

# **THE TIME OF ASR SALAAT AND THE EVIDENCE OF THE HANAFI MATH-HAB**



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## TERMINOLOGY

***Khairul Quroon*** - The three noblest ages of Islam, viz. the age of the Sahaabah, the age of the Taabieen, and the age of the Tab-e-Taabieen. Muslims who had seen the Sahaabah are called *Taabieen*. Those Muslims who saw the Taabieen are called *Tab-e-Taabieen*.

***Mithl*** - The shadow which is one length the size of the object's length.

***Mithlain*** - The shadow which is twice the length of the object.

***Fay'-e-Zawaal*** - The shadow which remains at the time of Zawaal (midday, i.e. when the sun is over the meridian). This shadow no longer decreases. Soon after Zawaal it begins to increase.

***Ahnaaf*** - Followers of Imaam Abu Hanifah (rahmatullah alayh).

***Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*** - The followers of the Sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). In this era only the followers of the Four Math-habs constitute the *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*.

***Zawaal*** - When the sun is directly over the meridian when it is true midday.

***Ghair Muqallideen*** - All those who renounce the following of one particular Math-hab among the Four Math-habs.

***Fuqaha*** - Great Jurists of Islam. In our context the reference is to the illustrious Ulama of the *Khairul Quroon* era.

## THE DISPUTE

Like many issues of the Deen, the time of Asr Salaat was resolved and settled fourteen centuries ago during the *Khairul Quroon*. The Four Math-habs (Hanafi, Maaliki, Shaafi and Hambali) have their Qur'aanic and Hadith proofs for their respective views and rulings on the various laws of the Shariah. The followers of the Four Mathabs which constitute the *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* have been practising the teachings and tenets of Islam in accordance with the expositions of their respective Mathabs throughout the passage of Islam's centuries in harmony, understanding and accepting the validity of the standpoints of all Math-habs.

In recent times there has developed a sect of misguided people called *Salafis* who have resolved to make unnecessary conflict and controversy a salient feature of their deviated math-hab. Teachings of the Math-habs which have been settled and accepted fourteen centuries ago have been unnecessarily and baselessly criticized and branded as being in conflict with the Qur'aan and Sunnah.

Although the Salafis criticize all Four Math-habs in general, they have displayed considerable rancour and gorged out much invective for the Hanafi Math-hab in particular. Their main allegation against the Ahnaaf is that Imaam Abu Hanifah (rahmatullah alayh) and the Fuqaha of the Hanafi Math-hab issued rulings in conflict with the Hadith, which ofcourse, has to be dismissed with contempt. The charge is utterly baseless.

## ASR TIME

The present discussion is on the question of Asr time. When does it begin? According to the Ahnaaf, Asr time commences at *Mithlain*, i.e. when the length of the shadow of an object has reached twice the length of the object plus *Fay-e-Zawaal*. If, for example, the length of the shadow of a meter stick at Zawaal is 10 centimetres, then Asr time will begin when the length of the shadow is two metres and 10 centimetres.

According to the deviant Salafis, Asr time commences at one *Mithl*, i.e. when the shadow equals one length of the object plus *Fay-e-Zawaal*. This is also the viewpoint of the other Math-habs.

The purpose of our booklet is not to refute the validity of the viewpoints of the other Math-habs. There is no dispute with them. However, the criticism and baseless charges directed against the Hanafi Mathhab by the Salafis have necessitated a response to show that the Hanafi view is based on the Hadith in the same way as the other Math-habs claim that their views are structured on the Hadith.

Since the Salafis and other Ghair Muqallideen of their ilk, in obedience to desire and opinion, have embarked on spreading confusion in the Ummah on masaa'il which have been resolved many centuries ago, the need for this response and refutation developed. Insha'Allah, this discussion will debunk their baseless claim that the Hanafi Fuqaha have employed logic in conflict with the Sunnah to formulate the rules of the Shariah. It is their allegation that the Ahnaaf resort to opinion and interpretation in spite of the existence of clear Hadith proofs to the contrary.

At the very outset we should say that on the issue of the beginning of Asr time, the Salafis have no Hadith which categorically asserts the *Mithl* view. They have resorted to interpretation of the Ahaadith in order to arrive at their opinion of *Mithl*. They simply lack even a single Hadith which clearly states the *Mithl* view. Thus, their charge of logic directed to the Ahnaaf rebounds on themselves and their opinion. It will, therefore, be correct for us to say that the Salafis have no Hadith evidence for their *Mithl* opinion. Let us now examine the basis and proofs of the two viewpoints on this question.

## **(1) THE HADITH OF THE IMAAMATE OF JIBRAEEL (alayhis salaam)**

The only Hadith which the Ghair Muqallideen present to substantiate their view of *Mithl*, i.e. Asr begins after the shadow has reached one length), is the Hadith which explains the times when Jibraeel (alayhis salaam) led Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) in Salaat, The Hadith is as follows:

*“Ibn Abbaas (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: ‘Jibraeel led me (i.e. became the Imaam) in Salaat by the Bait twice. On the first of the two occasions he performed Zuhr when the shadow was the length of a shoelace (i.e. very early) Then he performed Asr when the shadow of every object was equal to one mithl (once its length). Thereafter he performed Maghrib.....On the second occasion he performed Zuhr when the shadow of every thing was its mithl (one length) which was the Asr time of the day before. Then he performed Asr when the shadow was mith- lain (twice the length of the object).....” (Tirmizi)*

This Hadith constitutes the strongest proof for the one *Mithl* view. Our argument in refutation of the Ghair Muqallideen’s view pertaining to this particular Hadith is as follows:

(a) When it suits their desires, the Ghair Muqallideen conveniently overlook their own principles of deduction and formulation of rules. They always demand *unambiguous/ categoric (Sareeh)* Ahaadith of the *Saheeh* class from their adversaries for the masaail. However, when they fail to discover any such Ahaadith to bolster their claims, they have no hesitation in accepting narrations of lesser degree of strength than *Saheeh* and even narrations of ambiguous and contradictory meanings.

This particular Hadith which is their strongest *daleel* (proof) is of the *Hasan* category. Ahaadith of this category are valid as basis by the Ahnaaf. But it devolves on Salafis who are so vociferous in their demand for *Saheeh and Sareeh* Ahaadith to produce such narrations. Presentation of narrations of a lesser category than *Saheeh* is improper for them.

(b) Although this Hadith mentions that on the first of the two occasions Asr was performed at one *Mithl*, it is ambiguous in view of the contradiction of Zuhr having been performed also at one *Mithl* on the second occasion. In terms of the principle: “*When the proofs are contradictory, they are discarded.*”, this Hadith should not be tendered as proof for Asr time. The contradiction has con- strained the operation of this principle.

While the Hadith should not be used to substantiate the one *Mithl* view on account of the contradiction, a suitable interpretation has to be offered to avoid dismissing the Hadith which is of an authentic class albeit not of the *Sa- heeh* category. The best and most logical answer for the ostensible contradiction is that the performance of Zuhr at one *Mithl* on the second occasion abrogates the Asr time of the previous day when Asr was performed at one *Mithl*.

On the basis of the interpretation of abrogation, the con- tradiction is eliminated and the Asr view of *Mithlain* (twice the length of the object) is upheld, in fact categori- cally confirmed by the following statement appearing in this very same Hadith: “*Then he performed Asr when the shadow was mithlain.*”

(c) The other contradiction apparent here is that the Hadith clearly states that on the second occasion Zuhr was performed “*at the time of Asr of the day before*”. Zuhr may not be performed during Asr time. It has to be per- formed in its own time. In spite of this, Hadhrat Jibraeel (alayhis salaam) led Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) in Zuhr Salaat at a time which was Asr time the day before. This is further confirmation of the abrogation of the Asr time of the previous day.

While one *Mithl* was the Asr time yesterday, today it was abrogated practically by performing Zuhr Salaat in the same time, i.e. the time when it was Asr the day before.

(d) The following Hadith in Saheeh Muslim goes against the grain of the Salafis and rejects the one *Mithl* view for Asr:

*Abdullah Bin Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: “Verily, Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: “The time of Zuhr is when the sun has*

*past the zenith – and (at that time) the shadow of a man was as his length—and it lasts until the time of Asr has not set in.....”*

This Hadith categorically states that Zuhr time was at one *Mithl*. It is quite obvious that Asr cannot therefore also be at one *Mithl*. This Hadith also confirms the view of abrogation, namely, that Asr which was performed at one *Mithl* on the first occasion of Jibraeel’s imamate was abrogated when he performed Zuhr at one *Mithl* on the next day.

(e) Since the Salafis and Ghair Muqallideen in general rely so heavily on this particular Hadith, they should act in accord with it in entirety, not selectively. The Hadith states with clarity that on the second day Zuhr was performed at the time when Asr was performed the previous day. But this is not the math-hab of the Salafis. They discard this section of the Hadith in spite of it being after the practice of the first day. The Asr time of the previous time became the Zuhr time of the next day. But this is not the view of the Salafis in spite of the clarity of the Hadith on this aspect. Thus, this Hadith goes contrary to the view held by the Salafis.

The Ghair Muqallideen have attempted to overcome this difficulty by arguing that Asr was performed *after one mithl on the first day and Zuhr before one mithl on the second day*. This argument is devoid of substance because:

- (i) The Hadith in question states with clarity that Asr was performed on the first day at one *Mithl*, not *after one Mithl*.
- (ii) The Hadith likewise states explicitly that Zuhr on the second day was performed at one *Mithl*, not *before one Mithl*.
- (iii) The Hadith is very clear in mentioning that Zuhr was performed on the second day “*at the time of Asr of the previous day*”.
- (iv) The Hadith of Abdullah Bin Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) also confirms that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) stated that the time of Zuhr is after Zawaal, and that was a time when the shadow was one *Mithl*.
- (v) The Hadith of Jaabir (radhiyallahu anhu) in Nasai states that Zuhr was performed when the shadow was one *Mithl*. This Hadith relates to the

very same episode of the imamate of Jibraeel (alayhis salaam). The relevant words are: *“Then he (Jibraeel) came the next day when the shadow of a man was its mithl. He then said: ‘Stand up, O Muhammad! And per-form Salaat.’ Then he performed Zuhr.”*

It should be noted that on the second day Hadhrat Jibraeel (alayhis salaam) arrived only when the shadow was one *mithl*. Thus the Zuhr Salaat which he commanded Rasu- lullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) to perform was *after* one *mithl*, not *before* one *mithl*.

This portion of the Hadith confirms the viewpoint of the Ahnaaf that after one *Mithl* it is still Zuhr time.

## **(2) THE HADITH OF ABDULLAH IBN UMAR (radhiyallahu anhu)**

Hadhrat Abdullah Ibn Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) narrated that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: *“The time of Zuhr is when the sun has passed the meridian and the shadow of a man is his length, until Asr has not set in...”* (Saheeh Muslim)

This Hadith explicitly mentions that Zuhr time begins after Zawaal and when the shadow is one *mithl*. It is men- tioned with clarity that Zuhr is during one *mithl*.

## **(3) THE HADITH OF THE HUJRAH**

*“Aishah (radhiyallahu anha) narrates: Verily, Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) performed Asr while the sun was in her hujrah (room) while the shadow had not yet be- come apparent (on the walls).”*

This Hadith ostensibly indicates that Asr was performed very early before *Mithlain*. The rationale for the one *mithl* view in this narration is that if the shadow had already attained two lengths (*mithlain*), it would have been visible on the walls of the very small room.

The door of the *hujrah* faced west where the sun sets. There was no roof at the entrance of the *hujrah*. This allowed the sun to shine inside the room. Different explanations are given regarding the phenomenon of the shadow



in this situation. Imaam Tahaawi (rahmatullah alayh) said: *“There is no indication that (the Salaat) was performed early.....In fact, this narration indicates delay, not early performance.”*

Whatever merit the Salafis may discern in this Hadith for their view, the ambiguity of the narration constrains them to resort to interpretation. The narration is not a categoric proof for the one *mithl* view.

#### **(4) THE HADITH OF THE SUBURBS**

*“Anas Ibn Maalik (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) would perform Asr while the sun was high and bright. A man would go to the outlying suburbs and reach there while the sun was still high. Some of the suburbs were about four miles from Madinah.” (Bukhaari)*

The argument is that the arrival of a person in the suburbs would have to be before *mithlain* because the sun would be quite high by the time he reached.

This line of argument is extremely flimsy and cannot be presented as incontrovertible proof for the one *mithl* view, especially when this view is in conflict with other Ahaadith (already discussed) which explicitly mention one *Mithl* for Zuhr and *Mithlain* for Asr. Furthermore, the Hadith has to be interpreted to conform to the one *mithl* view. It is not an explicit statement which substantiates the Salafi viewpoint.

This Hadith is not proof for the *mithl* view because it is quite possible to reach the outlying suburbs while the sun was still high after having performed Asr at *Mithlain*.

Furthermore, the words ‘*Was-shamsu murtiafah*’ (the sun was high) means that the person would arrive quite some time prior to sunset. The sun being high in this context means, well before sunset. It does not mean before *mithlain*. While the sun was ‘high’, it was not at a height before *mithlain*. On the contrary it was close to setting. This is more reasonable since it would take approximately 1 hour 40 minutes to walk the 4 miles (7.2 kilo- meters). If the walk was commenced after Asr at *Mithlain*, the person would arrive while the sun was still quite high above the western horizon prior to sunset.

There is no evidence in this Hadith that Asr was performed at one *mithl*.

#### **(5) THE HADITH OF THE CAMEL**

*“Anas Ibn Maalik (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) performed Asr. When he turned (to leave) a man from Bani Salmah came to him and said: O Rasulullah! We intend slaughtering a camel and*

*wish you to attend. Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) replied: ‘Yes.’ He proceeded and we went with. We found that the camel had not yet been slaughtered. It was then slaughtered, cut up and cooked. We ate of it before the sun had set.” (Saheeh Muslim)*

This Hadith is also cited in substantiation of the one *mithl* view. It is argued that if Asr was performed after *Mithlain*, all this could not be possible. This claim is arbitrary and incorrect. It is quite possible to accomplish all this even after having performed Asr after *Mithlain*. The persons carrying out the work of slaughtering, skinning, cutting and cooking of the camel’s meat were experts. This work did not pose a formidable task for them. The interpretation of Asr at one *mithl* claimed on the basis of this Hadith is extremely flimsy and untenable.

Besides the foregoing ambiguous Ahaadith, the Salafis have no *Sareeh* (explicit) Hadith to substantiate their claim that Asr commences at one *Mithl*. Their entire case is the product of interpretation. Ahaadith of ambiguous meanings have been interpreted to produce the ruling of one *Mithl*. Furthermore, the interpretations are far fetched, and this reduces the strength of their argumentation and the credibility of their view. On the contrary, the Hadith narrations speak with greater clarity in favour of the Hanafi view, namely, Asr begins at *Mithlain*. The Hadith proofs of the Ahnaaf are as follows:

(1) The Hadith (No.1) pertaining to the imaamate of Jibraeel (alayhis salaam) which has already been discussed and explained.

(2) The Hadith of Abdullah Bin Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) which explicitly mentions that Zuhr time was also at one *Mithl*. This has already been discussed.

### **(3) The Hadith of Ibraad**

*“Abu Tharr Ghifaari (radhiyallahu anhu) said: We were with Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) on a journey when the muath-thin intended to give Athaan for Zuhr. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: ‘Wait until it becomes cool (i.e. delay the Athaan until it becomes a bit cool).’ (After some time), the muath -thin again intended to give the Athaan Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said to him: ‘Wait till it is a bit cool.’ (The Muath-thin waited) until we saw the shadow of the dunes. Then Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: ‘Verily, the intensity of the heat is of the flames of Jahannum Therefore when the heat is intense, delay the Salaat until it is cool.” (Bukhaari)*

It is quite apparent from this Hadith that the Muath-thin had intended to recite the Athaan quite early, i.e. before one *mithl*. However, Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) twice ordered him to delay the Zuhr Athaan which the Muath-thin recited only after the appearance of the shadows of the sand dunes. The appearance of the

shadows of the dunes was after one *mithl*. Thus it is confirmed that one *mithl* and after it is still time of Zuhr

In response to this proof of the Ahnaaf, it is argued that the instruction to delay Zuhr was on a journey, and perhaps this was for combining Zuhr with Asr. This argument is baseless because the Hadith explicitly mentions the reason for delaying Zuhr until the shadows of the dune became visible. The reason which is explicitly stated in the Hadith is: *“The intensity of the heat is of the flames of Jahannam.”*

This *illat* (reason) applies whether one is on a journey or not. It is common to both situations, hence the ruling will apply when-ever and wherever the *illat* exists.

Furthermore, in another Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (radhiyallahu anhu), Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: *“When the heat becomes intense, then delay the Salaat until it becomes cool, for verily, the intensity of the heat is of the flames of Jahannam.”* (Bukhaari)

Another Hadith in this regard recorded in Nasaai confirms this position with greater clarity. Anas Bin Maalik (radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: *“When it would be hot, he would delay the Salaat until coolness, and when it was cold, he would perform it early.”*

We understand from this Hadith that delaying Zuhr Salaat when it was very hot, and performing the Salaat early when it was cold, were the normal practices of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Hence, to restrict the delay to *safar* (journey) is utterly baseless.

This Hadith is conspicuous proof for the view of the Ahnaaf that one *mithl* is still Zuhr time, not Asr. The question of the setting in of ‘coolness’ does not arise before *mithl* (one shadow-length). Before one *mithl*, *the heat is intense*. The description of “the flames of Jahannam” will appropriately apply to the heat prior to one *mithl*, not to the heat after one *mithl*. The heat after one *mithl* is ‘cool’ in relation to the heat before it.

Rasulullah’s (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) emphasis on *ibraad* (to perform Zuhr Salaat when the heat had relatively cooled) is adequate proof for the claim of the Ahnaaf that it was his normal practice to perform Zuhr after one *mithl*. This effectively negates the contention of Asr being at one *mithl*.

Some have attempted to argue against the Ahnaaf with an even weaker interpretation. It is claimed that *ibraad* here does not mean to delay Salaat, but it means the opposite, viz. to perform Salaat early during the time called *Burdun Nahaar* (early afternoon). This weak interpretation is negated by the following facts:

In the Hadith cited by Abu Tharr Ghifaari (radhiyallahu anhu), Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) explicitly instructed the Muath-thin on two occasions to refrain from the Athaan and to delay it until it becomes cool. This instruction would be correct only if the Muath-thin had attempted to give the Athaan early, as indeed he had.

It is incorrect to describe the relatively 'cooler' heat of the early afternoon as being of *the flames of Jahannum*. This description aptly applies to the intense heat of the time after one *mithl*, not to the early afternoon heat.

#### **(4) The one Mithl shadow**

In the Hadith of Abdullah Ibn Umar (already discussed), the one *mithl* shadow of a man is not mentioned as the final time of Zuhr. It is stated as the *Awwal Waqt* (the Initial Time) with clarity. It is therefore baseless to aver that this initial time of Zuhr is the beginning of Asr.

### ENDING OF ZUHR AT MITHLAIN

From the Ahaadith which we have discussed it is abundantly clear that Zuhr Salaat was performed even after one *Mithl*. There is not a single narration from which it could be inferred that Zuhr was performed after *Mithlain* (two shadow lengths). On the contrary, the Hadith is explicit in stating that Asr was performed when it was *Mithlain*. Narrating the Hadith of the imamate of Jibraeel (alayhis salaam), Hadhrat Jaabir (radhiyallahu anhu) says:

*"Then Jibraeel came (on the second day) when the shadow of a man was twice his length. Then he said: 'Stand up, O Muhammad and perform Salaat.' He then performed Asr."* (Nasaai)

It has been established beyond doubt that Zuhr time continues after one *Mithl*, and that *Mithlain* is the time of Asr in the unanimous view of all authorities. While there is difference on the beginning of Asr time, no one disputes the validity of Asr when it is *Mithlain*. There is no third view. *Mithlain* is confirmed to be exclusively Asr time. Hence, it is a logical necessity to accept that Zuhr time expires when it is *Mithlain* which ushers in the time for Asr.

## CONCLUSION

The contention of the Salafis is that the case of the Ahnaaf is not based on Hadith, but is in conflict with Hadith. They pre-tend that their view is structured on *Sareeh* (explicit) Hadith narrations of the *Saheeh* class. But this is not the case. It has been seen that the primary basis of their view, viz., the Hadith of Jibraeel's Imaamate, is not a *Sareeh* substantiation for their view. On the contrary, it contradicts their opinion.

The view of Asr commencing with one *Mithl* has no *Sareeh* Hadith to bolster it. Interpretation (*Ta'weel*) has been adopted to support the one *mithl* view with Ahaadith.

All Math-habs employ the Hadith of Jibraeel's Imaamate as their basis. Just as the Ahnaaf are constrained to resort to interpretation of the Ahaadith on this question, so too are all others compelled to adopt interpretation. There is, therefore, no justification for the allegation that the view of the Ahnaaf is in conflict with the Ahaadith.

This exercise has not been embarked on with the intention to disprove the views of the other three Math-habs on the question of Asr time. The aim is only to show that the ruling of the Hanafi Math-hab is based on the Ahaadith, not in conflict with it.

**“IN REALITY, WE STRIKE THE HAQQ ON TO  
BAATIL, THEN IT (THE HAQQ) SMASHES OUT ITS  
(BAATIL'S) BRAINS. THEN SUDDENLY IT (BAATIL)  
VANISHES. AND FOR YOU, THERE IS WAIL (RUIN  
AND JAHANNUM) FOR THAT WHICH YOU  
FABRICATE.”  
(QUR'AAN)**

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