

A resident may combine prayers to avoid difficulties

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Question: “Is it allowed for a resident to combine Dhuhr and `Asr prayers without any excuse?”

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)¹:

“Imaam Muslim reported in his Saheeh the hadeeth from Ibn `Abbaas who said: ‘The Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) combined Dhuhr with `Asr and Maghrib with `Ishaa in Madeenah without being in a state of travelling or the presence of rain.’ They said: ‘Why did he do that O Abu I-`Abbaas?’² This was `Abdullaah bin `Abbaas’s kunyah. He replied: ‘So he would not put his ummah to difficulty.’³

So what is apparent from the hadeeth is that it is permissible to combine two prayers while being a resident and without the excuse of rain, as rain is a Legislated excuse that allows the combining of two prayers. And here Ibn `Abbaas says that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) combined while he was a resident and combined without the excuse of rain, and he confirmed that when he was asked the previous question ‘Why did he do that?’ by saying: ‘So he would not put his ummah to difficulty.’ This is the hadeeth and it is in Saheeh Muslim, not al-Bukhaaree. The same meaning is found in al-Bukhaaree: that he combined prayers in Madeenah as eight rak`ahs,⁴ but it does not have this detail that Imaam Muslim reported from Ibn `Abbaas which contains this important subtlety – i.e. his (صلى الله عليه وسلم) statement ‘So he would not put his ummah to difficulty’ in answer to that question.

So some scholars of both old and recent times hold that this combining is permissible for a resident without any excuse, and I don’t consider this correct because the narrator of the hadeeth justifies the Messenger’s (صلى الله عليه وسلم) combining without an excuse with another excuse: which is to legislate and explain to the people, as Ibn `Abbaas said, ‘So he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) would not put his ummah to difficulty.’ This means that the ruling of

¹ (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

² The addition of “O Abu I-`Abbaas” is found in Musnad Ahmad 4/192

³ Saheeh Muslim no.705

⁴ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree no.543

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combining as a resident is restricted to the presence of difficulty if one were to not combine. So when there is difficulty in performing the prayers in their known appointed times, it is permissible to combine to avoid the difficulty, which Allaah (عزوجل)⁵ negated in the likes of His Statement: [He has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty].⁶ But if there is no difficulty, it is obligatory to maintain performing the five prayers, each prayer in its time, because there is no difficulty.

For example, I am sitting here and I hear the adhaan there in the nearby mosque and I am able to go out without any difficulty, then it is not permissible for me to combine. And vice versa: when I came on this trip I found that this electric elevator wasn't working, and it is very difficult for me as you see because of a pain in my knees to go down or up by way of stairs. So some prayers went by and I didn't go out to the mosque. But when the electric elevator was fixed and saved me the difficulty of going up and down, it became obligatory upon me to pray every prayer in the mosque because I did not find this difficulty that I had found when I just settled here. Therefore combining is only allowed to avoid difficulty; and when there is no difficulty, there is no combining. They are two inseparable matters: when there is no difficulty, there is no combining; when there is difficulty, there is combining. And this is the best that can be said to reconcile between this authentic hadeeth and the hadeeths clearly stating that every prayer is to be prayed in its appointed time and that it is not allowed to distract oneself from it – especially since in most circumstances, combining necessitates leaving prayer with the congregation, as I described to you my previous situation.”

⁵ (عزوجل) (Azza wa Jaal) Mighty and Majestic is He

⁶ Surat ul-Hajj, 22:78