

Essential Questions & Answers Regarding the Eclipse

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{فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا}

{So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord} [18:110]

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In the name of Allāh, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy.

Question #1: What is a solar eclipse?

According to what we know – and Allāh knows best – a solar eclipse occurs during the orbit of the moon around the earth; when it moves between the sun and the earth, it blocks the light of the sun from reaching the earth. This causes an eclipse of the sun, or solar eclipse.

Question #2: What is a lunar eclipse?

When the Earth is positioned between the sun and the moon, it blocks the sunlight that is normally reflected by the moon. The moon will appear red or orange, as opposed to white or yellow. A lunar eclipse occurs during a night of a full moon.

Question #3: What is the wisdom of Allāh behind an eclipse?

Everything which Allāh wills and decrees to occur is due to a wisdom. The eclipse is not a mere coincidental natural occurrence, rather it is decreed by Allāh for a greater benefit.

Allāh decrees for it to occur to remind the people of His ability and power, for the believers to fear Him and as an admonishment regarding the Hereafter. Just as the eclipse is a change to normal circumstances, similarly the Final Day will see monumental changes. People will be in a state of dread and fear, only concerned with themselves.

Each person will forget his/her father, mother, spouse and children, standing in front of Allāh. The sun will be brought close such that people are drowning in their sweat, except those whom Allāh has mercy upon.

{And We send not the signs except as a warning} [17:59]

Question #4: Did an eclipse occur during the time of the Prophet ﷺ?

Yes, it occurred in the year in which the third son of the Prophet ﷺ died. His name was Ibrāhīm. He was the third and last son of the Prophet ﷺ, he died in his infancy.

‘The sun eclipsed in the life-time of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ on the day when (his son) Ibrāhīm died.

The people said “the sun has eclipsed because of the death of Ibrāhīm.

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ replied, ‘the sun and the moon do not eclipse on account of a person’s death or birth. When you see the eclipse pray and supplicate to Allāh.’¹

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘the sun and the moon are two signs amongst the signs of Allāh and they do not eclipse because of the death of someone but Allāh frightens His worshippers with them.’²

Question #5: What did the Prophet ﷺ do during an eclipse?

The Prophet ﷺ had left his house in the morning, riding an animal. This was in the morning in which his son Ibrāhīm passed away and it was a day of exceptional heat, then the sun eclipsed.

Upon seeing the eclipse, the Prophet ﷺ returned home quicky, and then came out in a state of fear and dread. As he was rushing to the Prayer area, his cloak fell down behind him however he did not notice such was his fear on that day.

¹ Narrated by al-Mughīrah Ibn Shu’bah; Collected by Al-Bukhaaree.

² Narrated by Abu Bakrah; Collected by al-Bukhārī

He then came to the Prayer area, and stood to lead the people in Prayer. The call was made: “Şalât al-Jamā’ah ([gather] for the congregational Prayer).”

Upon hearing this call, the old and young; the men and women; rushed out of their houses to join the Prophet ﷺ. He then led them in Prayer and after the Prayer, he delivered a short sermon.

During the Prayer, he was shown Paradise, Hell and other events which will occur.³

Question #6: How is Şalât Al-Kusūf (Eclipse Prayer) performed?

1. Şalât al-Kusūf is prayed in congregation, and is attended by both men and women.
2. There is no Adhān for it, rather it is called to by shouting out: “As-Şalât Jāmi’atun” (the prayer in congregation)
3. It is a loud prayer of two lengthy Rak’āt, but each Rak’ah contains two Rukū’ (bowing)
4. In the first Rak’ah, the Imām stands and recites Şūrah al-Fātiha, followed by reciting a lengthy passage of the Qur’ān. The Prophet ﷺ recited to the amount of Şūrah al-Baqarah.
5. Then the Imām performs a Rukū’ (bowing) and stays in this position for a long amount of time, glorifying Allāh .
6. He then stands up, but instead of going into Sujūd (prostration), he remains standing and begins to recite Şūrah al-Fātiha and another lengthy passage of the Qur’ān,

³ This description is paraphrased from a treatise authored by shaykh Albāni called: “Şiffatu Şalāt an-Nabī li Şalāt al-Kusūf”.

He has combined this description from a number of narrations collected by: al-Bayhaqī, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and an-Nāsaī.

but not as lengthy as the first passage. The Prophet ﷺ recited to the amount of Ṣūrah Aal Imrān.

7. The Imām then goes into a lengthy Rukū' but not as lengthy as the first one.
8. After standing, the Imām goes into Sujūd (prostration) and lengthens it in order to glorify Allāh and supplicate to him.
9. After two Sujūd, the Imām stands up and repeats the above process for another Rak'ah. Each standing, recitation, Rukū' and Sujūd is lengthened but each one is slightly shorter than the previous one.
10. He finishes with the Taslīm.⁴

Question #7: How long does Ṣalāt Al-Kusūf last for?

There is no minimum amount of time it lasts for. It begins when the eclipse is sighted by the people, and the Prophet ﷺ continued in the Prayer until the eclipse had disappeared.

It is important to emphasise that the Eclipse Prayer is based on the sighting of the people, not the mere forecasting of observatories, and ends when the eclipse has ceded.

Question #8: What actions are legislated for a Muslim to perform during an eclipse?

There are 13 actions which are legislated:

1. The Prayer.
2. Supplications.

⁴ This description has been summarised and paraphrased from the Ḥadīth of 'Āisha and Ibn 'Abbās, both collected by al-Bukhārī & Muslim.

3. Glorifying, exalting and praising Allāh through Takbīr (saying Allāhu Akbar), Tasbīh (saying subhānaAllāh) and Tahmīd (saying Alhamdulillah).
4. Donate to charity.
5. Seek refuge in Allāh from the punishment of the grave.⁵
6. Make Dhikr (remembrance) of Allāh.
7. Seek forgiveness through Istighfār. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'If you see this, turn to His remembrance, supplications and seeking forgiveness.'⁶
8. Making Tahlīl (singling out Allāh by saying Lā ilāha illa Allāh).⁷
9. Seek refuge in Allāh from the punishment of the Fire.⁸
10. To physically show anxiety and concern.⁹
11. Fear Allāh in one's heart.¹⁰

⁵ The above five actions are taken from the Ḥadīth of 'Āisha, collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, in which the Prophet ﷺ said, 'If you see it (the eclipse), supplicate, say the Takbīr, pray Ṣalāh and give in charity.' In one narration, 'He then ordered the people to seek refuge from the punishment of the grave.'

⁶ Narrated by Abu Mūsa Al-Ash'arī, collected by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

⁷ These actions are taken from the Ḥadīth of 'AbdurRahmān Ibn Samurah, collected by Muslim, "He then began to make Tasbeeh, Tahmīd, Tahlīl, Takbīr and Du'ā.

⁸ This is from the Ḥadīth of 'Āisha, collected by Muslim, "I heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ seeking refuge from the punishment of the Fire and the punishment of the grave".

⁹ This is from the Ḥadīth of Abu Mūsa Al-Ash'arī, collected by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, that the Prophet ﷺ "became frightened regarding the establishment of the Hour."

¹⁰ Due to previous Ḥadīth of Abu Bakrah in which the Prophet said, 'the sun and moon are two signs from the signs of Allāh, He uses them to frighten His worshippers.'

12. Emancipate slaves.¹¹

13. For the Imām to give a khutbah (sermon) and for the people to generally advise each other.¹²

Success and guidance is with Allāh alone, may peace and blessings be upon his Prophet and his followers.

Written by,

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14th Dhul Qi'dah, 1439
Corresponding to 27th July, 2018

¹¹ From the Ḥadīth of Asmā Bint Abī Bakr, collected by al-Bukhārī, that the Prophet ﷺ “encouraged for slaves to be emancipated”.

¹² In the Ḥadīth of ‘Āisha, collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, “the Prophet ﷺ turned to the people after the Eclipse Prayer and admonished the people, he praised Allāh and reminded the people to repent.”
The sermon is for the Imām alone, however the obligation to advise each other remains between the people.