72559 - Meaning of the hadeeth: “Whoever prays Fajr will be under the protection of Allaah”

the question

What is the meaning of the hadeeth of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “Whoever prays Fajr in congregation will be under the protection of Allaah”? How can I be under the protection of Allaah?
If a man prays at home in congregation with his wife, is it the same as the prayer in congregation that is mentioned in the hadeeth?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Muslim (657) narrated that Jundub ibn ‘Abd-Allaah said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever prays Fajr is under the protection of Allaah, so do not fall short with regard to the rights of Allaah, for anyone who does that, Allaah will seize him and will throw him on his face into the Fire of Hell.”

Al-Teebi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: The reason why Fajr prayer is singled out for mention here is because of the hardship that it entails, and performing it is a sign of a man’s sincerity and faith, and whoever is a sincere believer is under the protection of Allaah. Sharh Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh by al-Teebi (2/184).

There are two scholarly views on the meaning of the hadeeth:

1 – The hadeeth indicates that it is forbidden to harm any Muslim who prays Fajr, for the one who prays Fajr is under the care and protection of Allaah, and it is not permissible for anyone to harm the one whom Allaah has protected. If anyone harms him, he has transgressed and violated the protection of Allaah, so he deserves the punishment of Allaah for having transgressed His protection and for harming the one who is under His protection. See Fayd al-Qadeer by al-Manaawi

(6/164).

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen (1/591):

This indicates that it is obligatory to respect the Muslims who affirm their Islam by praying Fajr, because no one offers Fajr prayer but a believer. And it is not permissible for anyone to transgress against them. End quote.

This is also indicated by the report narrated by al-Tabaraani in al-Mu’jam al-Awsat (4/5) with his isnaad. Al-Albaani said in Saheeh al-Targheeb (1/110): it is saheeh because of corroborating reports.

It was narrated that al-A’mash said: Saalim ibn ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Umar was sitting with al-Hajjaaj and al-Hajjaaj said to him: Get up and strike this person’s neck. Saalim picked up the sword and took hold of the man, and headed towards the gate of the palace. Then his father looked at him when he was taking this man out and said: Is he really going to do it? He repeated it two or three times, and when he took him out, Saalim said to him: Did you pray Fajr? He said: Yes. He said: Then take whichever path you want. Then he came and threw down the sword and al-Hajjaaj said to him: Did you strike his neck? He said: No. He said: Why not? He said: I heard my father say: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever prays Fajr is under the protection of Allaah until evening comes.”

2 – What is meant by the hadeeth is a warning against abandoning or neglecting Fajr prayer, because abandoning it is a transgression of the covenant between a person and his Lord. This covenant is prayer and regular performance of prayer.

Al-Baydaawi said: It may be that what is meant by protection is that prayer brings security (from the punishment of Allaah), so what is meant is: Do not abandon Fajr prayer, and do not be heedless about it, lest you break the covenant that exists between you and your Lord, and Allaah seizes you, for whomever He seizes He will throw on his face into the Fire. That is because Fajr prayer is somewhat difficult and burdensome. So performing it is a sign of the believer’s sincerity,

and the one who is sincere is under the protection of Allaah. End quote from Fayd al-Qadeer (6/164).

Some scholars are of the view that the virtue of entering the protection of Allaah that is mentioned in this hadeeth applies only to the one who prays Fajr in congregation. Hence al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) gave it the title, in his editing of Saheeh Muslim, of “Chapter on the virtue of praying ‘Isha’ and Fajr in congregation.” He was preceded in that by al-Mundhiri (may Allaah have mercy on him), who quoted the hadeeth in his book al-Targheeb wa’l-Tarheeb under the heading “Encouragement to pray Fajr and ‘Isha’, in particular, in congregation, and a warning against staying away from them.”

This apparently is what Imam Muslim did, as he narrated nearly twenty ahaadeeth before this hadeeth, and umpteen ahaadeeth after it, all of them speaking about prayer in congregation and related matters.

Hence al-Haafiz ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Ishbeeli narrated it in his compilation of al-Saheehayn, in a chapter entitled “Prayer in congregation” (923).

Al-Mubaarakfoori quoted the same hadeeth in Sharh al-Tirmidhi, where he said: “The one who prays Fajr” in congregation. End quote.

Ibn ‘Allaan said in Daleel al-Faaliheen (3/550): i.e., prayer in congregation, as mentioned in the other report.

This is supported further by the hadeeth of Abu Bakrah (may Allaah be pleased with him): “Whoever prays Fajr in congregation will be under the protection of Allaah …” al-Haythami (may Allaah have mercy on him) said (2/92): Narrated by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, and its men are the men of saheeh. Al-Mundhiri said in al-Targheeb: the men of its isnaad are the men of saheeh. Al-Albaani said: It is saheeh because of corroborating evidence. See: Saheeh al-Targheeb, no. 461.

Note: This additional material was quoted by al-Manaawi also, and he attributed it to Muslim, but this is a mistake on his part. The additional word “in congregation” is not found in Muslim, or in

any of the six books.

And it was said that the virtue is attained by everyone who prays Fajr on time, even if he does not pray with the congregation, because no such limitation is mentioned in the report of Muslim or any other author of the six books.

This appears to be the meaning understood by Ibn Maajah (may Allaah be pleased with him) as he included this hadeeth in his Sunan in a chapter entitled "The Muslims are under the protection of Allaah," in Kitaab al-Fitan.

This was also suggested by Ibn Hibbaan in his Saheeh (6/36): "Chapter affirming the protection of Allaah for the one who prays Fajr." This applies to all those who pray.

3 – The prescribed prayer in congregation that is enjoined and brings the reward is prayer in congregation in the mosque, and not any other congregation. This has been explained in detail in questions no. 8918, 49947 and 72398.

There are several reports that speak of the virtue of offering Fajr prayer in congregation:

In Tafseer al-Tabari (3/270), in the commentary on the verse (interpretation of the meaning): "and those who pray and beg Allaah's Pardon in the last hours of the night" [Aal 'Imraan 3:17], it is narrated that Zayd ibn Aslam said: They are the ones who attend Fajr in congregation.

In their commentary on the verse "Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope" [al-Sajdah 32:16], Abu'l-Darda' and al-Dahhaak said: 'Isha' and Fajr prayer in congregation.

See: Zaad al-Maseer (6/339)

In Saheeh Muslim (656) it is narrated from 'Uthmaan (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever prays 'Isha' in congregation, it is as if he spent half the night in prayer, and whoever prays Fajr in congregation, it is as if he spent the whole night in prayer."

Al-Bukhaari (615) and Muslim (437) narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him)

that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “If they knew what there is (of reward) in ‘Isha’ and Fajr prayer, they would come to them even if they had to crawl.”

‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: To attend Fajr prayer in congregation is dearer to me than spending the night in prayer. Al-Istidhkaar (2/147).

And Allaah knows best.