The Comprehension of the Rulings of the Eclipse Prayer | Shaykh Abū ʿAmmār Yāsir al-ʿAdenī

Translated by Abū Āsiyah Mużaffar -may Allāh forgive him, his mashāyikh, his parents, his family and all the Muslims-

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Definition

It is the complete or partial obscuration of one of the two radiant luminaries (the sun and the moon) and its turning dark.

The scholars differentiated between the solar eclipse and the lunar eclipse

1. From them were those who said: Al-Kusūf for the sun and al-Khusūf for the moon, and this the most well-known
2. It was said: With the Kāf (ك) in the beginning and with the Khāʾ (خ) in the ending
3. It was said: With the Kāf (ك) for a total eclipse and with the Khāʾ (خ) for a partial one
4. It was said: With the Kāf (ك) for a complete loss of color and with the Khāʾ (خ) for a change in it

Description of the Eclipse prayer

It has been reported by several companions. It came in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from the ḥadīth of Ibn Abbas, Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-Aas, Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari, Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah, Abu Masoud Al-Ansari, Aisha and Asma. And in Al-Bukhārī from the ḥadīth of Abu Bakra, and in Muslim from the ḥadīth of Jabir bin Abdullah and Abdul Rahman bin Samra, and it came from a group of companions, may Allah be pleased with them, from outside the Ṣaḥīḥ, and Shaykh Al-Albani enumerated them in his book (Description of the Prophet's prayer ﷺ for the eclipse prayer).

The solar and lunar eclipse prayers are established based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah and consensus

- **As for the Book**, then the scholars have elicited it from His -the Most High's- saying:

﴿ وَمِنۡ ءَايَٰتِهِ ٱلَّيۡلُ وَٱلنَّهَارُ وَٱلشَّمۡسُ وَٱلۡقَمَرُۚ لَا تَسۡجُدُواْ لِلشَّمۡسِ وَلَا لِلۡقَمَرِ وَٱسۡجُدُواْ لِلَّهِ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمۡ إِيَّاهُ تَعۡبُدُونَ ﴾

And from among His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them, if you (really) worship Him.[1]

- **As for the Sunnah**, then his saying ﷺ as has come in the Ṣaḥīḥayn from the Hadīth of ʿĀ'ishah and others raised to the Prophet, "so if you see a thing like this (eclipse) then offer the prayer"
- **As for consensus**, more than one scholar has stated its legitimacy.[2]

[1] Sūrah Fussilat 41:37
[2] See (Mawsūʿah al-Ijmāʿ) by Saʿdī Abū Jayb (2/718).

The Arabs used to believe that an eclipse of the sun or the moon signified the death of an eminent person or their coming to life, but the Prophet ﷺ invalidated this belief by saying:

> "The sun and the moon are two signs against the signs of Allāh; they do not eclipse on the death or life of anyone."[3]

The reason for the eclipse is what the Prophet ﷺ explained, that Allāh frightens His servants with them. In Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, on the authority of Abu Bakrah, he said: The Messenger ﷺ said: "Allāh -the Most High- frightens His servants with them."

Benefit: Shaykh Ibn ʿUthaymīn was asked about the **cause of an eclipse**. He answered -may Allāh have mercy on him- by saying: "An eclipse has a physical cause and a legal cause. The physical cause of a solar eclipse is that the moon passes between it (the sun) and the earth, blocking out (the sun) fully or partially from the earth. The physical cause of a lunar eclipse is that the earth passes between it (the moon) and the sun, because the moon derives its light from the sun. If the earth comes between it and the sun, its light is lost, or part of it is lost." [4]

Ibn al-Arabi refuted this argument on seven counts, including:

First: The sun is many times the size of the moon, so how can a small object obscure a large object?

Second: If the sun covers it with its light, how can a small object obscure a large object when it faces it, and not take a tenth of it?

Third: If the moon's light is less and the sun's light is abundant, how can a lot be darkened by a little? Especially since it is of the same type or part of it.[5]

[3] Agreed upon based on the narration of A'ishah
[4] Majmūʿ Fatāwa ash-Shaykh Ibn ʿUthaymīn, 16/287
[5] See the remaining responses in ʿĀridatul-Aḥwadhī ʿAla Sunan At-Tirmidhī (3/38-40).

The Companions considered these signs a blessing from Allāh . Al-Bukhārī narrated in his Ṣaḥīḥ (3579) on the authority of Abdullah bin Masʿoud that he said: “We used to consider Āyāt (signs) as Allāh's Blessings, but you people consider them to be a threat.”

Ibn Hibban included a chapter in his Ṣaḥīḥ (2843) on this Athar: “Mentioning what one should do to seek blessings from seeing a solar or lunar eclipse, whether it is to repent to Allāh or to perform an act of obedience.”

Benefits of Eclipses:

Some have said that eclipses have seven benefits:

First: It reveals changes in the sun and moon, both being great creations.

Second: It demonstrates, through their changes, the change in the affair of that which follows them.

Third: It disturbs the hearts that are still in heedlessness and awakens them, for this is the purpose of admonitions.

Fourth: So that people may see a model of what will occur on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿ وَخَسَفَ ٱلْقَمَرُ ۝ وَجُمِعَ ٱلشَّمْسُ وَٱلْقَمَرُ ﴾

And the moon will be eclipsed. And the sun and moon will be joined together (by going one into the other or folded up or deprived of their light).[6]

Fifth: They exist in a state of perfection and are eclipsed, then they are treated gently and restored to their original state, warning against fear of deception and hope for forgiveness.

Sixth: It informs that those who are free of fault may be seized, so those who are guilty may be warned.

[6] Al-Qiyamah The Resurrection (75:8-9)

Seventh: People have become accustomed to the prescribed prayers, so they perform them without disturbance or fear. So He brought this sign and caused them to perform this prayer with disturbance and fear. Perhaps the blessing of that is that it becomes a habit for them in the obligatory prayers.[7]

[7] End quote from (Ghayat al-Ahkam) by al-Tabari (3/252-253).

Actions encouraged to be performed during an eclipse

First: The call to prayer

It is recommended to call for the eclipse prayer and the lunar eclipse prayer. Say "As-Salāt Jāmi'ah (Prayer in congregation)" two or three times, so that it is known or likely that people have heard. At night, people may be asleep, so the call to prayer may need to be repeated.

It has two formats:

First: الصَّلاَةَ جَامِعَةً (The Prayer is congregational); according to the hadith of Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas and Aisha in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.

Second: إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ جَامِعَةٌ (The Prayer is congregational); according to the hadith of Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī.

There is no call to prayer for the lunar eclipse prayer or the solar eclipse prayer, according to scholarly consensus.[8]

Some scholars maintain that the call to prayer for rain and the two Eid prayers (prayer in congregation) is made. However, this opinion is incorrect, and it is not valid to make an analogy between them and the eclipse prayer, for two reasons:

First: An eclipse occurs suddenly.

Second: The Prophet ﷺ did not call for the Istisqa' prayer or the two Eid prayers. Everything for which the cause existed during the Prophet's ﷺ era and he did not do it, then doing it is an innovation.

[8] See (Mawsūʿah al-Ijmāʿ) by Saʿdī Abū Jayb (2/718).

Second: That which is recommended (Mustahabb) to be carried out during the eclipse

1. Prayer
2. Supplication
3. Making the takbeer
4. Giving in charity (Sadaqah)
5. Seeking forgiveness (Istighfar)
6. Freeing slaves
7. Seeking refuge from the punishment of the grave

According to the hadith of Asma' in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, it says: "So if you see that, then call upon Allah, glorify Him, pray, and give charity." And in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, from the hadith of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, it says: "So if you see something like that, then hasten to remember Allah, supplicate to Him, and seek His forgiveness." And in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, from the hadith of Asma', she said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, commanded the manumission of slaves during an eclipse." And in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, from the hadith of Aisha, she said: "Then he commanded them to seek refuge from the punishment of the grave."

Third: The Eclipse Prayer

The wisdom behind the Eclipse Prayer includes:

1. Obeying the command of the Prophet ﷺ, as he commanded us to hasten to prayer.
2. Following the Messenger ﷺ , as the Prophet ﷺ prayed it.
3. Supplicating to Allah Almighty, as through solar and lunar eclipses Allah threatens His servants with a punishment whose causes have already occurred. Thus, people supplicate to their Lord Almighty, lest the punishment that Allah warned people of through solar and lunar eclipses befall them.

Its time:

The time for the eclipse prayer is from the appearance of the eclipse until it disappears, based on the hadith of Jabir in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, which says: "If you see anything of that nature, then pray until the light reappears." He made reappearance of the brightness, the objective of the prayer, because it is legislated to have longing from Allah to restore the blessing of light. When that happens, the intended purpose is achieved.

It is not prescribed for the people of a country where an eclipse has not occurred to pray, because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made the command to pray and what is mentioned with it conditional upon seeing the eclipse, not upon the news from astronomers that it would occur, nor upon its occurrence in another country.

If astronomers say that it will be eclipsed, we should not pray until we see the eclipse normally, because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "If you see it, then supplicate to Allah and pray."[9] However, if Allah has blessed us by making it so that it can only be seen with a magnifiers or binoculars in our country, then we should not pray.

If the sun eclipses after the Asr prayer, then the eclipse prayer should be performed, based on the general statement of the Prophet ﷺ : "If you see it, then supplicate to Allah and pray." This includes all times. Because every prayer has a cause, it should be performed wherever that cause exists, as indicated by the Sunnah. Similarly, if the moon eclipses after the Fajr prayer, then the eclipse prayer should be performed, unless there is only a short time remaining until sunrise, because the moon's power has disappeared. In that case, it should not be performed.

[9] (Agreed upon) from the hadith of Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah

There is no blame on a person who enters and finds people praying the eclipse prayer or the lunar eclipse to inform them that it has cleared, because that would be informing them that the reason for the prayer has ceased. The Prophet ﷺ commanded us to pray and supplicate until the eclipse clears. If they are informed of this, then they should complete the prayer, but with a shorter time.

The solar eclipse prayer is missed due to one of two reasons:

1. The entire eclipse clears. If it clears partially, then it is permissible to begin the prayer for the remainder, as if only that portion had been eclipsed.
2. The sun is eclipsed during its setting.

The lunar eclipse prayer is missed in one of two cases:

1. The complete clearance (with reappearance of the brightness completely).
2. The rising of the sun. Also it is said: by its disappearance while still eclipsed. If clouds appear and one is unsure about the disappearance, one should pray, because the original ruling is that the eclipse remains.

Its ruling:

Most scholars say that it is **recommended**. In fact, some of them reported consensus on this, such as al-Nawawi in his books (al-Majmu') and (Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim), and also Ibn Rushd in (Bidayat al-Mujtahid).

The correct view is that there is disagreement on this issue. Abu Hanifa, Malik, and others said that it is **obligatory**, and this is the more correct view, based on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: "When you see them, then pray." Agreed upon, from the hadith of Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari. And the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, as in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, from the hadith of Aisha: "When you see them, then hasten to prayer."

How it is performed:

There is no disagreement among scholars that the eclipse prayer consists of two rak'ahs. However, they differed regarding its method, with several opinions:

The first opinion: Two rak'ahs, in each rak'ah one standing, one bowing, and two prostrations, like all other voluntary prayers.

The second opinion: Two rak'ahs, in each rak'ah two standings, two recitations, two bowings, and two prostrations. This is the view of the majority.

The third opinion: Two rak'ahs, in each rak'ah three bowings.

The fourth opinion: Two rak'ahs, in each rak'ah four bowings.

The most correct method is that it consists of two bowings in each rak'ah, as the majority hold. As for the second method - which is the first opinion - they cite as evidence the hadith of Abu Bakrah in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: "The sun eclipsed during the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ... so he led them in two rak'ahs." They said: The general meaning of prayer refers to the usual prayer, especially since it was narrated in the same source with the wording: "as you pray." It was refuted that the mention of two rak'ahs in them is general, so it is restricted by other hadiths.

As for the methods in which there is an addition to the two bowings in the rak'ah, they are not authentic.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "This was deemed weak by the most knowledgeable scholars, and they said: The Prophet ﷺ only prayed the eclipse prayer once, on the day his son, Ibrahim, died. In the same hadeeths that mention praying with three and four bowings, he only prayed that on the day Ibrahim died. It is known that Ibrahim did not die twice, nor did he have two Ibrahims. It was narrated in a mutawatir report from him ﷺ that he prayed the eclipse prayer on that day with two bowings in each rak'ah."[10]

[10] End quote from Majmoo' al-Fatawa (18/17-18).

Summary of the description of the eclipse prayer

1. To make the takbīr, to start with the opening, istiʿādhah, recite al-Fātiḥah, and recite a length that is similar to Sūrah al-Baqarah
2. Make a lengthy Rukūʿ
3. Rise up from Rukūʿ saying "Samiʿ Allāhu liman ḥamidah, Rabbanā wa lakal ḥamd"
4. Do not prostrate, rather recite al-Fātiḥah, and a Sūrah lesser (in length) than the first
5. Make a lengthy Rukūʿonce again, lesser (in length) than the first
6. Rise up from Rukūʿ saying "Samiʿ Allāhu liman ḥamidah, Rabbanā wa lakal ḥamd"
7. Prostrate, then sit and then prostrate
8. Stand again for the second Rakʿah, and repeat as done in the first Rakʿah

This prayer in the described format is specific to the Solar eclipse prayer and the lunar eclipse prayer.

Some of the scholars expanded upon it and said: It is recommended for every sign (from Allah) or moments of panic while others specified it for recurring earthquakes. And the most correct view is the opposite.

Questions about the Eclipse Prayer

Issue 1: The solar eclipse prayer is exactly the same as the lunar eclipse prayer; there is no difference between them. The evidence for this is the hadith of Aisha in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, with a chain of transmission traceable to the Prophet ﷺ: "The sun and the moon are two signs among the signs of Allah. They do not eclipse for the death or life of anyone. So when you see that, then supplicate to Allah, say Allahu Akbar, pray, and give charity."

Issue 2: It is the Sunnah to recite aloud in prayer, day and night. Ahmad, Ishaq, and the two companions of Abu Hanifa held this view - contrary to the majority, who say that it should only be recited aloud at night. The evidence for this is:

1. The hadith of Aisha, who said: "The Prophet ﷺ recited aloud in the eclipse prayer." Narrated by al-Bukhārī.
2. It is a voluntary prayer for which congregation is prescribed, so reciting aloud is part of the Sunnah, like the Eid prayer, Tarawih prayer, and the prayer for rain.

As for the majority, they cited as evidence the hadith of Ibn Abbas in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, which states: "The Prophet ﷺ stood for a long time, approximately the length of time it takes to recite Surat al-Baqarah." The response to this is that the Prophet ﷺ recited aloud, but Ibn Abbas did not hear him, or he heard but did not memorize what he recited, so he estimated it to be Surat al-Baqarah.

Note: Other hadiths have been narrated that the majority use as evidence for silent recitation, such as the hadith of Aisha: "I estimated the Prophet's ﷺ recitation, and I saw that he recited Surat al-Baqarah in the first rak'ah and Surat Al-Imran in the second." "I estimated" means "I thought and guessed." The hadith of Samurah, who said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ led us in prayer during an eclipse, and we did not hear his voice." The hadith states: "The daytime prayer is silent."

All of these hadiths mentioned are not authentically attributed to the Prophet ﷺ.

Shaykh al-Albani said in (Tamam al-Minnah), p. (263): "It is authentically reported that he recited it aloud, as reported in al-Bukhārī. There is no evidence to contradict this. Had it been proven, it would have been rejected." End quote.

Issue 3: It is recommended to prolong standing, based on the hadith of Asma', who said: "So I stood with him, and he prolonged standing until I felt like sitting. Then I turned to the weak woman and said, 'This one is weaker than me,' so I stood up." Narrated by Muslim. In another narration by him: "So I looked at the woman who was older than me, and at the other who was sicker than me."

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen was asked about prolonging the eclipse prayer, if it is difficult for people.

He replied: "Do the Sunnah. Whoever is able to continue, let him continue. Whoever is not, let him sit and complete the prayer while sitting. If he is unable to do so, such as if he is blocked by urine or feces, let him leave."[11]

Issue 4: Whoever catches the second bowing in the first rak'ah (unit of prayer) will have missed standing, reciting, and bowing. Therefore, he has not performed one of the two rak'ahs of the eclipse prayer, so this rak'ah is not counted. He must, after the imam's salutation, perform a second rak'ah with two bowings, as proven in the authentic hadiths. The evidence for this is the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: "Whoever does an action that is not in accordance with our command, it will be rejected." Narrated by Muslim from the hadith of 'Aishah. The Prophet ﷺ did not command praying a rak'ah of the eclipse prayer with one bowing.

Issue 5: Whoever recites the takbir after the first bowing during an eclipse and does not say, "Sami'a Allahu liman hamidah," has omitted an obligatory act, and omission of an obligatory act, as is well known, necessitates prostration of forgetfulness.

Issue 6: It is not prescribed to recite a specific surah in the eclipse prayer; rather, it is prescribed to prolong it.

Issue 7: There is no specific supplication for the eclipse prayer. Rather, it is a prayer of awe and warding off evil and calamity. Therefore, one should frequently seek forgiveness and repent to Allah Almighty, and ask for mercy. As is well known, prolonging the prayer requires supplication, so one should repeat supplications for forgiveness, mercy, pardon, and the like.

Issue 8: It is Sunnah to perform the eclipse prayer in congregation, as the Prophet ﷺ commanded the caller to call out, "Prayer in congregation."

[11] (Majmu' Fatawa al-Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen) (16/317).

Issue 9: There is nothing wrong with a woman praying at home, as the general command is: "So when you see them, hasten to prayer." If she goes out to the masid, as the women of the Companions did, and prays with the people, that is better.

Issue 10: Whoever misses the congregational prayer should make it up as it was, as long as the eclipse remains.

Fourth: The Sermon

It is recommended that the imam deliver a **single** sermon, reminding the people, softening their hearts, frightening them of the punishment of Allah Almighty, and urging them to repent. This is because when the Prophet ﷺ finished the eclipse prayer, he stood up, praised Allah, and extolled Him as He deserved. Then he said, "As for what follows," and then he admonished the people. These are the characteristics of a sermon.

Some scholars say that there is no sermon for the eclipse prayer, because the Prophet ﷺ did not intend a sermon specifically for it. Rather, he wanted to clarify this to them, refuting those who believe that the eclipse is due to the death of some people.

This is followed by the explicit mention of the sermon in the hadiths, which describe its conditions, including praise, exhortation, and other aspects included in the hadiths. Therefore, it was not limited to informing them of the reason for the eclipse. The basic principle is that following is permissible, and specific characteristics can only be proven with evidence.

والحمد لله ربِّ العلمين

Written by: Abu Ammar Yasser Al-Adani | Hadhramaut, Al-Mukalla