

237687 - If a traveller decides to return part way through his journey, can he still shorten his prayers on his way back?

the question

I travelled from Riyadh to Damaam, but on the way, after I had travelled sixty kilometres, I decided to go back to Riyadh, because I changed my mind about travelling, and I shortened my prayer on the way back. Is what I did correct?

Summary of answer

Based on the above:

You made a mistake by shortening your prayers during your return journey. What you should have done was offer the prayers in full, because the distance from the place where you decided to return to your city was not equal to the distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers. And you have to repeat that prayer.

And Allah knows best.

Detailed answer

If a person decides to travel to some city, then on the way he decides to go back to his own city, then one of two scenarios must apply:

1.

The distance from the place where he decided to go back to his own city is equal to or greater than the distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers. In this case, he may avail himself of the concession of travel on his way back, until he enters his city.

2.

The distance from the place where he decided to go back to his own city is not equal to the distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers. In this case, he cannot avail himself of the concession of travel on his way back, because on his way back he is regarded as having started a new journey, so he cannot shorten his prayers unless the distance is equivalent to the distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers, which is eighty kilometres.

This is the view of the madhhab of the four imams.

Burhaan ad-Deen al-Bukhaari al-Hanafi said: If the traveller sets out from his city, then decides to go back to his city for some reason, and that happens before he has travelled the distance of three days, then he should pray in the manner of non-travellers in the place where he is and when travelling back to his city, because he has cancelled out the intention of travelling, by deciding to return to his city before the rulings on travel came into effect. Therefore he is no longer regarded as a traveller (musaafir) and between him and his destination there is a distance of less than three days. So he should pray in the manner of non-travellers on his way back.

But if he had travelled the distance of three days (or more), then he decided to go back to his city, he may pray in the manner of travellers, because the ruling on praying when travelling has already come into effect by virtue of his completing that time, and the ruling remains in effect until he is no longer travelling, when he reaches his destination

End quote from al-Muheet al-Burhaani fi'l-Fiqh an-Nu'maani (2/35)

In at-Taaj wa'l-Ikleel (2/498) it says: Whoever sets out on a journey in which it is permissible to shorten prayers, but he travels a distance that does not make it permissible to shorten prayers, then he goes back to his house for some reason, should offer his prayers in full on the way back. End quote.

Al-Qarraafi said: If he travels for three parasangs (leagues) then returns, he should offer his prayers in full on his return journey, because it is a second trip that is shorter than the distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers.

End quote from adh-Dhakheerah (2/364)

[three parasangs or leagues = approximately 15 km]

Imam ash-Shaafa‘i said: If a man sets out from Makkah, heading for Madinah, he may shorten his prayers, but if he becomes afraid on the way, when he is in ‘Usfaan, and he wants to stay there, or to go out to somewhere other than Madinah to stay there, if he gives up his previous intention to travel to Madinah, I regard him as starting a new journey from ‘Usfaan.

So if the journey that he wants to take from ‘Usfaan is of a distance shorter than that at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers, then he should not shorten his prayers, but if it is of a distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers, then he may shorten his prayers.

Similarly, if he comes back from there, heading for Makkah or some other city, I regard him as starting a new journey from that point. So if where he is headed to is at a distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers, then he may shorten his prayers, but if it is not of a distance at which it becomes permissible to shorten prayers, then he should not shorten his prayers.

End quote from al-Umm (1/216).

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: If he sets out to a distant land, then on the road he decides to come back, he is no longer travelling and it is not permissible for him to shorten his prayers so long as he is in that place. But when he leaves that place, he has started a new journey, and he can only shorten his prayers if he is setting out on a journey of two “stages” [a unit of distance], whether he is going back to his city, setting out for his original destination, or heading somewhere else. This was stated by ash-Shaafa‘i in al-Umm, and our companions are agreed on it.

Al-Majmoo ‘ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab (4/333)

[A “stage” = approx. 40 km]

Ibn Qudaamah said: If he sets out intending to travel a far distance and he shortens his prayers, then he decides to come back, the prayers he has already offered are acceptable and valid, but he should not shorten his prayers on his way back, unless the distance he will travel on his return journey is such that it makes it permissible to shorten the prayers.

This was stated by Ahmad.

End quote from al-Mughni (3/110)