

## Surah 4. An-Nisaa

Asad: AND WHEN you go forth [to war] on earth, you will incur no sin by shortening your prayers<sup>127</sup> if you have reason to fear that those who are bent on denying the truth might suddenly fall upon you:<sup>128</sup> for, verily, those who deny the truth are your open foes.

Malik: When you travel in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayers, especially when you fear that the unbelievers may attack you, since the unbelievers are your open enemies.

Pickthall: And when ye go forth in the land, it is no sin for you to curtail (your) worship if ye fear that those who disbelieve may attack you. In truth the disbelievers are an open enemy to you.

Yusuf Ali: When ye travel through the earth there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers for fear the unbelievers may attack you: for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies.<sup>617</sup>

Transliteration: Waitha darabtum fee alardi falaysa AAalaykum junahun an taqsuroo mina alssalati in khiftum an yaftinakumu allatheena kafaroo inna alkafireena kanoo lakum AAaduwwan mubeenan  
Khattab:

When you travel through the land, it is permissible for you to shorten the prayer<sup>1</sup> —?especially? if you fear an attack by the disbelievers. Indeed, the disbelievers are your sworn enemies.

### Author Comments

127 - Lit., "the prayer": a reference to the five obligatory daily prayers - at dawn, noon, afternoon, after sunset and late in the evening - which may be shortened and combined (the noon prayer with that of the afternoon, and the sunset prayer with that of the late evening) if one is travelling or in actual danger. While the extension of this permission to peaceful travel has been authorized by the Prophet's sunnah, the Qur'an mentions it only in connection with war situations; and this justifies the interpolation, in the opening sentence, of the words "to war". The prayer described in the next verse - with the congregation praying in shifts - is called salat al-khawf ("prayer in danger").

128 - Lit., "might cause you an affliction" - implying, according to almost all the commentators, a sudden attack.

Generally, it is permissible for Muslims who are travelling a distance of 85 km or more to shorten their prayers. A four-unit prayer is reduced to two.

617 - Verse 101 gives permission to shorten four Rakat prayers when people are on a journey: verses 102-104 deal with cases when they are in danger at war, in face of the enemy. The shortening of prayers in both cases is further governed as to details by the practice of the Messenger and his Companions. As to journeys, two questions arise: (1) what constitutes a journey for this purpose? (2) is the fear of an attack an essential condition for the shortening of the prayers? As to (1), it is best to leave the matter to discretion, having regard to all the circumstances of the journey, as in the case of the journeys which excuse a fast: see ii. 184, n. 190. The text leaves it to discretion. As to (2), the practice of the Prophet shows that danger is not an essential condition; it is merely mentioned as a possible incident. The Messenger usually shortened the prayers from four Rakats to two Rakats in Zuhr (midday prayer), 'Asr (afternoon prayer) and Isha (night prayer): the other two are in any case short, Fajr (morning prayer) having two Rakats and Magrib (evening prayer) having three.

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