

## **PRAYER TIMETABLE**

It has to come to the knowledge of the Mosque Committee that some people may have created confusion over the existing timetable being used by the Mosque. They have even produced a different timetable and publicised it. They are also questioning the validity of the prayers done according to the Mosque timetable.

Prayer times in the time of Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, were based on human observation of physical phenomena: dawn, sunrise, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening. The use of prayer timetables based on astronomical calculations has been developed since that time for both convenience and necessity (when these phenomena cannot be observed due to urban development or weather). Understandably, different methods of calculating these times have been developed over the years, each taking into account the sometimes special needs of each geographical location for which a timetable is required. As a result different timetables appeared basing upon the exact definition of *Subh-e-Sadiq*. The scholars have differed on the exact beginning of *Subh-e-Sadiq* and the *Isha* time. The *Subh-e-Sadiq* starts at a time when the sun is below the horizon by a certain angle. The reference angle of the sun used by different scholars for calculation of *Fajr* (and *Isha*) time varies from 12° to 18°.

Mosques generally do not produce their own timetables. They follow one scholar or another. We are following the timetable, which was specifically calculated for Cambridge by Khalid Shaukat, who is specialised in physics, mathematics, computer programming and computational astronomy. He has been actively doing research work for over 3 decades on Prayer Schedule, *Qibla* Direction, Islamic Calendar and Moonsighting, serving Muslim *Ummah* all across the World. He is also a consultant to the Islamic Society of North America, Shura Council of North America and Fiqh Council of North America. Mr Khalid Shaukat does not focus on any single Mazhab and has provided authentic prayer timetables for all Mazhabs. Some details of his work can be seen on the web site <http://www.moonsighting.com>. Through his web site he has provided Prayer Schedule, *Qibla* Direction, or Moonsighting information to almost every country (over 200 countries) and thousands of cities (more than 3,100 cities) in the world including polar regions (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Alaska), where sun does not rise or set for several months. Several mosques around the world have been built with his help in orientation of *Qibla* direction.

*Subh-e-Sadiq* is a phenomenon that can be physically observed as described in *Sunah*. Several independent groups of Muslims in different locations of the world at different times have observed this phenomenon physically in countries like England, Pakistan, USA, Caribbean Island, South Africa, Australia etc. Those observations revealed that *Fajr* time starts when the sun is 13.5° to 14° below horizon. We believe Khalid Shaukat has used 15° for the calculation of *Fajr* and *Isha* time considering a factor of safety.

Our timetable is in conformity with the timetables followed in most British mosques including East London Mosque, which is one of the oldest mosques in the UK. Prayer times for the East London Mosque are given on the following web site. The variation of time of few minutes is due to the difference of the location of Cambridge from London. <http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/prayer.htm>

As regards the time for *Asr* prayer there is no single standard method for calculating the time. There is a difference between the *Hanafi* and the *Shaafi Mazhab*. Whichever *Mazhab* you follow you will be on the right because all the *Imams* have worked out the prayer times according to the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, which has been recognised by all the *Ulama* of the world for centuries. In *Shaafi Mazhab* the time for *Asr* prayer begins when an object's shadow becomes equal to its height plus the length of its noon-time shadow. However in *Hanafi Mazhab*, *Asr* starts when an object's length should be twice its length plus the length of its noon-time shadow. Khalid Shaukat has provided us the calculation of *Asr*, both for *Hanafi* and *Shaafi Mazhabs*. We have adopted at the Mosque *Hanafi Asr* time for some months. While for some other months *Shaafi Asr* time has been adopted and for some period, times in between *Hanafi* and *Shaafi Mazhabs* have been adopted for convenience of local Muslims. The Mosque prayer timetable thus is perfectly within the time band allowed in *Shariah*.

Few months back some brothers started questioning the validity of the Mosque timetable and produced a counter timetable. They approached us to replace the Mosque timetable with theirs, which is in fact *Shaafi Mazhab* timetable. It must however be emphasised that Cambridge Muslim Community mostly comprises of the followers of *Hanafi Mazhab*. The Committee also observed that in the timetable, prepared by those brothers, *Fajr* prayer time in the summer months was not in line with most of the timetables available in Britain. For example in their timetable, the *Fajr* time in June begins as early as around 1.42 a.m. when the sun rises at around 4.36 a.m. whereas, according to the Mosque timetable *Fajr* in the same period starts around 3.36 a.m. and sunrises at 4.38 a.m. The Mosque Committee felt that it would not be fair to solely impose a minority view over a majority and did not feel it appropriate to replace the Mosque timetable with theirs.

The time of *Juma* prayer that we have been following in Cambridge is also perfectly within the *Shariah*. According to the *Hanafi* timetable the *Asr* prayer in early part of December starts around 2.00 p.m. We try to hold *Juma* prayer around 1.25 p.m. and it always concludes well before the start of *Asr* prayer time. Very recently some brothers have started holding early *Jumah* prayer at a different place and then they come to the Mosque and confuse the people by saying that the time of *Juma* prayer in the Mosque is wrong therefore the prayer is invalid. Such accusations are baseless as explained above.

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