36896 - Description of the fear prayer

the question

What is the description of the fear prayer?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The fear prayer is prescribed in the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“When you (O Messenger Muhammad) are among them, and lead them in As-Salaah (the prayer), let one party of them stand up [in Salaah (prayer)] with you taking their arms with them; when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear and let the other party come up which have not yet prayed, and let them pray with you taking all the precautions and bearing arms. Those who disbelieve wish, if you were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to attack you in a single rush, but there is no sin on you if you put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because you are ill, but take every precaution for yourselves. Verily, Allaah has prepared a humiliating torment for the disbelievers”

[al-Nisa’ 4:102]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) led his companions in offering this prayer on a number of occasions, in different ways.

Imam Ahmad said: There are six or seven proven ahaadeeth concerning the fear prayer; whichever of them a person does, it is permissible.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

There are six basic ways, but some scholars said there were more, because every time they saw a

different report by the narrators, they counted that as another way in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did it, whereas these are variations in the reports of the narrators. End quote. Al-Haafiz said: This is the correct view.

The way in which the fear prayer is done differs according to the severity of the fear and the location of the enemy – whether they are in the direction of the qiblah or some other direction.

The leader or imam should choose the version that is most suited to the situation and is most likely to serve the purpose, which is to ensure that the prayer is performed whilst guarding against the enemy, so that they will not attack the Muslims and catch them unawares whilst they are praying.

Al-Khattaabi said: There are different types of the fear prayer which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) offered on different occasions and in different ways, and the way in which it is to be done is to choose the best way that will ensure that the prayer is performed with the utmost vigilance.

End quote from Sharh Muslim by al-Nawawi.

Secondly: when it was first prescribed

It was narrated that Jaabir (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: We went out with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to fight some people from Juhaynah, and they fought us fiercely. When we prayed Zuhr, the mushrikeen said: If we had attacked them then, we would have finished them off. Jibreel informed the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about that, and the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us about it. He said: They said: There will come to them a prayer that is dearer to them than their children. When the time for ‘Asr came, we formed two rows, and the mushrikeen were between us and the qiblah … Then he stated that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) led them in offering the fear prayer. Narrated by Muslim, 840

Thirdly:

Here it will be sufficient for us to describe some of the ways in which it is offered.

1 – If the enemy is in a direction other than the qiblah: the leader should divide the army into two groups, one which will pray with him and another which will face the enemy lest they attack the Muslims. He should lead the first group in praying one rak'ah, then when he stands up for the second rak'ah they should complete the prayer by themselves, i.e., they should intend to pray alone and complete the prayer by themselves, whilst the imam remains standing. Then when they have completed the prayer by themselves, they should go and stand where the second group was, facing the enemy, and the second group should come and join the imam in the second rak'ah. In this case the imam should make the second rak'ah longer than the first, so that the second group may catch up with him. So the second group should join the imam and he should lead them in the remaining rak'ah, then he should sit to recite the tashahhud. When he sits to recite the tashahhud, this group should get up immediately after prostrating and complete the remaining rak'ah, then catch up with the imam for the tashahhud, after which he should lead them in saying the salaam. This version is in accordance with the apparent meaning of the Qur'aan, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"When you (O Messenger Muhammad) are among them, and lead them in As-Salaah (the prayer), let one party of them stand up [in Salaah (prayer)] with you taking their arms with them; when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear and let the other party come up which have not yet prayed, and let them pray with you taking all the precautions and bearing arms."

[al-Nisa' 4:102]

al-Sharh al-Mumti', 4/298

al-Bukhaari (413) and Muslim (842) narrated from Maalik, from Yazeed ibn Rumaan, from Saalih ibn Khawwaat from one who saw the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) on the day of Dhaat al-Riqaa' when he offered the fear prayer, that one group formed rows with him, and another group faced the enemy. He led those who were with him in praying one

rak’ah, then he remained standing and they completed the prayer by themselves. Then they moved away and faced the enemy, and the other group came. He led them in praying the remaining rak’ah, then he remained sitting and they completed the prayer by themselves, then he said the tasleem with them.

Maalik said: This is best that I have heard concerning the fear prayer.

2 – If the enemy is in the direction of the qiblah, then the imam should form them into two rows and start leading all of them in prayer, bowing with all of them and standing up with all of them, then when he prostrates the first row only should prostrate with him and the second row should remain standing, keeping guard. When he stands up, the first row should stand with him and the back row should prostrate. Then when they stand up, the back row should move forward and the front row should move backward, then he should lead them all in the second rak’ah, standing and bowing with all of them, then when he prostrates the row which moved forward, which was in the back during the first rak'ah, should prostrate with him, then when he sits to recite the tashahhud the back row should prostrate. When they sit to recite the tashahhud the imam should say the tasleem with all of them. This can only be done when the enemy is in the direction of the qiblah.

Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 4/300

Muslim (840) narrated that Jaabir ibn ‘Abd-Allaah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: I was present during the fear prayer with the Messenger of Allaah (S). We formed two rows, one row behind the Messenger of Allaah (S), and the enemy was between us and the qiblah. The Messenger of Allaah (S) said takbeer and we all said takbeer. Then he bowed and we all bowed. Then he raised his head from bowing and we all raised our heads. Then he and the row that was directly behind him went down in prostration, and the back row remained standing, facing the enemy. When the Prophet (S) had finished prostrating, the row that was directly behind him stood up, and the back row went down in prostration and then stood up. Then the back row went forward and the front row moved back. Then the Prophet (S) bowed and we all bowed, then he raised his head from bowing and we all raised our heads. Then he and the row that was directly behind him, that had been in the back during the first rak’ah, went down in prostration, and the back row

remained standing, facing the enemy. When the Prophet and the row that was directly behind him had finished prostrating, the back row went down in prostration. Then the Prophet (S) said the tasleem and we all did likewise

3 – If the fear is intense, and the imam cannot form the Muslims into rows and lead them in prayer in congregation. This is when the two sides are in the thick of battle and the fighting is intense.

In this case, each Muslim should pray by himself, as he is fighting, whether he is walking on foot, or riding, facing the qiblah or not. He should gesture for bowing and prostrating, making the prostration lower than the bowing.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And if you fear (an enemy), perform Salaah (pray) on foot or riding”

[al-Baqarah 2:239]

al-Sa’di said (p. 109):

“on foot” means walking. “riding” means on horseback or camelback or any other kind of mount. In this case it is not necessary to face towards the qiblah. This prayer is exempt because of fear. End quote.

Al-Bukhaari (943) narrated from Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “If they are more than that, then let them pray standing and riding.”

Al-Haafiz said:

“If they are more than that” refers to the enemy. What is meant is that if fear is intense and the enemy is great in number and there is the fear of dividing the Muslims, then in that case it is permissible to pray however one can, and it is permissible to omit the pillars or essential parts of the prayer that one cannot do. So he should move from standing to bowing, and from bowing to prostrating, by means of gestures etc. This is the view of the majority. End quote.

Al-Tabari narrated that Ibn ‘Umar said: When fighting breaks out, then (the prayer) is just dhikr and gesturing with the head.

Al-Bukhaari (4535) narrated from Naafi’ that ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) described the fear prayer, then he said:

If the fear was more intense than that, then they prayed on foot, standing on their feet, or riding, facing the qiblah or not facing the qiblah. Naafi’ said: I do not think that ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Umar narrated that except from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Al-Haafiz said:

The point is that there is a difference of opinion concerning the words, “if the fear was more intense than that” – is this attributable to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or is it the word of Ibn ‘Umar? The correct view is that it is attributable to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). End quote.

It says in al-Muntaqa Sharh al-Muwatta’:

“If the fear was more intense than that” means: a case of fear in which it is not possible to stand in one spot or to form rows. So they prayed on foot. That is because fear is of two types: one of which is when it is possible to stand still and form rows, but there is the fear that the enemy may attack whilst the Muslims are busy with the prayer.

The second type of fear is that in which it is not possible to stand in one spot or form rows, such as when under attack by the enemy. In this case each person should pray as best he can, on foot or riding. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And if you fear (an enemy), perform Salaah (pray) on foot or riding”

[al-Baqarah 2:239]

End quote.

Fourthly:

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said in al-Sharh al-Mumti’ (4/300):

But if someone were to say: What if we assume that the ways narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) cannot be applied nowadays, because the methods of warfare have changed?

We say: If it is necessary to pray at a time of fear of the enemy, they should pray in the manner that is closest to the ways narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), if the ways that are narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) cannot be followed, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So keep your duty to Allaah and fear Him as much as you can”

[al-Taghaabun 64:16]

end quote.