

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 238-239)

From the Book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,

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﴿حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ 238 فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَأَدْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ 239﴾

“Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawat (the prayers) especially the middle Salah. And stand before Allah with obedience. And if you fear (an enemy), perform Salah (pray) on foot or riding. And when you are in safety, offer the Salah (prayer) in the manner He has taught you, which you knew not (before).” [Al-Baqarah: 238-239]

These are two verses regarding Salah, that were revealed by Allah (swt) during the verses of marriage, loyalty, divorce, khula', children, and breastfeeding. Regarding what is learned from their Revelation, during the midst of these matters:

Firstly: One must not forget to maintain Salah during the events that he passes through in his life, with his wife and children. His problems must not make him forget the pillar of his Deen. Salah is for Allah, the One and Only, for it is a great pillar of Islam.

Secondly: Paying attention to Salah and rushing to it is an important matter in Islam, especially when problems and events are escalating. The Messenger of Allah (swt) used to rush to Salah, whenever an important matter concerned him. In addition to that, Salah brings a person closer to his Lord and strengthens the Taqwa in him. So he fears Allah (swt), his Lord, when dealing with the wife and children. Thus, he puts his effort to investigate the truth and stands by it in the matters of marriage, divorce and children, hence avoiding injustice and harm to others.

Thirdly: One should always remember that this great Islam does not separate Deen from politics. It does not separate between acts of individual worship from collective transactions. It does not separate what they call personal behaviour from jihad and the Bayah to the khalifah and so on. So, there is neither discrimination between rules related to rituals and rules related to worldly matters, nor is their discrimination between an obligation of the first type and an obligation of the second type. The One Who clarified the rulings of marriage, divorce and breastfeeding is the One Who explained the rulings of prayer, jihad, or zakat. All of these are from Allah (swt), and it is not correct to separate them from each other, nor to believe in some without the other. As mentioned in the Ayaat, (85) ﴿وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (85) **“Then do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the rest? Then what is the recompense of those who do so among you, except disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be consigned to the most grievous torment. And Allâh is not unaware of what you do.” [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 85-86]**

In these verses, Allah (swt) explains the following:

1. Allah (swt) commands to maintain the Salahs. He (swt) singles out the middle prayer, and also commands us to perform the prayer with humility, not to speak in between about anything that is not from it.

﴿حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ﴾ **“Guard strictly As-Salawât (the prayers).”** That is, they performed it in its times with its pillars and provisions. Al-Bukhari and Muslim narated on the authority of Ibn Masoud, may Allah be pleased with him, and the wording is from Al-Bukhari, he said, سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ الصَّلَاةُ عَلَىٰ مِيقَاتِهَا قُلْتُ ثُمَّ أَيٌّ قَالَ ثُمَّ بِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ قُلْتُ ثُمَّ أَيٌّ قَالَ الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَسَكَتَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَلَوْ اسْتَزِدُّهُ لَزَادَنِي **“I asked the Messenger of Allah (saw), I said, O Messenger of Allah: which deed is best? He said: Prayer on its appointed time, I said: Then which? He said: Honoring the parents, I said, then what? He said: Jihad for the**

sake of Allah, so I stopped asking the Messenger of Allah (saw), and if I had asked him more, he would have increased me.”

وَالصَّلَاةَ الْوُسْطَى **“the middle prayer,”** Several narrations have been mentioned about what is the middle prayer. Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha and others were mentioned. By examining them, it becomes clear that no narrations were narrated from the Messenger of Allah (saw), except about the Asr prayer and the noon prayer. The saying of a Sahabi is his opinion and not a sharai evidence, and therefore we will leave its discussion.

We now we'll review the Shariah evidences related to the Asr prayer and those related to the Zuhr prayer to see the most correct opinion regarding As-salat-ul-wusta (the middle prayer).

First: Muslim quoted from the hadith of Ali - may Allah honor his face, said that the Prophet (saw) said on the day of Al-Ahzab, «شَغَلُونَا عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى صَلَاةِ الْعَصْرِ مَلَأَ اللَّهُ بُيُوتَهُمْ وَقُبُورَهُمْ نَارًا» **“They distracted us from the middle prayer, the Asr prayer, and Allah (swt) filled their homes with fire.”**

Al-Tirmidhi narrated on the authority of Samrah «هي العصر» فقال: «سنل عن الصلاة الوسطى فقال: «هي العصر» أن رسول الله ﷺ «The Messenger of Allah (saw) was asked about the middle prayer, and he said: **“It is the Asr prayer.”**

Secon: Ahmad and Abu Dawud reported with a good chain of narrators on the authority of Zaid bin Thabit who said, كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يُصَلِّي الظُّهْرَ بِالْهَاجِرَةِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ يُصَلِّي صَلَاةَ أَشَدَّ عَلَى أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْهَا فَنَزَلَتْ «حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى» **“The Messenger of Allah (saw) used to pray the Zuhr prayer at the Hijrah, and there was no prayer more severe for the Companions than it, so it was revealed: “Guard strictly (five obligatory) AsSalawat (the prayers) especially the middle Salah”**

By examining these evidences, it becomes clear that the first group of hadiths is explicit in naming by the Messenger (saw) that the middle prayer is the Asr prayer, and in the second group, the Companion (ra) mentions that the reason for the revelation of the verse is related to the Zuhr prayer.

The first group is stronger in indicating the subject because it is an explicit text regarding the middle Salah, so it is more likely than the second.

It is true that the reason for Revelation is more likely to specify what is required if the first hadiths are considered. In addition, it the hadith is an explicit text within the matter. Therefore, it is more likely that it is the Asr prayer. There are also hadiths confirming its virtue.

It was reported regarding the Messenger of Allah (saw), «مَنْ فَاتَتْهُ صَلَاةُ الْعَصْرِ فَكَأَنَّمَا وُتِرَ أَهْلُهُ وَمَالُهُ» **“Whoever misses the Asr prayer, it is as if he lost his family and property.”** [Abi Dawud]

And he (saw) said, «بَكْرُوا بِالصَّلَاةِ فِي الْيَوْمِ الْغَيْمِ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ فَاتَتْهُ صَلَاةُ الْعَصْرِ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ» **“Hasten to pray on a cloudy day, for whoever leaves the Asr prayer, his deeds are in vain.”**

Thus, it will be in the verse, «حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى» **“Guard strictly (five obligatory) AsSalawât (the prayers) especially the middle Salah.”** Mentioning the Specific after the General, Allah (swt) has commanded to maintain the prayers and singled out the middle prayer for a wisdom that the Almighty knows.

«وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ» **“And stand before Allah with obedience”** i.e. being humble, without saying anything other than the prayer. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported on the authority of Zayd bin Arqam who said, «وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ» فَأَمَرْنَا بِالسُّكُوتِ **“We used to talk during Salah in the time of the Messenger of Allah (saw) until the revelation of “And stand before Allâh with obedience” , and we were ordered to stay quiet and were forbidden to speak, during Salah.”**

Ibn Jarir narrated on the authority of Ibn Masoud (ra) that he said, أتيت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وهو يصلي فسلمت عليه فلم يرد علي، فلما قضى الصلاة قال «إنه لم يمنعني أن أرد عليك السلام إلا أنا أمرنا أن نقوم لله قانتين لا نتكلم في الصلاة» **“I came to the Prophet while he was praying, so I greeted Salam to him, but he did not respond to me, and when he finished the prayer, he said: He did not prevent me from responding to your Salam except that We are commanded to stand up to Allah in**

obedience, not to speak in Salah.”

In the second verse, Allah (swt) explains how to pray in extreme fear. Allah (swt) shows the form of Salah in three cases:

Firstly: the usual prayer in safe circumstances, with the obligation to perform its rulings with its conditions and pillars, so the standing, recitation, bowing, prostration, and the rest of what is obligatory should be completed according to the Sharii rulings related to prayer.

Secondly: there is fear of an enemy and fear of his attacking the Muslims and the obligation of guarding, so that the Muslims are not taken by surprise.

So Allah (swt) commanded Salah in this case in a special way, which was indicated by a verse that was revealed in the Battle of Dhat al-Riqa, in the month of Jumada al-Awwal, in the fourth year of Hijrah, as narrated by Ibn Ishaq, according to what Ibn Hisham mentioned in his biography of him.

So Allah (swt), commanded prayer in this case in a special way, which was explained in the verse of surah An-Nisa, **﴿وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۗ وَالدَّيْنُ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَدَىٰ مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۗ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا﴾** **“When you (O Messenger Muhammad) are among them, and lead them in As-Salah, let one party of them stand up (in Salah) with you taking their arms with them; when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear and let the other party come up which has not yet prayed, and let them pray with you taking all the precautions and bearing arms. Those who disbelieve wish, if you were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to attack you in a single rush, but there is no sin on you if you put away your arms, because of the inconvenience of rain or because you are ill, but take every precaution for yourselves. Verily, Allah has prepared a humiliating torment for the disbelievers.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa 4:102].

It was revealed during the Battle of Dhat al-Riqa in the month of Jumada al-Awwal, the fourth year of migration, as narrated by Ibn Ishaq, according to what Ibn Hisham mentioned in his biography of him.

It was narrated by the six muhaddiths, except Ibn Majah, about the prayer that the Messenger (saw) led the Muslims in Dhat al-Raqqah: **أن طائفة صفت معه وطائفة وجاء العدو، فصلى بالتي معه ركعة ثم ثبت قائما فأتوا لأنفسهم ثم انصرفوا وجاء العدو، وجاءت الطائفة الأخرى فصلى بهم الركعة التي بقيت من صلاته فأتوا لأنفسهم فسلم بهم** **“A group lined up with him and a group came and the enemy came, so he prayed with the one with him one rak’ah, then he stood still, so they completed for themselves. Then they turned away when the enemy came, and the other group came and he led them in the remaining rak’ah of his prayer, and they completed it themselves, then he greeted them.”**

There are other hadiths that are authentic in other collections, and all of them are valid as long as the hadiths contained in them are authentic, provided that the Salah is carried out in the manner mentioned in the hadiths.

Thirdly: in the event of contact with the enemy, and here are two cases:

A. If the fear is intense, meaning that the enemy is attacking the Muslims, and anticipation and maneuvering in the battle continues, and it is possible for the soldiers to pray walking or riding by gesturing, lowering the head in prostration more than bowing, if possible, pray this prayer, the prayer of intense fear, as stated in the verse of Al-Baqarah, **﴿فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَاتًا﴾** **“And if you fear (an enemy), perform Salah on foot or riding”.**

Ibn Majah narrated on the authority of Ibn Omar (ra), **أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وصف صلاة الخوف** **“The Prophet (saw) described the prayer of fear and said: If the fear is more severe than that, then on foot or riding.”** That is, the Messenger (saw) described the prayer of fear in Surat An-Nisa, then added that if the fear was more severe than that, then on foot or riding, referring to a verse of Al-Baqarah.

And this hadith is in Al-Bukhari in the tafseer of Surah Al-Baqarah with the wording, **إن كان**

If the fear is greater than that, they should separate men, standing on their feet or riding, facing the qiblah and not facing it.”

Then Al-Bukhari added that Malik said, Nafi' said, لا أرى عبدَ الله بنَ عمرَ ذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، I do not see Abdullah bin Omar mentioning that except on the authority of the Messenger of Allah (saw).”

B. If the gathering is more severe, and the fighting from the enemy is considered greater, so that it is feared to expect death, where the soldiers distracted from the fighting by praying even if by lowering the head i.e. nodding, then in this case it is permissible to delay the prayer until this situation is over, as happened with the Messenger of Allah (saw) in the battle of Al-Ahzaab. As Al-Shafi'i carried with a chain of narrators, that is Sahih, on the authority of Abu Saeed Al-Khudri (ra) who said, «حبسنا يوم الخندق حتى ذهب هوى من الليل حتى كفينا القتال وذلك قوله تعالى ﴿وَكَفَى اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ﴾ فدعا رسول الله ﷺ بلالاً فأمر فأقام الظهر فصلاها كما كان يصلي ، ثم أقام العصر فصلاها كذلك ، ثم أقام المغرب فصلاها كذلك ، ثم أقام العشاء فصلاها كذلك ، وفي لفظ فصلى كل صلاة ما كان يصليها في وقتها» **We confined ourselves on the day of the Trench until the storm of the night was gone, until the fighting sufficed us, and that is what the Almighty said: “Allah sufficed for the believers in the fighting” [Al-Ahzab:25] So the Messenger of Allah (saw) called Bilal and he commanded that he give iqamah for zuhr prayer and he prayed it as he used to pray, then he established the asr prayer and he prayed it in the same way, then he established the maghrib prayer and he prayed it likewise, then he established the isha prayer and he prayed it likewise. In another wording, he prayed every prayer he used to pray at its time.”**

It is not said here that this was before the revelation of the An-Nisa verse, regarding the Salah of fear, because al-Khandaq was in the fifth year of Hijrah and the An-Nisa verse in the battle of Dhat al-Riqa' was in the fourth year of Hijrah. Therefore each case has its own Salah as we have mentioned.

And as happened in the case of (Tuster) with the Persians, Al-Bukhari narrated on the authority of Anas bin Malik (ra), حَضَرْتُ مَنَاهَضَةَ حِصْنِ تَسْتَرٍ عِنْدَ إِضَاءَةِ الْفَجْرِ، وَاشْتَدَّ اشْتِعَالُ الْقِتَالِ فَلَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيَّ، الصَّلَاةُ فَلَمْ نُصَلِّ إِلَّا بَعْدَ اِرْتِفَاعِ النَّهَارِ فَصَلَّيْنَاهَا وَنَحْنُ مَعَ أَبِي مُوسَى فَفَتِحَ لَنَا. قَالَ أَنَسٌ وَمَا يَسُرُّنِي بِتِلْكَ الصَّلَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا **The opposition of the Shushtar Fortress came at the light of dawn, and the fighting intensified. So they were unable to pray. We did not arrive until after the day had risen, so we prayed it while we were with Abu Musa, and he conquered for us. Anas said: I am not pleased with that worldly prayer and what is in it”**

﴿فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا﴾ **“And if you fear (an enemy), (perform Salah) on foot or riding”**

That is, if you fear (the enemy) and you arrive standing on the ground, then pray on foot, or if you arrive as riders, then pray riding, according to your position. This omission is in the manner of the Arab saying إن خيراً فخير وإن شراً فشر “if it is good, then it is good, and if it is bad, then it is bad” meaning إن تفعل خيراً، وإن تفعل شراً “if you do good, and if you do evil.”

﴿فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَأذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ **“And when you are in safety, perform Salah in the manner He has taught you, which you knew not (before)”** That is, if the fear of the enemy is removed, pray the usual Salah and thank Allah for His grace and facilitation for you in prayer and teaching you what you didn't know.