1151 - When a pregnant woman feels contractions, should she stop praying, and does she have to makeup the missed prayers?

the question

When does a woman in labour (for childbirth) stop performing the salah? Does she still perform the salah if she is having contractions but no fluid has come from her body yet?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We put the following question to Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen, may Allaah preserve him:

If a woman whose pregnancy has reached full term passes blood and has pains, but she does not know whether these are the contractions that will lead to childbirth or contractions that will later ease off [“practice” contractions, also known as Braxton-Hicks contractions], should she pray or not?

He answered, may Allaah preserve him:

Of course, there are two things we may assume here:

The first is that the pregnancy will continue without contractions.

The second is that the apparent case is that these are contractions, so she should stop praying.

If this is what usually happens to her, and she may carry on having contractions for four or five days without giving birth, then in this case she should still pray.

Question:

If she acts upon the second assumption, then the contractions ease off, should we tell her to make

up the prayers she has missed?

Answer:

It is preferable to make them up, because she took her decision on the basis of an assumption.

In summary, then:

If this woman usually has contractions for a number of days – more than two or three – then this is not nifaas and she should pray. If that is not what usually happens, then we assume that it is nifaas in the sense that she should stop praying. If she stops praying, then it turns out that it was not nifaas, then in this case we say that if she makes up the prayers she has missed, this is good, and if she does not make them up, there is nothing wrong with that because she acted on an assumption.

And Allâh knows best.