

## Combining Two Prayers

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There are hadiths which state that the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) would combine two obligatory (fard) prayers together while travelling. The hadiths explain how he would alight from the back of the animal and perform Maghrib followed by 'Isha, and then resume his journey. [There is a difference of opinion regarding the interpretation of these hadiths, i.e. exactly how he performed the two prayer together.](#)

**The Hanafis offer the following explanation.** Although the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) performed the prayers one after another, he actually performed each prayer in its own time. For example, when combining Maghrib and 'Isha, he would stop a short time prior the end of Maghrib and would perform the prayer. Then as soon as the time of 'Isha would enter, he would perform 'Isha and then resume his journey.

Other scholars offer the explanation that the Messenger of Allah (saw) would perform Maghrib and 'Isha in the time of 'Isha (i.e. after Maghrib had expired).

The method offered by the Hanafi school of performing the first prayer toward the end of its time and the second prayer immediately after, at the beginning of its time, is known as 'jam' al-suri' or 'apparent combining' in the terminology of the jurists (fuqaha). The method of performing two obligatory (fard) prayers in one prayer time is known as 'jam' al-haqiqi' or 'real combining'

There are many hadiths which describe combining two prayers. According to Hanafi scholars, the most suitable explanation is that of jam' al-suri, wherein each prayer is performed in its own time. The Hanafi approach in explaining this issue is in total agreement with the Qur'an and hadiths, both of which emphasize each prayer being performed in its own stipulated time. On the contrary, the jam' al-haqiqi approach leads to great conflicts between the Qur'an and hadiths.

It is also important to remember that performing Maghrib and 'Isha in the time of Maghrib, and Zuhr and 'Asr in the time of Zuhr, is known as jam' al-taqdim or 'advanced combining,' since one of the prayers is performed before its time. Combining them at the time of the later prayer is known as jam' al-takhir or 'delayed combining,' because one of the prayers is delayed from its specific time.

### **The Various Opinions**

One opinion is that it is permissible to perform jam' al-haqiqi if one is undertaking a hurried journey. The second opinion is that jam' al-haqiqi is permissible when undertaking any type of journey; whether it be hurried or relaxed. For some, it is also permissible in the event of heavy rainfall, and some state that it is also permissible in the event of illness.

The view of Imam Abu Hanifa (rahmatullahi alaihi) is quite simple. According to him, the jam' al-haqiqi method is not permissible except at 'Arafat (during the pilgrimage), where advanced combining takes place between Zuhr and 'Asr, and at Muzdalifa, where the pilgrims perform delayed

combining between Maghrib and 'Isha. The practice of advanced and delayed combining at these two places is established through the consensus of the scholars. Hence, the Hanafis do not permit jam' al-haqiqi except in these two instances. They have interpreted the hadiths which mention the combining of two prayers to be jam' al-suri. This type of combining is permissible at all times, as there can be no doubt concerning the permissibility of two prayers performed in their own times.

### The Qur'an On This Issue

1) Allah, the Exalted, says: **"Verily the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours** (4:103)

This means every prayer has an appointed time with a beginning, prior to which the prayer is not valid, and an ending, after which the prayer is not to be delayed; otherwise it will become qada' or missed prayer. Hence, this verse indicates the importance of performing each prayer in its own time.

2) Allah, the Exalted, says: **"Guard strictly the (five obligatory) prayers."** (2:238)

This verse is also quite clear about performing prayers at their appointed times and not delaying them.

3) Allah, the Exalted, says: **"So woe unto those worshippers (hypocrites) who are negligent in regards to their prayer."** (107:5)

A group of scholars state that this verse is admonition for those who delay the prayers beyond their appointed times.

4) Allah, the Exalted, says: **"The, there succeeded them a posterity who gave up prayers."** (19:59)

According to a group of scholars, the words 'who gave up prayers' mean those who delay the prayers beyond their stipulated times.

In short, these verses of the Qur'an verify that delaying any prayer is undesirable and extremely disliked. Delaying the prayer has been portrayed as a trait of the hypocrites (munafiqin). For this reason, the hadiths, which seem to inform that the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) delayed prayer, must be interpreted in a way that corroborates these verses, in order to remove the notion of undesirability from the Messenger's (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) practise. The only way this can be achieved is by taking the combining mentioned in them to mean 'apparent combining.' Now we will look at a few hadiths which are quite explicit in their prohibition of taking a prayer out of its time.

### The Hadiths On This Issue

1) Abu Musa (radiallahu anh) narrates that the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) said: **"Combining two prayers together without any valid reason is from the major sins (kaba'ir)."** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:459, al-Ta'liq al-sabih 2:124)

Thus, combining two prayers would not be permissible even in the event of a journey or rain, just as other major sins are not made permissible in such circumstances.

2) It is narrated from 'Umar (radiallahu anh) that **he wrote to the people (around the Islamic world) prohibiting them from combining two prayers together. He informed them that combining two prayers together was a major sin.** [al-Ta'liq al-sabih 2:124)

3) 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (radiallahu anh) narrates: **"I never observed the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) perform any prayer out of its time except at Muzdalifa. He combined Maghrib and 'Isha at Muzdalifa."** (Sahih al-Bukhari 1:227, Sahih Muslim 1:417, Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar 1:164)

4) In another narration Ibn Mas'ud (radiallahu anh) states: **"The Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) combined two prayer while on a journey. He would combine Maghrib and 'Isha by delaying Maghrib until just before its expiry time and performing 'Isha immediately as its time entered."** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:458)

5) A'isha (radiallahu anha) narrates: **"The Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam), while on a journey, would delay Zuhr and perform 'Asr early and would delay Maghrib and perform 'Isha early (i.e. each prayer in its own time)."** )Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar 1:164, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:457)

6) It is related that Ibn 'Abbas (radiallahu anh) said: **"I performed eight rak'ats together (four of Zuhr and four of 'Asr) and seven rak'ats together (three of Maghrib and four of 'Isha) with the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam).** (One of the narrators says,) "I asked Abu al-Sha'tha', 'I assume he delayed Zuhr (to the end of its time) and performed 'Asr as soon as it entered, and delayed Maghrib (likewise) and performed 'Isha early.' He replied, 'I also think the same.'" (Sahih Muslim 1:246, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:456)

This hadith from Sahih Muslim is very precise in its description of combining two prayers. The method described by the narrator is jam' al-suri.

7) Imam Abu Dawud (rahmatullahi alaih) has transmitted the following report: "The Muezzin of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) informed him it was time for prayer. Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) instructed him to continue on the journey. When the red of sunset (shafaq ahmar) had nearly disappeared, he got off from his mount and performed Maghrib. Then he waited until the red had completely disappeared and performed 'Isha. He then said, **'Whenever the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) was in a hurry for some reason, he would do as I have done.'**" (Sunan Abi Dawud 1:178)

As we can see, the method of combining mentioned in the above hadiths is one other than that of jam' al-suri. It is an agreed upon method which no one disputes. How can there be an objection to two prayers being performed together in a way that does not cause them to be performed either before their stipulated time or after it? Undoubtedly, this is not only the safest method of combining two prayers, but it is also the most suitable way to explain the hadiths on the subject of combining.

It is also common knowledge that the Fajr prayer should not be performed before its time or intentionally delayed beyond it. Similarly, other prayers should not be performed out of their stipulated times either, especially not while considering it to be Sunnah. This indicates that the Sunnah method of combining two prayers is jam' al-suri, as has also been substantiated through the Qur'an and hadiths. **This is the Hanafi opinion in this issue.**

If it were permissible to practise jam' al-haqiqi in the event of travel or illness, then why is it confined to some prayers only? Why is it not permissible to perform all the prayers of the day together in the morning before departing on a journey? The reason for this is quite simple. The practise of combining mentioned in the hadiths is not to be taken as jam' al-haqiqi but as jam' al-suri, wherein each prayer remains in its own time, but all prayers are performed one after another.

### **The Hadiths On Combining Prayers**

In the following, we will analyze some hadiths that are normally presented to establish the permissibility of jam' al-haqiqi.

1) Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) narrates: **"Whenever the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) would undertake a hurried journey, he would combine Maghrib and 'Isha."** (Sahih Muslim 1:245)

This narration is sometimes used to prove the permissibility of 'real combining,' whereas it just mentions that the Messenger of Allah (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) combined two prayers and does not mention that jam' al-haqiqi was performed. The Hanafis have explained that the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) performed 'apparent combining' and not 'real combining,' since the former is a method agreed upon by all scholars.

In this hadith, since Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) does not mention the actual method of combining, we turn to hadith 7 above - also a narration of Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) - where he expounds on the method of combining prayers. This method he describes in that narration is none other than jam' al-suri, so it will be taken as a commentary for this narration.

2) Nafi' (radiallahu anh) reports: **"Whenever 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) had to travel in a hurry, he would combine Maghrib and 'Isha after the red twilight of sunset had disappeared. Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) stated that whenever the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) was forced to travel in a hurry, he would also combine Maghrib and 'Isha."** (Sahih Muslim 1:245)

3) 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) narrates: **"Once the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) had to travel quickly due to some emergency in his family. He delayed Maghrib until the red twilight had disappeared, then got odd his animal and combined the two prayers. Thereafter, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhuma) informed everyone that this was the practise of the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) whenever he had to travel in a hurry."** (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1:124)

These two hadiths seem to be in apparent conflict with the opinion of the Hanafis. However, in reality, if they are understood correctly, they would be found to be in total agreement. This is due to the following reasons:

(a) Firstly, there are two types of shafaq or 'twilight:' one is the redness (ahmar) seen in the sky after sunset, and the second is the whiteness (abyad) that remains for a short while after the redness disappears.

'Allama 'Ayni (rahmatullahi alaih) states: **"It is possible that the twilight referred to in the narrations is the red one. (In the Hanafi school) there are two views regarding the expiry of Maghrib time. Some say it ends when the redness disappears, and others say it ends when the whiteness disappears. Therefore, if the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) performed both prayers immediately after the redness had disappeared, it means he performed Maghrib during the whiteness, i.e. within its stipulated time (according to the view that Maghrib ends after the whiteness has disappeared), and he also performed 'Isha within its stipulated time (according to the view that Maghrib ends with the disappearance of the redness after which 'Isha begins)."** ('Umdat al-qari 3:568)

(b) Another explanation, mentioned in al-Ta'liq al-sabih, is that these hadiths have been narrated with various differences. Some contain the addition, **"the redness was close to disappearing."** This indicates that one of the narrators may have become slightly confused regarding the exact wording due to the various reports, so he finally reported it in the words, "after the redness had disappeared," according to his speculation. This means that in reality it was just prior to the ending of the red twilight that the Messenger (salallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) performed Maghrib, which means it was jam' al-suri.

(c) Another reason for preferring jam' al-suri is that since the hadiths of Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhum) on this issue are inconsistent and do not maintain a fixed expression, it would be more preferable to regard hadith 7 above (also narrated by him) as the commentary for the various transmissions of his report. That hadith makes it clear that the method of combining used by the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) was 'apparent combining.' Hence, the combining mentioned in the remaining hadiths of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu anhum) will also be considered to be 'apparent combining.'

4) Mu'adh (radiallahu anh) narrates that **during the expedition of Tabuk, whenever the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) would set out before the sun declined from its meridian, he would delay Zuhr and perform it (just prior to its expiry time) with 'Asr early by combining it with Zuhr (i.e. Zuhr at the end of its time and 'Asr as soon as it entered), then he would continue his journey. Whenever he would depart before Maghrib, he would delay it and perform it with 'Isha (i.e. in their respective times), and if he set out after Maghrib he would perform 'Isha early by combining it with Maghrib."** (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1:124, Sunan Abi Dawud 1:178)

The following points have been made about this narration:

(a) 'Allama 'Ayni (rahmatullahi alaih) states regarding this narration: **"This hadith was rejected by Imam Abu Dawud (rahmatullahi alaih), and it is also reported from him that there is no clear hadith to be found concerning the performance of prayer before its stipulated time."**

(b) Another problem is the strong criticism of Husayn ibn 'Abdillah, a narrator in this hadith's chain, by the hadith experts (muhaddithin). Ibn al-Madni (rahmatullahi alaih) says, **"I have abandoned his reports."** Imam Ahmad (rahmatullahi alaih) states, **"He has defects."** Ibn Ma'in (rahmatullahi alaih) call him weak (da'if); and Imam Nasa'i (rahmatullahi alaih) says, **"His narrations have been rejected."**

(c) Even if the hadith were accepted for a moment to be authentic, it would still be considered as describing jam' al-suri for various reasons. It is indicated in the hadith that the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) would delay the first prayer to the end of its time and perform the second one immediately thereafter in its own time. The following two narrations of Ibn 'Abbas (radiallahu anh) suggests the same explanation:

**"The Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) performed Zuhr and 'Asr together and Maghrib and 'Isha together without (being in the state of) fear or travel."**

**"The Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) combined Zuhr and 'Asr together and Maghrib and 'Isha together in Madina without (being in the state of) fear or rain." (Sahih Muslim 1:246)**

These narrations speak of the Messenger (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) combining the prayers even though the circumstances were not of fear, rain, or travel. These are the main three circumstances under which one can perform jam' al-haqiqi according to many scholars besides the Hanafis.

So was he performing jam' al-haqiqi, as some like to say, even though none of the valid reasons for doing so were present? The correct explanation we could offer here is that these narrations of Ibn 'Abbas (radiallahu anh), as well as the other narrations on this issue, do not speak of the Messenger (salallahu alayhi wa sallam) performing jam' al-haqiqi at all; but rather to his performance of jam' al-suri.

## **Conclusion**

It could be safely concluded that the Hanafis have followed a safe path in explaining the hadiths in this issue. Their explanation does not contradict the hadiths or Qur'anic verses that strictly enjoin that prayer be performed in their own times. They interpret the hadiths of combining to be based on jam' al-suri, wherein two prayers are performed one after another - the first prayer at the end of its time and the second prayer immediately thereafter, at the beginning of its time. This seems to be the safest and most uncontroversial approach to adopt in light of the many narrations on this issue.

On the other hand, taking the various narrations to be based on jam' al-haqiqi - wherein one prayer is intentionally delayed and performed in the time of the other, or the later prayer is performed in advance during the time of the earlier prayer - will cause these hadiths to contradict the verses and hadiths that encourage prayers to be performed in their own times. Furthermore, those who allow jam' al-haqiqi have also stated that it is superior not to combine the two prayers but to perform

them separately in their own respective times.