

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

SHORTENING OF PRAYERS

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The Quranic injunction to shorten prayers **in specific conditions** is a mercy by our Creator. However, this allowance is **severely** misused by the Muslim community. Without referring to a multitude of [Islamic secondary sources including Ahadith](#) and subsequent debates, the article will make use of some examples to illustrate the extent of the problem which isn't reconcilable through the various positions taken by the Islamic 'Ulema'. In fact, the opinions are so diverse, that they are irreconcilable.

- Some scholars understand the shortening of prayers as "Waajib" (compulsory), others leave it upon ones will.
- Early authorities dispute whether 'shortening' of prayers becomes compulsory after travel thresholds surpass a certain distance or time period. Others disagree and stipulate a completely different criteria of time and distance.

The opinions are in fact so varied and complex that I sincerely encourage the reader to research the differences of opinion for themselves. This will also serve to highlight the problems caused by [Islamic secondary sources](#) such as Ahadith and the opinions of scholars / jurists based on them.

Practically, all sorts of confusions arise for one seeking an answer.

- Which opinion does one follow with regards distance, time or overall directive?
- One travelling to the Holy Mosque reads full prayers behind the Imam (leader) but shortens it as soon as one steps into their hotel which is meters away.
- One shortens the 'obligatory' prayer but continues to read full superogatory prayers.
- People travel to work over a certain distance; they feel obliged to shorten their prayers.
- One travels in the comfort of their vehicles on a motorway covering 50 miles + in less than an hour in an air conditioned luxury car and feels obligated to shorten their prayers at their destination.

- One feels obliged to shorten prayers on a journey but can continue in other matters as normal for example, enjoying their holidays, engaging in leisure activities and to carry out other tasks which require much effort.

THE QURAN IS CLEAR AS TO ITS DIRECTIVES WITH REGARDS SHORTENING PRAYERS AND WHEN TO APPLY IT

Let us read the verses that deal with the matter.

004.101

“And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer **if you fear (Arabic: Khif'tum) that those who disbelieve will cause you distress**, surely the unbelievers are your open enemy.

- Prayer is **only** shortened if there is **danger** or **fear** on a journey

004.102

“When thou (O Messenger) are with them, and stand to lead them in prayer, Let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, Taking their arms with them: When they finish their prostrations, let them take their position in the rear. And let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed - and let them pray with thee, **taking all precaution, and bearing arms: the Unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush. But there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves.** For the Unbelievers God has prepared a humiliating punishment”

- The whole narrative captures the essence of fear of ones life or when one is presented with danger. Only in these circumstances can prayer be shortened.

004.103

"When you have performed the act of worship, remember God, standing, sitting and reclining. And when you are in safety / secure **(Arabic: it'manantum)**, observe proper worship. Worship at fixed times has been enjoined on the believers"

- Once again it is clear that when one is **free** from danger that they are expected to set up regular prayers.

002.238-239

“Attend constantly to prayers and to the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to God. **But if you are in danger**, then (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback; **and when you are secure**, then remember God, as. He has taught you what you did not know”

- Traditional form is abandoned in danger but prayer is **not**. When one is **secure**, one must pray as normal.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is clear from the Quranic narratives that the allowance to shorten the prayer is linked specifically with fear and danger. If no danger or fear is presented, there is no need to shorten the prayer.

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