amr ibn Dinar said: I heard Jàbir ibn Zayd, quoting Ibn ‘Abbàs who said: The Prophet, upon whom be God’s peace and benediction, performed seven (rak‘ahs) together and eight together (meaning maghrib with ‘isha’ and zuhr with ‘asr prayers).

Also, in his Sahih,276 under the bàb “’waqt al-‘asr”, al-Bukhàri is reported to have said: I heard Abu Imamah saying: We performed with ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz the zuhr prayer, after which we went out and entered upon Anas ibn Màlik whom we found performing the ‘asr prayer. I said: What is that prayer you performed? He said: It is the ‘asr prayer, and it is the prayer of the Messenger of Allah, upon whom be God’s peace and benediction, which we used to perform with him.

Despite the plainness of these traditions, still there are some who exploit this point to revile the Shi’ah with. It has once upon a time occurred in Tunisia, when the prayers leader (imàm) in the City of Qafsah, stood up for reviling and defaming us in the midst of the worshippers, saying: Have you noticed the religion they brought ... after performing the zuhr prayer they rise up and perform the ‘asr. It is a new religion other than the Din of Muhammad the Messenger of Allah. These people contradict the Qur’àn which says: “Verily prayer is (imposed) upon the believers as (a) timed Ordinance.” He spared nothing but reviled with it those who were enlightened and

guided.

One of the enlightened, who was a highly learned youth, came toward me and cited to me so sadly and bitterly what hte leader (of prayer) said. So I handed him both Sahih al-Bukhàri and Sahih Muslim, asking him to show the imam the (traditions proving the) veracity of jam‘ (performing two prayers together), which being of the Prophet’s Sunnah. As I never intended to debate with him; since I did this before by that which is better but he responded with reviling and slander, and baseless charges. However, my friend never stopped praying behind him and when the prayers finished, the imam sat as usual to give the lessons. Then my friend advanced to him and put forth the inquiry about performing two faridahs together. He replied: It is one of the Shi‘ah’s heresies. My friend said to him: But it is recorded in Sahih al-Bukhàri and Sahih Muslim, with giving them to him. On reading the bàb al-jam‘ bayna al-salàtayn”, he was shocked by the truth, before all the worshippers, attending his classes. So he immediately closed the books, and returned them to me saying: This (sunnah) belongs in particular to the Messenger of Allah, and when you become an apostle of Allah you can apply it. After that this friend said to me: I realized then that this man was no more than a bigoted illiterate (jàhil), making an oath not to pray behind him any more (being led by him).277

Thereafter, I asked my friend to go back to him to let him be acquainted with the fact that Ibn ‘Abbàs used to perform that salàt (two prayers together) besides Anas ibn Màlik and many a Companion, so why does he intend to distinguish the Messenger of Allah to perform it alone? Haven’t we had a good example in the Messenger of Allah? But my friend begged me to excuse him of this task, saying: No need for this, since I am sure that he will never be convinced even when the Messenger of Allah (S) himself comes to him.

All praise belongs to Allah, that a large number of the youths, after recognizing this reality, (the performing together of two prayers), resumed their (performance of) prayers after discarding it. That was because they were suffering from missing the performing of the prayers in their due times, in a way they used to resort to perform the four prayers altogether at night, the act causing them troubles and their hearts being fed up.But they realized then the wisdom that lies behind performing two prayers together, as all employees, students and common people would, through this sunnah, be able to perform the daily prayers in their due times with restful hearts. Only then they realized the true meaning of the Messenger’s expression: “.... so that I never create any trouble for my Ummah.”

Prostration on Clay

All Shi’ah ‘ulamà’ unanimously agree on the preferability of prostrating on the earth, in accordance with the tradition they report from the Messenger of Allah (S): “The best

prostration is on the earth."

In another narration, he (S) said:

"It is not permissible to prostrate but only on the earth, or any plant coming out from it, provided it be unedible and unwearable." The author of Wasà'il al-Shi'ah, reports from Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, with the authority of Hishàm ibn al-Hakam, from Abu 'Abd Allàh (A) that he said: Prostration on the earth is preferable since it is more extremely indicative of modesty, and submission to Allah, the Mighty and the Glorious." In another narration, he reported from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, through his isnàd from Ishaq ibn al-Fadl, that he questioned Abu 'Abd Allàh (al-'Imàm al-Sàdiq) [A] about prostration on mats (hasir) woven from reed (qasab). He (A) replied: There is no objection to it, but to prostrate on earth is more preferable to me, and the Messenger of Allah, may God's peace and benediction be upon him and his Progeny, liked this, that to make the forehead touch the earth. I like for you whatever was liked by the Messenger of Allah (S)."

Whereas the Sunni 'ulamà' see no objection to prostrate on pens (zaribah) and carpets, though they prefer it to be (reedy) mats. There are some narrations reported by al-Bukhàri and Muslim in their Sahihs, confirming the Messenger's having a mat made of palm leaves, using it for prostration. Muslim reported in his Sahih under kitàb al-hayd, on the aurhotiy of Yahya ibn Yahya and Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from Abu Mu'àwiyah, from al-'A'mash, from Thabitt ibn 'Ubayd, from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, from 'A'ishah who said: The Messenger of Allah (S) said to me, hand me the khumrah from the mosque. She says: I said: I am menstruant. He said: Your menstruation is not from your hands.278 (Muslim says: Al-Khumrah is a small rug-like, with the size enough for prostration).

The evidence indicating that the Messenger of Allah was much preferring prostration on earth, can be sought in the tradition reported by al-Bukhàri in his Sahih, on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may God be pleased with him), who said that the Messenger of Allah, may God's peace and benedictions be upon him and his Progeny, used to seclude himself during the second ten days of the Month of Ramadàn. He kept on this habit for one year, till the coming of the twenty-first night, the morning of which he was supposed to end his seclusion, when he said: Whoever secluded himself with me, should do so in the last ten days. I saw this night, and was made to forget it; I saw myself (in dream) wading in water and mud, in its morning. So seek it (the night) in the last ten days, and in every odd night. At that very night, it rained, and the mosque which was supported by a trellis, started to leak, when my eyes felt on the Messenger of Allah, may God's peace and benediction be upon him and his Progeny, seeing the trace of water and mud on his forehead, in the morning of the twenty-first day.279

The other evidence demonstrating the Companions' preferring prostration on earth, in the presence of the Prophet (S), being the hadith reported by al-'Imàm al-Nasà'i in his Sunan, under "bàb tabrid al-hasà Lis-sijud 'alayh" (cooling the stones for prostrating on them), who said: Qutaybah informed us and said, 'Abbàd reported, from Muhammad ibn 'Amr, from Sa'id ibn al-Harth, from Jàbir ibn 'Abd Allàh, who said: When we were performing the zuhr prayers with the Messenger of Allah (S), I picked up a handful of stones in the palm of my hand, cooling them and shifting them to the other palm, and when prostrating I would place them to put my forehand on.280 Added to this, the hadith uttered by the Prophet (S):

"The earth is made for me a place for prostration (masjid) and a purifier."281 He also said: "The earth as a whole is made to us a place for prostration and its soil made a purifier."282 Why are Muslims then be fanatic against the Shi'ah because of their prostration on earth instead of zaràbi (moquette)? And how dare they to charge them with impiety, reviling and defaming them, falsely and calumniously with the charge of being idolaters? Further how do the Saudis beat them (the Shi'ah) merely for keeping the turbah (piece of clay on which foreheads are put) in their pockets or bags? Is this truly the Islam that commands us to respect each other, and never insult any monotheist Muslim witnessing that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing prayers, pyaing the poor-due, fasting the Month of Ramadàn and making pilgrimage to the House of Allah (Makkah)? And can it stand to reason that the Shi'i undergoes all those troubles, sustaining all those losses to make pilgrimage to the House (Ka'bah), and visit the Prophet's tomb, while being worshippers of stones, as some people desire to portray?

Can't the Sunnis be convinced with the statement of the Martyr Muhammad Bàqir al-Sadr, which I quoted in my first book Thumma Ihtadayt (Then I was guided), when I asked him about the piece of clay (on which they put their foreheads during their prayers, calling it al-turbah, and he answered thus: We all prostrate on the dust for Allah, but not for the dust, as some people claim that the Shi'ah do. And there is difference between prostration on the dust and prostration for the dust! For the prostration is only for Allah, praise be to Him the Highest. And when the Shi'i takes care so as the place of his prostration be pure and accepted by Allah, responding to the commands of the Messenger of Allah and the Pure Imams of Ahl al-Bayt. Especially nowadays where all mosques being carpetted with soft moquette, which are made of unknown material to all the Muslims, and never be made in Islamic countries, besides some of them being made of materials on which prostration is forbidden... are we to discard and renounce the Shi'i who is concerned about the validity of his salàt, and accuse him of being infidel and polytheist just for a fictitious suspicion?

The Shi'i who cares about the affairs of his Din (religion), particularly his salàt which is the backbone of religion ('amud al-Din), taking off his belt and watch whose band is made of leather of unknown origin; and sometimes his foreign trousers so as to pray in a loose and waving trousers, for the only reason to take precaution and attaching much importance to that magnificent halting before Allah, so as not to meet his Lord with any undeirable thing ... does all this deserve to be met with all this scorning and aversion, or it should be met with respect and exaltation? Since he has magnified the offerings consecrated to Allah, as said in the Qur'àn: "And whoever respecteth the signs of God verily it is (the reflection) of the piety of the hearts." (22:32)

O bondmen of Allah, fear the wrath of Allah and speak words straight to the point. Allah says: "And had it not been God's grace upon you and His mercy in this world and the hereafter, (indeed had seized you for the slander ye entered into, a grievous chastisement." (24:14, 15