129636 - Which is the middle prayer?

the question

Which is the begining of the day- is it fajr or magrib. Please tell me. Which is the middle prayer. If it is asr then, fajr is the beginning of the day. Please clarify me in detail from the quran and the hadeeth.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Identifying the middle prayer which is mentioned in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawaat (the prayers) especially the middle Salaah (i.e. the best prayer). And stand before Allaah with obedience [and do not speak to others during the Salaah (prayers)]” [al-Baqarah 2:238] is one of the matters concerning which there is a difference of opinion among the scholars, and concerning which there are approximately 20 opinions, as listed by al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) in Fath al-Baari (8/197). Al-Haafiz ‘Abd al-Mu’min al-Dimyaati (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote a book concerning that entitled Kashf al-Mughatta fi Tabyeen al-Salaat al-Wusta. The strongest of these opinions are two:

1.That it is Fajr prayer

This is the view of Abu Umaamah, Anas, Jaabir, Abu’l-‘Aaliyah, ‘Ubaydah ibn ‘Umayr, ‘Ata’, ‘Ikrimah, Mujaahid and others, and it is one of the two views of Ibn ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbaas.

It is also the view of Maalik and of al-Shaafa’i as stated in al-Umm. End quote from Fath al-Baari (8/196).

2.That it is ‘Asr prayer

This is the view of most of the scholars, and it is the correct and reliable view, because of the evidence to that effect in the Qur’aan and the Sunnah.

This is the view of 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib. Al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasaa'i narrated that Zurr ibn Hubaysh said: We said to 'Ubaydah: Ask 'Ali about the middle prayer. He asked him and he said: We used to think that that was Fajr, until I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say on the day of al-Ahzaab: "They distracted us from the middle prayer, 'Asr prayer." This report states that it is 'Asr in the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). The argument for it being Fajr is strong, but the correct view is that it is 'Asr.

This is the view of Ibn Mas'ood and Abu Hurayrah, and it is the correct view according to the madhhab of Abu Haneefah; it is also the view of Ahmad and the view which most of the Shaafa'is adopted because of the soundness of the hadeeth.

Al-Tirmidhi said: It is the view of most of the scholars among the Sahaabah.

Al-Mawardi said: This is the view of the majority of the Taabi'een.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said: It is the view of most of scholars of hadeeth.

Among the Maalikis, this is the view of Ibn Habeeb, Ibn al-'Arabi and Ibn 'Atiyyah. End quote from Fath al-Baari, 8/196.

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is indicated by the saheeh hadeeths is that it is 'Asr, and this is the favoured view. End quote.

Al-Majmoo', 3/61

Al-Haafiz al-Dimyaati mentioned some of the particular virtues that are unique to 'Asr prayer:

·The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) emphasised the calamity of missing it and described it as loss of family and wealth, when he said: "Whoever misses 'Asr prayer, it is as if he has lost his family and his wealth."

·The good deeds of the one who misses it are lost.

·It was dearer to them than their own selves and their parents, children, families and wealth.

·It was the first prayer at the time of which the fear prayer was prescribed.

·It was the first prayer in which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) turned to face the Ka'bah.

·The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "A man tries to sell an item after 'Asr by swearing an oath by Allah…". So Allaah showed the seriousness of an oath sworn after 'Asr prayer.

·Sulaymaan (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) destroyed a large number of horses because inspecting them distracted him from 'Asr prayer until the sun set.

·Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "By Al-'Asr (the time). 2. Verily, man is in loss…" [al-'Asr 103:1-2]

·It was the middle prayer to be made obligatory, because the first prayer to be made obligatory was Fajr and the last was 'Isha', so it was the middle prayer in being made obligatory.

End quote. Kashf al-Mughta, p. 126-132

With regard to the question about the beginning of the day, and whether it is during the night or the day, the answer is that the night comes before the day. So when the sun sets, the night belonging to the following day has begun. Hence when the new moon of Ramadan is sighted, the people pray Taraweeh that night because that night is part of Ramadan, and when they see the new moon of Eid, they do not pray Taraweeh because that is part of Shawwaal.

But that does not imply that Fajr is the middle prayer, because what is meant by middle here is the best, not the one that is in the middle between two things.

See: al-Tahreer wa'l-Tanweer, 15/253; Tafseer Soorat al-Baqarah by Ibn 'Uthaymeen, 2/178.

And Allaah knows best.