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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All Praise is due to Allaah, and may the salaah and salaat 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 (musabaaqaah)
2) Conformity (muwafiqah)
3) Staying behind (takhallof)
4) Following (mutabaa’)

(1) al-Musabaaqaah (Going Ahead)

al-Musabaaqaah 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 sujuud 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 rukn (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 rukn (pillar)
**Example:** Someone made *rukuu* 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 rukuu, then make rukuu, and do not make rukuu till he makes rukuu.*"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 (ﷺ: *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).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.
(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 rukuu. However, he later heard the imaam say, “Sami’a Allaahu liman hamidah.” In this case, the ma’muum makes rukuu 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 speakers 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.

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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 imam before the imam reaches the same position as him, then he makes up what he failed to perform and follows the imam. Otherwise, he follows the imam and makes up the missing rakaah after the imam makes tasleem.

2) Staying behind without a valid excuse – This can either be through staying behind the imam 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 imam and catching up with him in the pillar he has moved to perform.

Example: The imam makes ruku 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 imam in ruku. His action is haram, and his ruku is valid but in opposition to the sunnah.

Staying behind by a pillar involves the imam 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 imam makes ruku and rises from it before the ma’muum has bowed.

b) The imam lifts up from the first sajdah while the ma’muum remains in sujood making du’aa. The imam 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 imam entails the ma’muum performing an action of salaah immediately after the imam; this is the sunnah.

Examples:

a) The ma’muum follows the imam into ruku even if he has yet to finish a second surah after al-Fatiha.

b) When the imam lifts his head from sujuud, the ma’muum follows him; this is better than continuing to make du’aa as the ma’muum’s salaah is linked to his imam, 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 (*muwafiqah*) – 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
Unayzah 29th of Dhul Qi’dah, 1427
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