9476 - When Was the Adhan Prescribed?

the question

I heard that the Islamic call to prayer (Adhan) was known from the time of Ibrahim Al-Khalil (peace be upon him), because Allah says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning): “And proclaim [adhdhin] to mankind the Hajj (pilgrimage)” [Al-Hajj 22:27]. Is this correct?

Summary of answer

The correct view is that the Adhan was prescribed when the Messenger of Allah was in Madinah, and in Makkah or during the Isra’ journey as some inauthentic Hadiths suggest.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Claim That the Adhan Existed before Islam

Some people do say that, and some even say that the Adhan was known to all the Prophets from the time that Adam (peace be upon him) came down to this earth. Some of them say that it was known to Prophet Ibrahim when his Lord said to him (interpretation of the meaning): {And proclaim [adhdhin] to mankind the Hajj (pilgrimage). They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel.} [Al-Hajj 22:27] This is a strange thing to say and it is not correct.

The Correct View: Adhan Was Introduced in Madinah

The correct view is that the Adhan was prescribed during the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Al-Madinah, not in Makkah and not during the Isra’ as was narrated in some inauthentic Hadiths.

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) says:

One of the strangest things that was narrated concerning the beginning of the Adhan was the report of Abu Ash-Shaykh, whose chain of narration contains someone who is unknown, from `Abdullah ibn Az-Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which he said, “The Adhan was taken from the Adhan of Ibrahim, “And proclaim [Adhdhin] to mankind the Hajj (pilgrimage)” [Al-Hajj 22:27]. So the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave the Adhan. (End quote from Al-Fat-h, 2/280).

Inauthentic Narrations about Adhan before Prophet Muhammad

The (report about) the Adhan of Adam is also inauthentic. Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

What was reported by Abu Na`im in Al-Hilyah about Jibril calling out the Adhan to Adam when he came down from Paradise has a chain of narration which contains people who are unknown. (Al-Fat-h, 2/280)

Authentic Reports on How the Adhan Was Established

The authentic evidence indicates that the Adhan was first prescribed during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Madinah. Among these reports are the following:

- It was reported from Nafi` that Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say: when the Muslims came to Madinah, they used to come together and try to find out if the time for prayer had come, for there was no call to prayer. One day they were talking about that and some of them said, Let us use a bell like the bell of the Christians. Others said, Let us use a horn like the horn of the Jews. `Umar said, Let us send a man to call us to prayer. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “O Bilal, get up and call

the people to prayer." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 569)

- It was reported from Abu `Umayr ibn Anas from his paternal uncles among the Ansar: the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was concerned about the prayer and how he could bring the people together to pray. It was said to him, Raise a flag when the time for prayer comes, and when they see it they will call one another – but he did not like this idea. Then the ram's horn or shofar was suggested to him. Ziyad said, the shofar of the Jews. But he did not like this idea, and said, "This belongs to the Jews." A bell was suggested to him, but he said, "This belongs to the Christians." `Abdullah ibn Zayd ibn `Abd Rabbihi went away, thinking about the concern of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He saw the Adhan in a dream, and the next morning he came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him about it. He said, "O Messenger of Allah, whilst I was half-asleep, someone came to me and showed me the Adhan. `Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) had also seen it before that, but he kept quiet for twenty days. Then he told the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who said to him, "What stopped you from telling me about it?" he said, " `Abdullah ibn Zayd beat me to it, and I felt shy." The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "O Bilal, get up and see what `Abdullah ibn Zayd tells you to do, and do it." So Bilal gave the Adhan. (Narrated by Abu Dawud in his Sunan, 420)
- According to a report narrated from `Abdullah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him): when the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded that a bell should be made so that it could be used to tell the people to gather for prayer, I had a dream in which I saw a man carrying a bell in his hand . I said, "O slave of Allah, will you sell that bell?" he said, "What will you do with it?" I said, "We will call the people to prayer with it." He said, "Shall I not show you something better than that?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Say, Allahu akbar Allah akbar, Allahu akbar Allahu akbar, ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah, ash-hadu an la ilaha illallah, ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasul-Allah, ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasul-Allah. Hayya `alas-salah, hayya `alas-salah, hayya `alal-falah, hayya `alal-falah. Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, la ilaha illallah (Allah is most Great, Allah is most Great, Allah is most Great, Allah is most Great. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, I bear witness that

there is no god but Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Come to prayer, come to prayer. Come to success, come to success. Allah is most Great, Allah is most Great. There is no god but Allah).”

Then he went a short distance away from me, and said, “When the prayer is about to start, say, Allahu akbar Allah akbar, ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah, ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasul-Allah. Hayya `alas-salah, hayya `alal-falah. Qad qamat il-salah, qad qamat il-salah. Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, la ilaha illallah (Allah is most Great, Allah is most Great. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Come to prayer, come to success. The prayer is about to begin, the prayer is about to begin. Allah is most Great, Allah is most Great. There is no god but Allah).” When morning came, I went to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him what I had seen. He said, “This is a true dream, in sha Allah. Get up with Bilal and tell him what you have seen, so that he can give the call, because he has a more beautiful voice than you.” So I got up with Bilal and started telling him what I had seen, and he gave the call to prayer. `Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) heard that whilst he was in his house, and he came out, dragging his cloak behind him, saying, “By the One Who sent you with the truth, O Messenger of Allah, I saw the same as he saw.” The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “To Allah be praise.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 499)

These Hadiths indicate that the Adhan was first prescribed during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Madinah. Perhaps this is one of the distinguishing features of this Ummah which Allah has favoured over all other nations.

And Allah knows best.