

The five prayer times — how they are set

No timetable was revealed. A shadow, a zenith, a twilight — and Jibril came down to show the Prophet ﷺ where each time begins and ends.



Jibril marked the edges

Jibril led him ﷺ at the Ka'bah on two days: once at the opening of each time, once at its close — then said the time lies between the two.

Sunan Abi Dawud 393 · hasan sahih · Sunan at-Tirmidhi 149 · hasan sahih

The Companions argued from it

When 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz delayed 'Asr a little, 'Urwa told him: Jibril descended and led the prayer in front of the Prophet ﷺ.

Sahih al-Bukhari 3221

Z̤uhr · the sun leaves its peak

The time opens the moment the sun passes the meridian — Jibril prayed it when the shadow had grown by a sandal-strap's length.

Sunan Abi Dawud 393 · hasan sahih

'Asr · shadow equals height

Jibril prayed 'Asr when a thing's shadow was as long as the thing itself.

- Hanafi reckoning sets it later, at twice that length

Sunan Abi Dawud 393 · hasan sahih · Sunan an-Nasa'i 526 · sahih

Maghrib · the fast is broken

He prayed Maghrib the moment the sun had set — the same instant at which one who is fasting breaks the fast.

Sunan Abi Dawud 393 · hasan sahih

'Isha' and Fajr · two twilights

'Isha' once the twilight has gone from the sky; Fajr at the true dawn, the first thin whiteness on the horizon.

Sunan Abi Dawud 393 · hasan sahih · Sunan an-Nasa'i 526 · sahih

At the two ends of the day

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفِي النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ

"And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night." The sun sets the hours; the Qur'an names them.

Qur'an 11:114 · 17:78

The two disliked stretches

"The Prophet ﷺ forbade praying after the Fajr prayer till the sun rises, and after the 'Asr prayer till the sun sets."

- Most scholars except a prayer with a cause, e.g. one you owe

Sahih al-Bukhari 581

Early, not at the edge

Asked which deed is dearest to Allah, he ﷺ answered: the prayer at its early stated fixed time. A time is a window, not a deadline.

Sahih al-Bukhari 527