

أوقات الصلوات الخمس

A Lesson About the Timings of the Five Prayers

By Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

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سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr. Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

In this brief article, Dr. Akram revealed some of his insights into the timings of prayer and how they relate to the profound Ibrāhīmīc call: I love not the things that go down!

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

أوقات الصلوات الخمس

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أو كسفورد

أحب الله تعالى من خليله إبراهيم عليه السلام قوله "لا أحب الآفلين"، فجعله شعاراً للحنيفية، وفرقانا بين الإيمان والكفر، وأراد من المسلمين أن يكون هذا القول نصب عيونهم ليلاً ونهاراً، وسراً وجمهاً، ممحا شغلهم الشواغل أو ألهمهم الملاهي أو استولت عليهم الغفلات، فجعل أوقات صلواتهم دليلاً عليه، فعليه يستيقظون، وعليه ينامون، وبه من طور إلى طور يتحولون، ومن شأن إلى آخر يتقلبون.

يستيقظ المسلم في الصباح لأول صلواته، وقد آذنت النجوم والكواكب والقمر بالرحيل، ولم تطلع الشمس بعد، فما أكمله من وقت وما أتمها من ساعة للنبي على الآفلين، يقوم المسلم ويتوضأ، ويتوجه إلى ربه قائلاً "لا أحب الآفلين"، فكل ما في الكون آفل، ومحبة الآفلين تنجيس للقلب وتلويث للعقل، ويتبرأ العبد المؤمن من محبة الكواكب والقمر

والشمس وسائر المظاهر، ويقبل على رب العالمين، يخصه بالعبادة والاستعانة.

ثم تطلع الشمس فينبر بها المنبرون، ويخضع لقوتها الخاضعون، ويعجب من سطوتها العاجبون، وما إن ينتصف النهار إلا وتميل الشمس إلى مغربها، ويتجلى ضعفها، ويستحكم فيها الزوال، فيترك المسلم شغلها وراحته ويقبل لصلاة الظهر قائلاً: زالت الشمس وحق لها أن تزول، ولكن ربي لا زوال له، هو حي لا يموت، قيوم السماوات والأرضين، وجاء وقت الظهر تذكيراً له بقول إبراهيم عليه السلام "لا أحب الآفلين".

ولا يمضي إلا قليل حتى تغيب الشمس وراء الجبال، فبعد أن غطت الشمس بأضوائها المرتفعات والتلال والجبال، فاءت فصارت المرتفعات والتلال والجبال تحجبها، فيقوم المسلم، ويسرع لصلاة العصر، ضعفت الشمس وضعفت أضواؤها، وانكسرت مظاهر سلطانها وقوتها، ولم يضعف رب العالمين، ولم يحجبه شيء، هو الظاهر والباطن، وتذكر العبد المؤمن بذلك قول إبراهيم عليه السلام "لا أحب الآفلين".

ثم يحدث ما يدهش الألباب والعقول، إن الشمس التي طلعت في الصباح بأضوائها الساطعة وأنوارها الخارقة وصارت أكبر حقيقة في الكون أعجزت حتى العميان والنائمون أن ينكروها، غربت وغربت معها قوتها

وشوكتها وأهبتها، فيتطهر العبد المؤمن ويقوم في خشوع يعبد من لا غروب له ولا أفول، ويقول: "لا أحب الآفلين."

وبعد قليل تغيب جميع آثار الشمس، ويغشى الأرض ظلام مطبق، فيقوم العبد المسلم قائلا: "لا أحب الآفلين" ويؤدي صلاة العشاء، فكانت بداية يومه تذكيرا لقول إبراهيم عليه السلام، وكانت نهاية يومه تذكيرا له، وكان كل طور من أطوار يومه تذكيرا له. وإلى هذا المعنى يشير قوله تعالى "أقم الصلاة لدلوك الشمس إلى غسق الليل وقرآن الفجر إن قرآن الفجر كان مشهودا" وغيره من الآيات الكثيرة في كتاب الله تعالى.

إن العبد المسلم الذي يُذكره الله كل يوم عند أفضل عباداته قول إبراهيم عليه السلام "لا أحب الآفلين" لا يمكن أن يستهويه شيء في الأرض ولا في السموات، لا المآكل والمشرب تُسعده، ولا الشهوات والملاذ تُأسر فؤاده، ولا المناصب والوظائف تستميله، ولا الأموال والقناطير المقنطرة من الذهب والفضة تسره، إن الصلاة تجعله لا يبغى دون رب العالمين مطلبا، فيا أيها المؤمن أسلم لرب العالمين، واسجد له، واقترّب.

A Lesson About the Timings of the Five Prayers

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God the Exalted so loved the statement of His beloved friend Ibrāhīm—“I love not the things that go down,”¹—that He made it the symbol of upright Ḥanīfiyyah² and the separation of faith and disbelief. He wanted the Muslims to keep this statement before their eyes night and day, silently and with loud voice, and despite the busyness of their preoccupations, allure of their enjoyments or overriding nature of their distractions. He made the timings of their prayers testament to this very call: with it they awaken, with it they go to sleep, and with it they move from one motion to another and from one stage to the next.

The Muslim first arises in the early morning to the very first of his prayers, after the stars, planets and moon have announced their departure and the sun has not yet risen. What an appropriate time and perfect hour, to mourn the things that set! The Muslim rises and performs ablution, directing himself to his Lord, saying, “I love not the things that go down”—and everything in creation does go down. Love for those things that set is dirt over the heart and pollution of the mind. The believing slave declares his innocence from the love of the stars, moon, sun and all these open realities, and comes instead to the Lord of all the worlds, singling Him out alone in worship and seeking assistance.

And then the sun rises. It dazzles those who are affected by its brilliance. Its sheer power humbles its subjects. Its pride astounds and amazes.

¹ Qur’ān 6:76.

² Ḥanīf is the Qur’ānic description of Ibrāhīm, meaning the one who turned away from all beings and entities other than the one true God and Lord of all. From this, the pure uncompromisingly monotheistic way of Ibrāhīm became known as the Ḥanīfiyyah way, and the Qur’ān calls upon all believers to follow this very same approach.

At exact mid-day, the sun then begins to incline towards its setting, and here its weakness begins to become apparent. This is the time following the zenith of the sun.³ The Muslim leaves his preoccupation or rest and comes to the *Zuhr* prayer. He says: “The sun is about to decline, and it deserves to do so, but my Lord has no decline. He is ever-Living and never dies, the Rector of the heavens and the earths.” So the time of *Zuhr* came to remind him again of the Ibrāhīmīc call: I love not the things that go down!

The sun then stays in this state for only a little until it begins to retreat behind the mountains. When the hills, mountains and elevations begin to cover the rays of the sun, the Muslim stands to rush to the ‘*Aṣr*’ prayer. Now the sun and its light is weakened, and the manifestation of its power and might is broken. But the Lord of the worlds is never weakened. Nothing can cover Him. He is the Manifest as well as the Hidden. The believing slave is again reminded of the Ibrāhīmīc call: I love not the things that go down!

Then occurs something that surprises the hearts and minds: the same sun which rose in the day with its dazzling light and its piercing rays to become the most obvious physical reality in existence—which even the blind or those asleep cannot deny—begins to set, and takes along with it all its power, pomp and splendor. The believing slave now purifies himself and stands in humility to worship He who has no decline nor setting.⁴ He proclaims: I love not the things that go down!

After some time, all the traces of the sun are gone. Complete darkness now envelopes the earth. The submitting slave now stands to proclaim: I love not the things that set! He performs the ‘*Ishā*’ prayer. His day had begun with a reminder of the Ibrāhīmīc call and now his day ends with the same. In fact, every stage of his day was a reminder of the same. This is the meaning alluded to by God’s statement, among many others in His Book:

³ The solar zenith or meridian is the highest point of the sun in the horizon, at which point the shadows of objects are the shortest. Interestingly, the word zenith comes from the Arabic expression of Muslim astronomers *samt al-ra’s*, meaning “direction of the head,” reduced to *samt* by European translators of Arabic in the Middle Ages and then inaccurately rendered as *sanit*, ultimately becoming *zenith*.

⁴ The Maghrib prayer.

Establish Prayer from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night; and hold fast to the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn, for the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is witnessed.⁵

Indeed the Muslim slave—whom God reminds every single day, in their best worship, of the Ibrāhīmīc call: I love not the things that go down!—can never be seduced nor charmed by anything in the earth nor in the heavens. Neither food nor drink can make him truly happy. No desire or pleasure can hold his heart captive. No office or occupation, no wealth, and no treasures of gold and silver! The prayer stops him from longing for anything other than the Lord of the worlds. O person of faith, submit to the Lord of all the worlds, prostrate to Him and draw near!⁶

⁵ Qur'ān 17:78.

⁶ Taken from the concluding verse of Sūrah al-'Alaq: "But prostrate yourself and become nigh (to your Lord)." [Qur'ān 96:19]. This was the first revelation in Islam, and the Sūrah begins with the command *Iqra'* ("Read!"). It is Dr. Akram's position that this command means to recite the revelation in prayer, as the concluding verse supports.