

Points of Benefit Regarding *The Imam and Ma'Muum in Salaah (Prayers).*

Saleh As-Saleh

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from live duroos in Paltalk's "[Understanding Islam 1](#)" room

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
The Imam and the Ma'muum

All Praise is due to Allaah, and may the *salaah* and *salaam* be on Prophet Muhammad, his household, the noble companions, and those who follow them until the Day of Resurrection.

The Position of the Ma'muum With Respect to Following the Imaam

The position of the *ma'muum* with respect to following the *imaam* falls into four categories:

- 1) Getting ahead (*musabaqaah*)
- 2) Conformity (*muwafiqaaah*)
- 3) Staying behind (*takhallof*)
- 4) Following (*mutabbaa'*)

(1) al-Musabaqaah (Going Ahead)

al-Musabaqaah entails getting ahead of the *imaam* in either sayings or actions. Concerning **sayings**, it is acceptable to get ahead of the *imaam*, except in two matters; they are:

- 1) *Takbeerat al-Ihraam* – If the follower precedes the *imaam* in it, then his *salaah* is invalid, even if he forgot.
- 2) *Tasleem* – If the follower deliberately precedes the *imaam* in it, then his *salaah* is nullified. However, if it was unintentional, then he simply repeats it after the *imaam*.

Therefore, if someone recites *al-Faatiha*, the remembrances of *sujood* and *rukuu*, or the *tashahhud* before the *imaam*, then there is nothing upon him.

Regarding preceding the *imaam* in **actions**, it is divided into two situations:

- 1) Going ahead of the *imaam* to a *rukun* (pillar)

Example: Someone made *rukuu* before the *imaam*. Later, the *imaam* caught up with him. At this point, the follower should stand up and make *rukuu* with the *imaam*, so as to follow him.

- 2) Going ahead of the *imaam* by a *rukun* (pillar)

Example: Someone made *rukoo* and then lifts himself up before his *imaam* bows.

Going ahead of the *imaam* in actions is forbidden in all of its forms and is from the major sins, as evident in the *sunnah*. If someone knowingly goes ahead of the *imaam*, then his *salaah* is invalid. Correspondingly, the *salaah* of the person who did it ignorantly or due to forgetfulness is valid. However, if the legal excuse (e.g. forgetfulness or ignorance) is lifted before the *imaam* catches up, then it is incumbent upon the *ma'muum* to follow the *imaam* in those acts which he did prematurely.

Example: Someone made *sujuud* and lifted up from it before his *imaam* prostrated. Therefore, he must return to position of the *imaam* and follow him. If his action was done deliberately, then his *salaah* is invalid; if it was due to ignorance or forgetfulness, then his *salaah* is valid.

(2) *al-Muwafiqah* (Conforming)

Conformity with the *imaam* can also be through sayings or actions. If it is in **sayings**, then it is not harmful except in two situations:

- 1) *Takbeerat al-Ihraam* – If the follower conforms with the *imaam* in it, then his *salaah* is invalid.
- 2) *Tasleem* - If the follower deliberately conforms with the *imaam* in it, then his *salaah* is nullified. Correspondingly, if it was done due to forgetfulness and he returns later to follow his *imaam* in *tasleem*, then there is nothing upon him.

It is also disliked (*makrooh*) to have conformity with the *imaam* in actions because the Prophet (ﷺ: *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

*“If he makes rukoo, then make rukoo, and do not make rukoo till he makes rukoo.”*¹

This *hadeeth* makes it clear that we should follow the actions of the *imaam*, not conform with them. As such, if someone conforms with the *imaam* in *sujuud* by reaching the ground at the same time as him, then this is disliked; the Prophet (ﷺ) said in the same *hadeeth*:

*“Do not make sujuud until he makes sujuud.”*²

It is also reported from al-Baraa ibn 'Aazib (رضي الله عنه: *radiyallaahu 'anhu*):

*“When Allaah's Messenger said, ‘Sami'a Allaahu liman hamidah’ none of us bent his back (for prostration) till the Prophet prostrated, and then we would prostrate after him.”*³

¹Part of a *hadeeth* reported in *Sunan Abi Dawood* (English translation no. 603, book 2). Similar narrations are in *Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (English translation vol. 1, *hadeeth* no. 689) and in *Saheeh Muslim* (English translation no. 826, book 4).

² Ibid.

(3) *at-Takhalloof* (Staying Behind)

at-Takhalloof is of two types.

- 1) Staying behind due to a valid excuse – In this situation, the person brings what he failed to perform and follows the *imaam*. There is nothing upon him, even if he fell behind by a pillar or more.

Examples:

- a) A person did not hear his *imaam* until the *imaam* moved ahead of him by a *rukn* or two. In such a situation, he does that which he failed to perform and then follows his *imaam*.
- b) While a person was praying in congregation, he did not hear the *imaam* make *rukoo*. However, he later heard the *imaam* say, “*Sami’a Allaahu liman hamidah.*” In this case, the *ma’muum* makes *rukoo* and then follows his *imaam*, without losing the *rakaah*.

However, if someone lagged behind the *imaam* to the point that the *imaam* caught up with him in the next *rakaah*, then the person does not bring that which he failed to perform at this stage. Instead, he follows his *imaam*, and this will be the beginning of a new *rakaah* for him. After the *imaam* makes *tasleem*, the *ma’muum* must make up the *rakaah* he missed.

Examples:

- a) While a person is praying in congregation, the *imaam* makes a complete *rakaah*, but the *maamum* could not hear the speaker until the *imaam* began his second *rakaah*. As such, the *ma’muum* must follow the *imaam*, and the *imaam*’s second *rakaah* will be his first. Therefore, when the *imaam* completes his *salaah* by making *tasleem*, the *ma’muum* must stand up and pray an additional *rakaah*.
- b) During *salaat al-jumu’ah*, a person heard the *imaam* reciting *al-Fatiha*. At this point, there was a power outage. During the time the electricity was cut, the *imaam* completed a full *rakaah*. When the power returned, the *ma’muum* heard the *imaam* reciting *Surah al-Ghaashiyah* (Chapter 88), at which point he realized he missed the first *rakaah* since this *surah* is recited during the second *rakaah* of *salaat al-jumu’ah*. As such, the *ma’muum* should remain in his position and follow the *imaam*, and the *imaam*’s second’s *rakaah* will be his first. When the *imaam* makes *tasleem*, the *ma’muum* should then stand for a second *rakaah*.

³ Reported in *Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (English translation vol. 1, *hadeeth* no. 658) and in *Saheeh Muslim* (English translation no. 959, book 4).

Hence, if the person recognizes his failure to follow the *imaam* before the *imaam* reaches the same position as him, then he makes up what he failed to perform and follows the *imaam*. Otherwise, he follows the *imaam* and makes up the missing *rakaah* after the *imaam* makes *tasleem*.

- 2) Staying behind without a valid excuse – This can either be through staying behind the *imaam* within a pillar or staying behind him by a pillar. Both are *haram* (unlawful) if done deliberately. Staying behind within a pillar entails following the *imaam* and catching up with him in the pillar he has moved to perform.

Example: The *imaam* makes *rukuu* while the *ma'muum* is lagging behind having yet to complete one or two verses for a *surah* he recited after *al-Fatiha*. Then, the follower completes the *surah* and catches up with the *imaam* in *rukuu*. His action is *haram*, and his *rukuu* is valid but in opposition to the *sunnah*.

Staying behind by a pillar involves the *imaam* going past the *ma'muum* by an entire pillar. In this case, the *ma'muum's salaah* is nullified if there was not a valid excuse.

Examples:

- a) The *imaam* makes *rukuu* and rises from it before the *ma'muum* has bowed.
- b) The *imaam* lifts up from the first *sajdah* while the *ma'muum* remains in *sujood* making *du'aa*. The *imaam* then does the second *sajdah*, preceding the *ma'muum* by one *rukn* (pillar). This is common in many mosques, but it nullifies the *ma'muum's salaah*.

(3) *al-Mutabbaa'* (Following)

Following the *imaam* entails the *ma'muum* performing an action of *salaah* immediately after the *imaam*; this is the *sunnah*.

Examples:

- a) The *ma'muum* follows the *imaam* into *rukuu* even if he has yet to finish a second *surah* after *al-Fatiha*.
- b) When the *imaam* lifts his head from *sujood*, the *ma'muum* follows him; this is better than continuing to make *du'aa* as the *ma'muum's salaah* is linked to his *imaam*, and they are commanded to follow him.

Summary

The position of the *ma'muum* with respect to following the *imaam* falls into four categories:

- 1) Getting ahead (*musabaqaah*) – This is forbidden in all of its forms. Anyone who knowingly or intentionally does it invalidates his *salaah*. However, if it is done out of ignorance or forgetfulness, then the *salaah* is valid.
- 2) Conformity (*muwafiqaaah*) – This is *makrooh* (disliked).
- 3) Staying behind (*takhalloof*) – This can be either due to an invalid or valid excuse.
- 4) Following (*mutabbaa'*) – This is the *sunnah* and correct.

All Praise is due to Allaah, and may the *salaah* and *salaam* be on Prophet Muhammad, his household, the noble companions, and those who follow them until the Day of Resurrection.

Saleh As-Saleh
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