

# The Fiqh of Travel

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## Seeking the True Destination: Learning How to Travel

In the modern world, travel has become cheap, easy and convenient. Journeys that would have once taken several months and exposed the traveller to many dangers, can now be undertaken with very little expense, planning or risk. Today's traveller makes the decision to travel to far-flung regions of the earth with far less deliberation than earlier travellers, when the decision to travel would not be taken lightly. The pre-modern traveller would have carefully weighed up the religious and worldly advantages of the journey before taking the first step. Accordingly, travel was more purposeful than it is today, and this sense of purpose can be observed in Islam's rich body of teachings on the subject which imbue it with the remembrance of Allah from the outset. By accessing and applying these teachings, the modern traveller can derive something of the benefit that earlier travellers found in their journeys.

This introduction explores Islamic perspectives on travel, defining what is praiseworthy and deplorable for the traveller. The aim is to help the reader transform his or her journey from something ordinary, or perhaps even unlawful, into a good act. Put another way, the aim is to add another dimension to travel, so that it transcends the simple movement between two points on the earth to become a journey along the path to Allah.

The word for travel in Arabic is *safar*. Derived from the root s-f-r, meaning 'to uncover', travel is said to reveal a person's true character and nature. This disclosure is instructive, primarily for the traveller himself. Character flaws are often hidden beneath the layers of routine with which we shroud our daily lives. Travel, by its nature, places one in difficult situations where routine is unpeeled, revealing the real nature of the traveller, and forcing a reassessment of prejudices, ideas, habits and delusions that have become ingrained deep into the psyche. Perhaps this is why Arabs say *al-barakāt ma'a al-ḥarakāt*, meaning, 'Blessings come with movement'.

The blessings of movement extend beyond those enjoyed by the individual traveller himself. Consider the primary elements of the world: water and air. They are in constant flux, bringing with them the cyclical change of seasons and weather and out of this movement the land brings forth its fruits and humanity finds not only its provender, but also rest, relief, and good health. Similarly, with the movement of people comes learning, change and improvement. It is also said, 'were it not for

movement, the pearls of the ocean would never adorn the necks of women'. The proviso is that we adhere to Prophetic guidance, at which point travelling will help to clear the mind, refresh the soul, and remove anxieties.

Journey is also a significant theme of Islam, where two great journeys of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) mark out significant points in its ascent. The first, delineating the start of the Islamic calendar itself, was his departure from Makka, when he said to it, 'By Allah, you are the best of Allah's lands and the most beloved of them to Him; had I not been compelled to leave you I would not have left'. Through this journey, he left a society that sought to smother the nascent religion and took it to the fertile lands of Madīna, where Islam flourished. Then after many years he made the second pivotal journey, returning victorious and opening Makka, the capital of the Arab civilisation, to Islam.

### Gaining from one's travels

The Qur'ān itself, along with the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), point to the close link between travel and the attainment of knowledge or the acquisition of wealth. Often, travel is the secret to prospering in this world and the next.

Many of the early Muslims understood this secret and Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī wrote a famous book called *Al-Riḥlah fī Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth* (Travelling in order to seek Ḥadīth) in which he compiled the names of those who travelled to learn even a single narration. The Companion Jābir undertook a month's journey from the city of the Prophet to hear a ḥadīth from the lips of 'Abdullāh ibn Unays. The *tābi'* Sha'bī remarked that the journey of a person from the Levant (Shām) to the corners of Yemen for a single word that provides him guidance or protects him from spiritual destruction is not wasted. It is said that the secrets of Sha'bī's great learning was his travelling from city to city to acquire knowledge.

There are many other benefits to be gained from travelling as it broadens the horizons, increases one's tolerance of others and improves character. Imām Shāfi'ī, who was a well-travelled man, said in a poem:

مَا فِي الْمَقَامِ لِذِي عَقْلٍ وَذِي أَدَبٍ	مِنْ رَاحَةٍ فَدَعِ الْأَوْطَانَ وَاعْتَزِبِ
سَافِرٌ تَجِدُ عَوَضًا عَمَّنْ تُفَارِقُهُ	وَأَنْصَبَ فَإِنَّ لَذِيذَ الْعَيْشِ فِي النَّصَبِ
إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ وَقُوفَ الْمَاءِ يُفْسِدُهُ	إِنْ سَاحَ طَابَ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَجْرِ لَمْ يَطْبِ
وَالْأَسَدُ لَوْلَا فِرَاقُ الْأَرْضِ مَا افْتَرَسَتْ	وَالسَّهْمُ لَوْلَا فِرَاقُ الْقَوْسِ لَمْ يُصِبِ
وَالشَّمْسُ لَوْ وَقَفَتْ فِي الْفُلْكِ دَائِمَةً	لَمَلَّهَا النَّاسُ مِنْ عُجْمٍ وَمِنْ عَرَبٍ

وَالْتَّبَرُّ كَالْتُّبْرِ مُلْقَى فِي أَمَاكِنِهِ وَالْعُودُ فِي أَرْضِهِ نَوْعٌ مِنَ الْحَطَبِ  
فَإِنْ تَغَرَّبَ هَذَا عَزَّ مَطْلَبُهُ وَإِنْ تَغَرَّبَ ذَلِكَ عَزَّ كَالْدَّهَبِ

The one with intellect and good conduct

Finds no rest in remaining home, so leave your abode and travel

Travel, and you will find a replacement for those you leave behind.

Strive, for the pleasure of life lies in hardship.

I have seen motionlessness spoil water

When it flows it becomes clear; when held back it stagnates.

The lion, were it to stay in its den would never catch its prey.

The arrow, were it not to leave the bow, would not hit its mark.

The sun, were it to halt in one place in the heavens

The Arabs and the non-Arabs alike would grow weary of it.

Gold is akin to soil when it is at its source

While oud in its own place is only another type of wood.

When this one is taken from its source it rises in demand

And when that one is mined it becomes as prized as gold

In another poem, Imām Shāfi'ī highlights a number of benefits inherent in travel:

وَسَافِرٌ فِيهِ الْأَسْفَارُ خَمْسُ فَوَائِدِ تَغَرَّبَ عَنِ الْأَوْطَانِ فِي طَلَبِ الْعُلَى  
وَعِلْمٌ وَآدَابٌ وَصُحْبَةٌ مَاجِدِ تَفَرُّجٌ هَمٌّ وَاكْتِسَابٌ مَعِيشَةٍ  
وَقَطْعُ الْفَيَافِي وَازِيكَابُ الشَّدَائِدِ فَإِنْ قِيلَ فِي الْأَسْفَارِ دُلٌّ وَمِخْنَةٌ  
يَدَارِ هَوَانٍ بَيْنَ وَاشٍ وَحَاسِدِ فَمَوْتُ الْفَتَى خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ قِيَامِهِ

Travel from your homeland seeking high ranks;

Go, for in travelling there are five benefits.

Freedom from worry, acquisition of livelihood,

Knowledge, conduct, and company of the illustrious.

If it be said that there is humiliation and trial in travelling,

Crossing of deserts and the onset of difficulties

Then the death of a young man is better for him than residing,

In an abode of humiliation among critics and the envious.

Five benefits are mentioned: freedom from worry, increasing wealth, learning, refinement of character and widening one's circle of friends. Travel brings with it the possibility of a new start as one's talent may hold value in a different environment or new opportunities may present themselves to the traveller. So although travel necessarily entails hardship, there are also a great many benefits which have the potential to transform one's life from a mundane, sedentary affair into something more meaningful. The Imām's words can be seen as encouragement for those who are unable to reap these benefits in their homelands to travel and seek opportunities elsewhere.

Tha'ālibī says that one of the virtues of travel is observing the wonders of other cities and continents, and the remnants of past civilisations and cultures. All this should increase one's knowledge and awe at the omnipotence of Allāh.

Importantly, travel can break the spiritual complacency that sets in when surrounded by a limited group of people. Delusions about one's religious practice will arise if one remains fixed within a particular social group. Major sins common among that group will appear insignificant because they are so widespread, with each person telling himself 'everybody does it'. However by travelling one is likely to meet people who practice religion more rigorously and may gain inspiration from them. Seeking out the company of the righteous is certainly a worthy intention of travel, and Imām Shāfi'ī listed keeping the company of the illustrious among the benefits of travel.

### Travel in the Qur'ān and Sunna

There are a number of verses in the Qur'ān which speak about travel and leaving one's home. One verse commands the *ḥajj*. Allah Most High says to the prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him): 'And proclaim to the people the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage); they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass' (Qur'ān 22:27). So the journey of *ḥajj* is a legal obligation in Islam and constitutes a major journey that most Muslims will strive to undertake at least once in their lives. Another verse states, 'Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah' (Qur'ān 9:41) which signifies

expeditions for the purpose of jihād. Yet another verse recommends Muslims to travel in search of lawful livelihood. Allah Most High says, 'And when the [Friday] prayer has been concluded, disperse in the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed' (Qur'ān 62:10). This indicates a link between travel and earning a living. Another verse encourages migration for the sake of Allah Most High for those unable to practice their faith in their hometown. He, exalted is He, says 'And whoever emigrates in the Way of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance' (Qur'ān 4:100). Allah instructs Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him) to travel to meet Khaḍir (Qur'ān 18:60) in order to learn the spiritual significance underlying events.

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: 'Those who are present here should convey to those who are not present' (*Bukhārī*) which is an indication to travel to spread religious teaching. Another verse in the Qur'ān says, 'Say, Travel through the land; then observe how was the end of the deniers' (Qur'ān 6:11). Travel is here a means of discovery, understanding and reflection, whether it is to learn from the history of past nations or from other inspiring circumstances.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also permitted travel to the three mosques, Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makka, the Prophet's Mosque in Madīna and Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem, and encouraged people to travel to visit the sick and to fulfil other rights such as maintaining ties of kinship.

### The Journeys of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace)

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) travelled for a variety of reasons. Before he received prophecy, he travelled to Syria with his uncle to trade. When he despaired of the people of Makka, he travelled to the city of Ṭā'if to invite them to worship Allah. He then undertook the arduous journey from Makka to Madīna to escape oppression. Later, the Prophet also left Madīna on a number of occasions for military expeditions. The Companions who followed in his footsteps also travelled far and wide for these reasons and that is why graves of Companions are to be found as far afield as Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, and even China.

### Types of Travel

#### Obligatory

Firstly, Islam obliges believers to undertake the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage) once in a lifetime for those among them who have the means to do it. Additionally, if there is no way of learning the basics of the *dīn* in one's hometown, such as rulings on *wuḍū'*, *ṣalāt* and other everyday rites, then it is also necessary to travel in order to learn these things. Such journeys contain a high reward and a person is considered to be in the 'path of Allah' until he returns.

### Recommended

Secondly, there is recommended and praiseworthy travel, for example the *‘umra*, the lesser pilgrimage to Makka, or travelling to the illuminated city of Madīna and the blessed city of Jerusalem. Travelling to any other place than these three for the sake of their sanctity or as a pilgrimage is not considered praiseworthy. However, as per the command of Allah: ‘O you who believe, fear Allah and be with the truthful’ (Qur’ān 9:119) travelling to a particular place to be among Muslims, the righteous (*awliyā*) and scholars and to benefit from them is certainly praiseworthy.

Travelling to visit one’s relatives is also a source of great reward; the further away they are, the greater the reward. The benefits of joining the ties of kinship are manifold; among them there is as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ‘Whoever would be pleased to receive expansion in their sustenance and blessing in their life should join the ties of kinship’ (*Bukhārī, Muslim*).

Another is travelling to visit the sick. The Prophet (peace be upon him) related that a person once went to visit his brother in another town because he was not well. Allah placed an angel in his path who asked him where he was going. He replied that he was going to visit his brother in that particular town. The angel asked if he had any other trade or business interests there. He replied no, except ‘I love him for the sake of Allah Most High’. The angel informed him ‘Allah also loves you just as you love your brother’ (*Muslim*).

### Permissible

As we can see from the preceding remarks, the legal status of a journey is tied to its purpose—when the journey is undertaken to discharge an obligation, it itself is obligatory; when it is undertaken to fulfil a recommended act, the journey is praiseworthy. This brings us to the question of the lawfulness or otherwise of tourism (*siyāḥa*). Accordingly, a trip to a lawful destination and for any lawful purpose is permissible and there is nothing wrong with it.

However, the permissible act is one that attracts neither punishment nor reward, and the proper attitude of the believer should be to elevate permissible acts into praiseworthy. This is achieved by coupling it with an exalted intention such as to travel so that one might reflect on the wonders of Allah’s creation and enjoy the manifestation of His beauty and magnificence. The fundamental aim would be to underpin one’s faith in the oneness of Allah and His majesty, power and greatness with direct experiences. Allah says, ‘[It is] the handiwork of Allah who gives to everything its solidity. He is aware of what you do’ (Qur’ān 27:88). Allah also says, ‘Say: Travel about the earth and see how He brought creation out of nothing. Then later Allah will bring about the next existence. Allah has power over all things’

(Qur'ān 29:20).

Another aim of travel can be to take lessons and admonition from seeing the ruins of nations that Allah destroyed. Allah says, 'Say: Travel about the earth and see the final fate of the deniers' (Qur'ān 6:11). In another verse He says: 'Say: Travel about the earth and see the final fate of the evildoers' (Qur'ān 27:69). When visiting places of Allah's wrath, such as where nations have been destroyed, or places where Allah's magnificence and beauty is manifest, it is important not to be oblivious to the signs of Allah, for He says: 'How many signs there are in the heavens and earth! Yet they pass them by, turning away from them' (Qur'ān 12:105). Therefore, it is imperative to not be of such people.

It is actually highly discouraged to visit places where the punishment of Allah has descended merely to gape at them. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed through Hġjr, the land of Thamūd, he said: 'Do not enter the dwellings of those who wronged themselves unless you are weeping, lest there befall you something like that which befell them'. Then he covered his head and urged his mount to move on quickly until he left the place behind (Bukhārī 3200, Muslim 2980). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, whilst discussing the campaign to Tabūk, states that someone who passes by places of those who were the objects of divine wrath or who were punished should not enter them or stay there, rather he should hasten to move on and cover his head with his garment until he has passed them. He should not enter upon them unless he is weeping and willing to learn a lesson. An example of this is when the Prophet (peace be upon him) hastened to move on through the valley of Muḥassar, between Minā and Muzdalifa, because it was the place where Allah had destroyed the army of the elephant (*Zād al-Ma'ād*, 3:560).

Travelling can also provide some respite from one's daily toils, clear one's mind and help one to relax. One can then return to one's worldly and spiritual obligations with renewed vigour. Therefore, taking a break from daily routine and the toil of labour in order to relax and clear one's thoughts can be useful. It is a permissible form of travel as long as the intention is sound and one avoids unlawful activities and prohibited means of pleasure and indulgence, such as visiting casinos, or spending time at the beach or at resorts or on a cruise where there would be many inappropriately dressed holidaymakers.

Most important in this type of travel is a sound intention as it will make the journey a praiseworthy and rewarding form of worship. One way is to plan the journey with the intention of generously spending money on the family (while refraining from extravagance) and bringing happiness to their hearts. Infusing your journey with a spiritual motive will lift it into a praiseworthy act, your money will be well-spent

and thus your holiday will be complete. The sign that one has done this sincerely is increased love for Allah and deeper character and wisdom.

Another motivation for travel is to observe and learn from praiseworthy cultures and behaviour of others and derive lessons from observing their ways. A change of scene and living amongst others sometimes opens one's eyes to one's own weaknesses and helps to reform them. When visiting a new place it is important to get away from normal tourist haunts and visit the locals. Tourist locales normally conform to certain known conventions that sometimes veil the true beauty or ugliness of the place. Make it a point to visit the local mosques, seek out and meet the local scholars and righteous people. Exchange gifts with the people you meet and visit a family home if you are able to, as this will give you a truer picture of the area than the tourist spots and hotels would.

### The Unlawful

Unlawful (*ḥarām*) forms of travel include those undertaken with an unlawful intention, such as for the sake of drinking, fornication, gambling and spending time among improperly dressed people on a beach. This would be *ḥarām* even in one's own hometown.

Scholars have made certain recommendations about Muslims from Muslim countries travelling to non-Muslim countries. They warn that a person's faith must be strong to resist the lure of the unlawful things they are likely to encounter. They should have sufficient knowledge such that inappropriate doubts about the *dīn* will easily be dispelled and their faith not harmed. A justification for this kind of travel might be that it is for the sake of business, medical treatment, or best of all, *da'wa* and inviting people to the worship of Allah. Living in a non-Muslim land also requires that we follow this advice as much as when travelling to such places, and possibly even more. We need to have enough knowledge to deal with all that we encounter, along with good character and compassion.

### Visiting Mosques and the Graves of the Righteous

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'No journey should be undertaken to visit any mosque but three: Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, the Mosque of the Messenger (peace be upon him) and the Aqṣā Mosque' (Bukhārī 1132, Muslim 1397).

The injunction in this narration is specifically about the impermissibility of travelling for the purpose of praying in a mosque other than the three mentioned. The great ḥadith master Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī reports that the impermissibility expressed in the narration is restricted to mosques. Travelling for other purposes such as to seek knowledge, visit friends and relatives, for the purpose of trade, recreation and so forth, are not included in this prohibition as indicated in another



version of this ḥadīth narrated by Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī from the Prophet (peace be upon him), 'It is impermissible for a person to travel to any mosque for the purpose of offering prayers except Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, the Aqṣā Mosque and this mosque of mine' (Aḥmad with a sound chain).

Hence, although it is not permissible to visit a mosque apart from these three believing that they hold a special reward, it is encouraged to visit mosques in the places one travels to, to perform one's prayer, attend circles of teaching or congregational prayers, as that is a general recommendation wherever one may be. Similarly it is permissible to visit the graves of the awliyā' and the righteous as that comes under the general encouragement of visiting graveyards.

### Etiquette of Travel

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'A lone rider is a *shayṭān*, two riders are two *shayṭāns*, and three are a company' (Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd). An interpretation of this narration is that it is disliked (*makrūh*) to be alone in situations where a man fears for himself because of weakness, severe exhaustion or hardship, or when he fears that *shayṭān* may tempt and mislead him, or when the route travelled is a lonely and remote one. As for well-travelled routes, those in which there is no risk of becoming lost, and where there are likely to be helpers and means of support, such as is the case with travel nowadays on planes, trains and buses, then it is not blameworthy. However, the benefit of being with righteous companions is not limited to help and support. The most important thing is that it helps one to remain steadfast and focused, for *shayṭān* is further away from two than he is from one, and even further away from three. When you are alone there is nothing to keep you in check except your own fear of Allah and *taqwā*. If that is weak then it is easier to succumb to the whisperings of *shayṭān* because one is among strangers and not among people before whom one might be embarrassed to do blameworthy acts. Therefore, travelling in a group is best for reasons of safety and spirituality.

Find a good travelling companion who loves *taqwā* and dislikes sin. This person will be beneficial for you on your journey, and a support and source of inspiration. This may not always be possible or practical, especially if you travel frequently for business, but do your best and never abandon *taqwā*, for 'indeed, the best provision is fear of Allah' (Qur'ān 2:197).

Before leaving on your journey seek forgiveness from Allah for all the wrongs you have committed and seek forgiveness from others for wrongs you have done them. Pay off your debts if you can. If you are unable to repay a loan that is due then seek an extension from the person. If you are keeping something safe for someone else,

return it to its rightful owner or make arrangements for it to be returned in case something happens to you. It is wise to make provision for all eventualities.

If you are working on a project for someone, advise them that you will be away for a while. It is also permissible not to reveal that you are going on a trip, as sometimes people expect you to take things on their behalf or bring things back for them.

You should write a will, especially if there is no-one to look after your affairs should anything happen to you. If you have previously written up a will, there is no need to make a new one, unless you need to update it.

You should make the prayer (*du‘ā*) of *istikhāra*, even if you have no choice about going, asking Allah for good in the trip. *Istikhāra* is a means of asking for a good outcome, and is not necessarily just about making a decision.

If your parents are alive, and even if someone else is caring for them or they are able to look after themselves, go and speak to them and make them happy. Notify them of your trip and ask them to pray for you.

Leave enough money behind for the people you are responsible for. Also, speak to them and inform them of your journey and help them with anything they need before you leave.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) preferred to travel on a Thursday and seldom travelled on any other day (*Bukhārī*). If this is not possible then the next choice is a Monday.

Before leaving the house, it is recommended (*mustaḥabb*) to perform two *rak‘as* of prayer. After Sūrat al-Fātiha, in the first, recite Sūrat al-Kāfirūn, and in the second, Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ. After this make *du‘ā* to Allah, for a safe, beneficial and prosperous journey and any other *du‘ā* you would like.

Before leaving, it is good to say farewell to your relatives and neighbours, unless you travel often in which case it is not necessary to disturb them. The point of this is to ask for their *du‘ās* because even if you travel frequently, it is still good to ask your family for their *du‘ās*. The *du‘ā* of saying farewell is as follows and each person should read it to the other:

أَسْتَودِعُ اللَّهَ دِينَكَ وَأَمَانَتَكَ وَخَوَاتِيمَ عَمَلِكَ.

Astawdi‘u ‘Llāha dīnaka wa amānataka wa khawātīma ‘amalik.

I entrust Allah with your dīn, your -trustworthiness and the outcomes of your deeds (*Tirmidhī*).

If you are travelling in a group it is recommended to make one person the *amīr*, or leader of the group. Depend upon him to make crucial decisions and obey him. However, the *amīr* must also remember that he is not there merely to give orders. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ‘The leader of the people is their servant’. This is the position of the *amīr*. The person chosen as the *amīr* should not simply be the most pious, but the one who also has keen insight and travel knowhow, since the most pious member of the group may not be the most experienced of them, especially if he has not travelled a great deal.

### *Du‘ā’ for Boarding a Vehicle, Embarking on a Vessel or Mounting a Riding Animal*

While boarding, mounting or embarking recite first:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

Bismi ‘Llāh. In the name of Allah.

When comfortably seated and ready to go, recite:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

Al-ḥamdu li ‘Llāh. Praise be to Allāh.

Then recite:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ، وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ

Subḥāna ‘lladhī sakhkhara lanā hādhā wa mā kunnā lahū muqrinīn. Wa innā ilā Rabbinā la munqalibūn.

Glory be to Him who has subjected this to us. We could never have accomplished it by ourselves. Indeed we are returning to our Lord! (Qur’ān 43:13).

Thereafter, recite thrice:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

Al-ḥamdu li ‘Llāh. Praise be to Allāh.

Then thrice:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allāhu Akbar. Allāh is the Greatest.

Thereafter recite the following prayer for forgiveness (istighfār):

سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي، إِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

Subḥānaka innī ḡalamtu nafsī fa 'ghfir lī, innahū lā yaghfiru'dh-dhunūba illā Ant.

Glorious are You. Truly, I have wronged myself so forgive me. No one but You forgives wrongdoing (Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī).

Also recite:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ فِي سَفَرِي هَذَا مِنَ الْبِرِّ وَالْتَّقْوَى، وَمِنَ الْعَمَلِ مَا تَرْضَى، اللَّهُمَّ هَوِّنْ عَلَيْنَا الْمَسِيرَ، وَاظْلُ عَنَّا بُعْدَ الْأَرْضِ، اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الصَّاحِبُ فِي السَّفَرِ وَالْخَلِيفَةُ فِي الْأَهْلِ، اللَّهُمَّ أَصْحَبْنَا فِي السَّفَرِ وَاخْلُفْنَا فِي أَهْلِنَا، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ وَعْثَاءِ السَّفَرِ، وَكَأْبَةِ الْمُنْقَلَبِ، وَمِنْ الْخَوْرِ بَعْدَ الْكُورِ، وَمِنْ دَعْوَةِ الْمَظْلُومِ، وَسُوءِ الْمُنْظَرِ فِي الْأَهْلِ وَالْمَالِ

Allāhumma innī as'aluka fī safarī hādhā mina 'l-birri wa 't-taqwā wa mina 'l-'amali mā tarḡdā. Allāhumma hawwin 'alaynā 'l-masīra wa 'ṭwi 'annā bu'da 'l-arḡ.

Allāhumma Anta 'ṣ-ṣā-ḥibu fī 's-safari wa 'l-khalīfatu fī 'l-ahl. Allāhumma aṣḥibnā fī 's-safari wa 'khlufnā fī ahlinā. Allāhumma innī a-'ūdhu bika min wa'thā'i 's-safar(i), wa ka'ābati 'l-munqalab(i), wa mina 'l-ḥawri ba'da 'l-kawr(i), wa min da'wati 'l-mazlūm(i), wa sū'i 'l-manẓari fī 'l-ahli wa 'l-māl

O Allah, on this journey of mine I ask of You virtue, taqwā and such actions as please You. O Allah, make the passage easy for us and fold up the earth's expanse for us. O Allah, You are the companion on the journey, and the successor in the family. O Allah, accompany us on the journey, and stand in for us in our family. O Allah, I seek refuge in You from the hardships of travel, and from an ill return, from decrease after increase, from the supplications of the wronged, and from an evil circumstance befalling my family and wealth (*Tirmidhī*).

When on a journey, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recommended calling the *takbīr*—*Allāhu akbar*, 'Allah is Greater'—on ascending and saying the *tasbīḥ*—*subḥānAllah*, 'Glorious is Allah'—on descending (*Bukhārī*). There is no need to raise the voice very much when praising Allah.

When you have reached your destination or enter into any town or city on your way, it is beneficial to make the following *du'ā'*:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ خَيْرَهَا وَخَيْرَ أَهْلِهَا وَخَيْرَ مَا فِيهَا، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَشَرِّ أَهْلِهَا وَشَرِّ مَا فِيهَا

Allāhumma innī as'aluka khayrahā wa khayra ahlihā wa khayra mā fīhā, wa a'ūdhu bika min sharrihā wa sharri ahlihā wa sharri mā fīhā

O Allah, I ask you for the good of it, the good of its inhabitants and the good of that which is in it and I seek refuge with you from its evil, the evil of its inhabitants and the evil of that which is in it.

When travelling, make plenty of *du‘ās* for family, friends, and the Muslims as a whole, for it is related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that three types of *du‘ās* are answered: the *du‘ā* of the wronged, the *du‘ā* of a traveller, and the *du‘ā* of a parent against his or her child (*Tirmidhī*).

When you have finished your work or your holiday, hasten back to your family and hometown, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised: ‘Travelling bears within itself a degree of punishment, because it prevents you from sleeping, eating and drinking. Once you have fulfilled your purpose or need in the place you are travelling in, return quickly to your family’ (*Bukhārī*).

The Imām of the Two Sanctuaries ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī was asked why it is considered a degree of punishment and he replied straight away, ‘Because one is forced to stay away from one’s loved ones’. Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the Omayyad governor and general once said, ‘If it were not for the sweetness of return I would only have punished my enemies by forcing them to be exiled from their homes’.

When returning, inform your family, especially your wife, of the time of your return. It is highly discouraged to surprise her as she may not be in a state to welcome you (*Bukhārī*). The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) would first go to the masjid before proceeding home as that would give time for the news to reach his wives. Mobile communication has made alerting one’s family to one’s return much easier.

When returning home from a journey say the following *du‘ā*:

أَيُّبُونَا تَائِبُونَ عَابِدُونَ لِرَبِّنَا حَامِدُونَ

Ā’ibūna tā’ibūna ‘ābidūna li Rabbīnā ḥāmidūn.

Returning, penitently, worshipping our Lord, praising (*Bukhārī*)

### Other General Advice

Among the advice of Luqmān the Wise to his son, there is: ‘Son, travel with your sword, turban, rope, waterskin, needle and thread. Then take a supply of the medicine you and your companions need. Support them in everything except disobedience of Allah’.

He also said, ‘When you travel with companions consult them frequently on your affairs and theirs, constantly smiling when talking to them. Be generous to them with your provisions; when they call respond to them; when they ask for assistance help them. Overcome them with three things: prolonged silence [when there is no need to speak], abundant prayers, and generosity of your heart with your supplies’.

## Prayer While Travelling

There are a number of legal rulings which apply to a person travelling beyond the distance of 48m/77km miles at which these rules apply. One can wipe over their leather socks for up to seventy-two hours, prayers can be shortened, one can pray zuhr in place of the jumu'a and one can forgo the fast if it will be difficult and make it up later.

### How Long May Prayers Be Shortened and Combined?

The prayers are shortened for someone who intends to stay in a city for fourteen days or less, according to the Ḥanafī school, or less than twenty prayers, according to the Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī schools. Therefore, those intending to stay in a place for more than fourteen days (Ḥanafī) or for twenty prayers or more (Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī) cannot shorten the prayers, and are considered as residents.

In the Ḥanafī school, someone who is unsure how long he or she will stay, with plans contingent upon certain work being done, or a meeting being completed, shortens their prayers indefinitely until a firm intention is made to stay for fifteen or more days.

One's status as a resident lapses when one becomes resident elsewhere or undertakes another journey of forty-eight miles or more. One would then have to intend staying fifteen days or more at the first place to become a resident of that area again. Days are counted in hours, each day being a unit of twenty-four hours. In the Shāfi'ī school someone on an unlawful journey, for example visiting a girlfriend, attending a concert, or visiting casinos, cannot apply the dispensations available to travellers. In the Ḥanafī school, however, the purpose of travel does not affect the dispensations.

### Prayer in a Plane, Car and Other Vehicles

It is not permitted to perform a *farḍ* prayer while seated in a car. One should stop at a safe place and pray on the ground outside or under a shelter. It would be permissible to pray in a vehicle such as a large van in which one could stand and pray while stationary. When in a plane or train one should try one's utmost to stand and pray. On longer flights this is usually possible as the aircrafts are larger and there is normally a galley area in the middle or at the back of the plane that is not always occupied. The attendants are often accommodating as long as it is not mealtime when there is a lot of rush and the galleys are occupied. On one flight I took on United Airlines, an attendant stood in front of me while I was praying and redirected any passenger that came by to another lavatory. The attendant also came and woke me for the next prayer which I had informed her about earlier.

Working out the direction in which to pray is also relatively simple. If the flight

displays a route map on their entertainment system then that should help one to determine the direction by looking to see where the western coast of Arabia is. Otherwise one can look at the route map in the inflight magazine and determine the direction to Makka from it. If this is not possible, then asking one of the attendants can be helpful. However, do clarify why you are asking. They can also be helpful when determining the times of sunset, sunrise or dawn.

If it is not possible to stand and pray in a plane or train due to security concerns, or because of limited space, pray seated, facing in whichever direction the plane is facing. Then repeat the prayer when you reach your destination. The rule here is that wherever other people prevent you from discharging one of the fundamental elements of *ṣalāt*, pray anyway then repeat it afterwards. However, if natural causes prevent you from observing a fundamental element, for example being unable to stand due to dizziness or illness, or the swaying of a ship, the prayer is complete and need not be repeated.

With regard to timing, you do not observe the times of prayer of the city you have left behind or of your destination but rather you follow the times of prayer as observed during the flight. Hence, Maghrib will be performed when you see the sun set, wherever you happen to be on your journey. Remember that when travelling westwards, prayer times will stretch further apart and your day will be elongated whereas prayers become much closer together when travelling in an easterly direction.

There is agreement that while travelling one can also combine prayers by performing one prayer at the end of its time and the next prayer immediately afterwards at the beginning of its time. However, according to the Ḥanafī school, one should not purposely combine two prayers in the same time. If the earlier prayer was delayed and missed due to inability to pray, it can be performed as a *qadā'* prayer with the next prayer. However, it is permitted in the Shāfi'ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools to combine prayers together in one prayer time, such as zuhr and 'aṣr together in either of their times and maghrib and 'ishā' together in either of their times. However, it is preferable to keep them within their own times as far as possible. For more details, please consult the *fiqh* texts of these schools.

There is a difference of opinion among the jurists on the time of the 'aṣr prayer. Imām Abū Ḥanīfa's position is that it begins when the shadow of an object is twice its length, and this is taken as the standard ruling in the Ḥanafī school. The other imāms, including Imām Abū Yūsuf and Muhammad, hold that it starts earlier, when the shadow of an object is the same as its length. According to the Ḥanafī school, a traveller or someone about to travel may perform the 'aṣr prayer at this earlier time

too. However, in this case the *ẓuhr* prayer should be performed before the first shadow.

Non-*farḍ* prayers, such as *sunna* and *nafl* (optional) prayers can be performed sitting in a vehicle while travelling, and facing the qibla is also not necessary. It is related from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that when he was outside Madīna he performed *nafl* prayer while seated on his mount, facing the direction toward which he was travelling and not toward the qibla. Hence, it is also *sunna* to perform *nafl* prayers seated in a car, train or plane in whatever direction one is travelling as long as one is outside the city.

### Practical tips on *wuḍūʿ* while on the road

Being in public certainly does not constitute an excuse for delaying a prayer. Muslims should know how to determine the direction of prayer wherever they happen to be. They should know the prayer times, how to quickly and efficiently perform ablution in a public lavatory, and likewise how to quickly and validly perform a prayer in public place. None of these measures are unreasonably difficult provided that one has determination to carry them out.

It is always advisable to carry a small container, even a 500ml water bottle. This can be filled with clean water and used to wash oneself after relieving oneself in public toilets where water is not available. It can also be used to make *wuḍūʿ* when required. Leather or durable waterproof socks are very useful as one can wipe over them, contrary to regular thin porous socks. It saves one from having to lift one's feet into the washbasin in a public washroom and the embarrassment that this sometimes entails. Normally, wash basins in planes are very small so it is possible that one can wash one's feet over the toilet using water from the disposable cups that are sometimes available or in which water is served to the passengers. Purity is half of our faith and therefore we should wipe any wet areas on the floor and around the basin with the paper towels provided so as not to inconvenience the next person who uses it.

A small mat, rug or compact travel musallas (now widely available) should be carried to pray on, otherwise, one can also pray on one's coat, shawl or other garment. If nothing is available then one can even pray directly on the ground as long as one does not believe strongly that the ground is impure.

There are many places that one can pray. Airports and stations have prayer facilities in the form of multi-faith prayer rooms. If one is not available or accessible, as they are sometimes in the Departures area and sometimes within the internal security area, then it is a good idea to walk around and find a recess, an unoccupied seating area or a quiet end of a passage and pray there. If there is an attendant in sight, it is



advisable to inform them of what you will be doing and how long it may take. For many airport personnel, the sight of a Muslim praying in an unoccupied area is probably not unusual, but it is always best to let them know just to be safe.

#### Who is a *Musāfir*?

The person who sets out with the intention of eventually travelling approximately 48 miles/77 km (Ḥanafī) and 50 miles/80.47 km (Shāfi'ī) is regarded as a *musāfir*. The moment he passes the boundaries of his town or city he becomes a *musāfir*, but not while still within. If the airport is within the boundaries of the city, it falls under the rule of the city and the person is not considered a *musāfir* when he reaches it. In large metropolises such as London, Chicago and Toronto, each borough can be considered independent in its own right for travel purposes and thus the airports will generally be considered outside one's city.

#### Shortening the *Ṣalāt* (*Qaṣr*)

A traveller is required to perform only two *rak'as* for the *farḍ* prayers of *ẓuhr*, '*aṣr* and '*ishā*'. Fajr continues to be two *rak'as* and maghrib remains as normal. If a person mistakenly performed four *rak'as* instead of two, and he had sat down for *tashahhud* in the second, then his prayer is valid and the first two are regarded as his *farḍ* and the other two as *nafl*. If he remembers in the final *rak'a*, he should make *sajdat as-sahw*. If he did not sit in the second *rak'a* then all four *rak'as* become *nafl* and he will have to repeat his *farḍ* prayer.

#### Becoming a *Muqīm* (Resident)

A person remains a *musāfir* and continues offering two *rak'as* for four-*rak'a* prayers until he forms a definite intention to remain in a place for fifteen days or more, at which point he becomes a *muqīm* (resident). The place where he forms this intention is known as his *waṭan al-iqāma*, or, 'significant temporary residence'. He must now offer full prayers. If he forms this intention while in *ṣalāt* then he must perform it as four.

The underlying principle is that a *musāfir* will not become a *muqīm* until he firmly intends to stay in a place for a period of fifteen days from the time he makes this intention. Based on this, if a person stops in a place intending to stay for three or four days and then is unable to leave but each day he intends to leave the following day, or within fourteen days or less, and continues like this for one or more months, he remains a *musāfir*. If at any point he forms a firm intention to stay for fifteen days he becomes a *muqīm* even if he subsequently leaves within a few days.

The intention to stay fifteen days in one place has to be to stay the full fifteen days in one place. If one intends to stay at two different places for fifteen days altogether, and there is a significant distance between the two places, e.g., half a mile, then one

remains a *musāfir*. After becoming a *muqīm* by intending to stay at a place for fifteen days, if one changes one's intention and decides to leave before fifteen days, one does not become a *musāfir* because of that change of intention.

A *waṭan al-iqāma* is nullified by undertaking a journey of 48 miles/77 km with the intention of travelling that distance or adopting another place as one's *waṭan al-iqāma*. For instance, if someone travelled to India and made Delhi their *waṭan al-iqāma* for fifteen days or more, then travelled to Agra (about 130 miles/210 km away) for a day or so and then came back to Delhi, the *waṭan al-iqāma* will be considered nullified. If he now makes the intention to stay there for a further fifteen days it again becomes *waṭan al-iqāma*. Otherwise he remains a *musāfir*.

### Wiping Over Leather Socks

Any footwear that fulfils the following conditions may be wiped over:

1. It is water-resistant when wiping
2. It is durable enough to walk in for about three miles without tearing
3. It is thick enough to remain upright without having to be tied
4. It is not torn to such an extent that an area equal to the size of three small toes is exposed.

### Rulings About Wiping

Wiping is valid on such footwear if it is put on while the person is in *wuḍū'*. It is valid for a *musāfir* to wipe over it for up to a period of seventy-two hours, whereas for a resident it is twenty-four hours. The time is reckoned from the first time the *wuḍū'* breaks after having put on the two *khuffs* in a state of purity. This time expires after twenty-four hours for the resident, or seventy-two hours for the traveller, have elapsed. Then if the person is still in *wuḍū'* he can simply remove the *khuffs* and wash his feet without needing to redo the whole *wuḍū'*, and start wiping again. If not in *wuḍū'*, then the whole *wuḍū'* has to be performed.

The period can be extended from twenty-four hours to seventy-two hours for a resident who starts a journey within this time and becomes *musāfir*. Similarly, the period is reduced from seventy-two to twenty-four hours for a *musāfir* who becomes a resident.

### How to Wipe

Wet the fingers and draw them over the upper surface of the footwear starting from the toes and ending above the ankle. It is obligatory to wipe on each surface an amount equivalent to three fingers. One wipe is sufficient on each foot and the fingers of the right hand are used for the right foot and those of the left hand for the left.

### Things that nullify wiping

Everything that nullifies *wuḍū'* also nullifies the wiping; one wipes again when redoing the *wuḍū'*. It is also nullified by:

1. Removing one or both *khuffs*
2. One or both *khuffs* slipping off the foot so that the foot becomes exposed
3. Water entering the *khuff* and wetting more than half the foot
4. Ghusl becoming obligatory through sexual intercourse, wet dream or menstruation, etc.
5. The expiry of the period during which one may wipe.

### Fasting in Ramadan While Travelling

A traveller on a journey longer than 48 miles/77 km (Ḥanafī) and 50 miles/80.47 km (Shāfi'ī) may postpone an obligatory fast, although this should only be done where it would be difficult to fast. For instance, if one is travelling westwards the fast may become exceptionally long, such as a trip from the UK departing at 6:05 am which would reach Toronto at approximately 10 am Toronto time and the *iftār* there will be at about 8pm. That would become a very long fast. In such cases it is permissible not to fast the day but then make it up later.

### *Ṣalāt al-Istikhāra* (Prayer for Decision Making or Seeking Good)

When one needs to make a decision or is seeking blessings in something one is undertaking, such as a journey, one should perform two *rak'as* of prayer and then recite the following *du'ā'*:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ، وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ، وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ، فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ، وَتَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ، وَأَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ [هَذَا الْأَمْرَ] خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي، فَاقْدِرْ لِي وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي ثُمَّ بَارِكْ لِي فِيهِ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ [هَذَا الْأَمْرَ] شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي، فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ، وَاقْدِرْ لِي الْخَيْرَ حَيْثُ كَانَ، ثُمَّ أَرْضِنِي بِهِ

Allāhumma innī astakhīruka bi 'ilmika wa astaqdiruka bi qudratika wa as'aluka min faḍlika 'l-'azīm, fa innaka taqdiru wa lā aqdiru wa ta'lamu wa lā a'lamu wa Anta 'Allāmu 'l-ghu-yūb, Allāhumma in kunta ta'lamu anna [hādha 'l-amra] khay-rul lī fī dīnī wa ma-'ashī wa 'āqibati amrī, fa 'qdirhu lī wa yassirhu lī thumma bārik lī fīh(i), wa in kunta ta'lamu anna [hādha 'l-amra] sharrul lī fī dīnī wa ma-'ashī wa 'āqibati amrī, fa 'ṣrifhu 'annī wa 'ṣrifnī 'anhu wa 'qdir liya 'l-khayra ḥaythu kān(a), thumma arḍinī bih.

O Allah, I ask You for the good [or 'to choose'] through Your knowledge and I ask You to grant me ability through Your power and beg You for some of Your infinite bounty, for surely, You have power and I have none, You know and I know nothing, and You are the Knower of all that is hidden. O Allah if You know that this matter is

good for me in my dīn, my livelihood and the outcome of my affairs in the world and the Hereafter, then decree it for me, make it easy for me and grant me blessing in it. But if You know that this matter is bad for me in my *dīn*, my livelihood and the outcome of my affairs in the world and the Hereafter, then turn it away from me and turn me away from it, and ordain the good for me wherever it be, and cause me to be pleased with it (*Bukhārī*).

When one reaches the words هَذَا الْأَمْرَ (*hādha 'l-amra*) 'this matter', one should think about the matter for which one is seeking a decision or asking for blessings for. After that, people of knowledge say that one should sleep in a state of purity on a clean bed facing toward the qibla, and that whatever comes to mind upon waking will be the best course of action and should be adopted. If no resolution comes to mind on the first day and anxiety and indecisiveness continue, one should repeat it the next day and so on for a week (or until a decision comes to mind). By the grace of Allah one will come to know the good or ill of the matter. One must remember that it is not necessary that a person see a dream relating to his case. One of the benefits of this *du'ā'* is that it can help one avoid making rash decisions based on a fleeting emotion.