71367 - Using a timetable to know the times of prayer

the question

I read on this site about the times of prayer but because I only know the time by using a clock, it is very difficult for me to know the times from the sky. Are there any ways on which I can know the time when the sun passes the zenith, etc, or how long there is for each prayer after the adhaan in the summer and the winter?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We have mentioned the times for prayer in detail, and practical ways of knowing when the sun passes its zenith, by looking at the shadows, and by working out the hours of the day, and knowing when the middle of the night is and how to work it out, in the answer to question no. 9940.

These are simple methods which anyone can make use of, when they need to. Allaah has made it easy for the Muslims by causing timetables to be available which show the times of the prayer in detail, day by day, summer and winter, for different cities in one country. And there are mosques everywhere that give the call to prayer, which is an announcement of the time. To Allaah be praise. If each person had to look each day to the horizon in order to work out the time for Fajr, and think about the shadows and how long or short they were, to work out the time for Zuhr and ‘Asr, that would involve a great deal of hardship, which is not a part of this great religion.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmaan al-Barraak (may Allaah preserve him) said: The time between dawn and sunrise is approximately one and a half hours, as is shown in the timetables. Timetables have become a means for people to know the times of prayer by hours and minutes, and attention should be paid to that because the five daily prayers are the basis of Islam, so the Muslim must observe them at the proper times, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those who remain constant in their Salaah (prayers)”

[al-Ma’aarij 70:23]

“Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawaat (the prayers) especially the middle Salaah (i.e. the best prayer - ‘Asr). And stand before Allaah with obedience”

[al-Baraqah 2:238]

end quote.

See also the answer to question no. 8048.

Although timetables are important and useful, they are a human effort which is subject to the same mistakes and errors as any other human effort. But usually they are correct in stating the times, except for the mistake in the time for Fajr which occurs in some of them, as is explained in the answer to question no. 26763.

We ask Allaah to guide us and you.

And Allaah knows best.