

Congregational Salah

- Jama'ah (congregation) is the mutual association present among Imam and Imam-followers.
- Congregation for Salah is valid if one person is present along with Imam for all Salahs except Friday Salah.
- Congregation for Friday Salah is valid when three men other than Imam are present.
- Congregational Salah for five daily Salahs for men is an Sunnah Muakkadah for every individual, equivalent in importance to a compulsory act.
- Missing a congregational Salah is not permissible except on account of some excusable difficulty considered valid by the Shariah.
- If a man has the habit of missing congregational Salahs without excusable difficulty, he is a sinner.
- Congregation is a prerequisite for Friday Salah and Salahs of the two Eeds. Hence, Friday Salah and Eed Salah will not be valid without congregation.
- Congregation is an emphasized sufficiency Sunnah for TarawEeh Salah and solar eclipse Salah.
- Congregation for Witr Salah in the month of Ramazan is desirable.
- Congregation for Witr Salah in a month other than Ramazan if held regularly is undesirable.
- If some people do this once or twice without making it a regular affair, then there is no harm.

- Congregation for Salah of lunar eclipse is Makruh.
- Congregation for Nafil Salah is Makruh if it is held as a result of invitation and prior information.
- If some people gather without invitation and prior information and start a congregational Nafil Salah without Adhan or Iqamah, then it is not Makruh.
- A second congregation is Makruh in the mosque of a locality for which an Imam and a Muadhin have been appointed and in which the people of the locality have already performed congregational Salah with Adhan and Iqamah.
- However, if the previous state has changed like if the Imam of the second congregation stands in a different place from that of the first Imam, then it will not be Makruh.

For whom congregation is Sunnah Muakkadah

Congregation is Sunnah Muakkadah, equivalent in importance to a compulsory act for people in whom the following prerequisites are present:

1. He should be a man. Congregation is not a Sunnah for a woman.
2. He should have attained puberty. Congregation is not a Sunnah for a child.
3. He should be sane. Congregation is not a Sunnah for an insane man.

4. He should be free of excusable difficulties. Congregation is not a Sunnah for a man in excusable difficulty.
5. He should be free. Congregation is not a Sunnah for a slave.

However, if any of the aforementioned excused persons – woman, child, insane person, person with excusable difficulty and slave – performs Salah with congregation, their Salah will be valid and they will be rewarded for attending the congregation.

When is attending congregation is not necessary ?

Attending a congregation is not necessary if any of the following excuses is present:

1. It is raining heavily.
2. It is stone-cold and he fears that if goes out for mosque, he would fall sick or his sickness would aggravate.
3. There is too much mud on the road.
4. It is very dark.
5. Strong wind is blowing at night.
6. The person is sick.
7. He is blind.
8. He is so decrepit as to be unable to walk to mosque.
9. He is attending to a sick person, taking care of his needs.
10. He is finding it hard to suppress urine or excrement.
11. He is imprisoned, no matter whether it is on account of someone else's right upon him or unjust.

12. He is without one or both legs.
13. He is suffering from a disease which disables him from walking, like paralysis.
14. Meal has been served for him and he is hungry, strongly inclined towards taking it.
15. He is preparing for a journey.
16. He fears loss of his wealth if he engages in congregational Salah.
17. He fears departure of train or airplane if he engages in congregational Salah.

Prerequisites for validity of Imam-duty

For validity of Imam-duty in a Salah, it is a prerequisite that the Imam meets the following prerequisites:

1. Being a man: A woman cannot be Imam for men.
2. Being a Muslim: A Disbeliever can never be an Imam.
3. Having attained puberty: A child cannot be an Imam.
4. Being sane: An insane person cannot be an Imam.
5. Being capable of reciting the minimum amount of Qur'anic verses necessary for validity of Salah: If a person who is not as learned becomes the Imam for knowledgeable people, this Imam-duty will be invalid.
6. Should not be devoid of a Salah prerequisite like Purity, covering of the organs to be hidden.

7. Should be free from excusable difficulties like continuous nosebleed, urine dripping or flatus discharge.
8. Should have defect-free tongue: He should be able to pronounce the Arabic letters correctly.

If a person mispronounces 'ra' as 'gain' or 'lam', or 'sEen' as 'tha', he cannot be Imam when people who can pronounce the letters correctly are Imam-followers.

Who should be preferred for Imam-duty?

- The king and his deputy get the first preference for Imam-duty.
- The duly appointed Imam of the mosque is to be preferred in that mosque specifically.
- The owner of the house if eligible for Imam-duty is to be preferred if the congregation is held in his house.
- If none of the above – king, his deputy, duly appointed Imam and the house-owner – is present among the people gathered, then the person to be given first preference for Imam-duty is:
 - The one who is most knowledgeable about the rulings of Salah with respect to its validity and invalidity
 - Then, the person who has memorized more of the holy Qur'an than others, provided he knows the general rulings of Salah
 - Then, the most pious
 - Then, the most aged

- If they are equal in all these criteria, then the person whom the gathered people elect for Imam-duty will lead them in Salah.
- If the people differ in opinion, then the person supported by the majority of gathered people will be their Imam.
- If the people make a person other than the one to be preferred for Imam-duty as their Imam, then they have done wrong.

Whose Imam-duty or congregation Makruh?

1. A habitual sinner is made the Imam.
2. A heretic is made the Imam.
3. A blind man is made the Imam. However, if he is the most preferable of the gathered people, then it is not Makruh.
4. An illiterate person is made Imam – no matter whether he is from a city or a village – in the presence of a knowledgeable person.
5. A person whom people dislike due to some fault in him is made the Imam.
6. Making the Salah longer than the amount established by Sunnah is Makruh.
7. A congregation consisting only of women is Makruh. But if they perform Salah in congregation, then their female Imam should stand in the middle of the row, not ahead of the row.
8. Attending of congregational Salah by women in these times is Makruh due to prevalence of evil.

Manner of standing of Muqtadi and ordering of

- If there is only one person with the Imam whether a man or a sentient child, he should stand on the right of the Imam slightly behind him.
- If there are two or more men with the Imam, they should stand behind him.
- Similarly, if a man and a child are there, they should stand behind the Imam.
- If men, women, children and eunuchs gather for a congregational Salah, then men's row should be in the front, closest to the Imam, then children's, then eunuchs', then women's.
- The most preferable among the gathered men for Imam-duty should stand in the first row so that one of
- them may be made Imam in case an Ablution-invalidator occurs to the current Imam.
- If there is only one child in the gathering, he should stand in men's row.
- If there is more than one child, they will stand in a row behind men's rows. Men's row should not be completed with them.
- If a person comes for congregational Salah and finds the Imam bowing, then if there is space in the row, he should first stand in the row, then say the first Takbeer even if he misses the Salah-unit.

- He should not say the first Takbeer nor start bowing while behind the rows.

Prerequisites for validity of Imam-following

Following an Imam is valid if the following prerequisites are met:

1. The Muqtadi should intend to follow the Imam at the time of his first Takbeer of Salah.
2. The Imam should stand a little ahead of his follower. At least his heels should be ahead of those of the Muqtadis.
3. The Imam's Salah should not be of a lower category than that of the Muqtadi. Following the Imam will not be valid if the Imam is performing a supererogatory Salah and the Imamfollower an obligatory Salah. Following him will be valid in the reverse case, i.e. if the Imam is performing an obligatory Salah and the Muqtadi a supererogatory one.
4. The Imam and the Muqtadi, if both are performing obligatory Salah, should be offering the obligatory Salah of the same time. If the Imam is performing Zuhr and the Muqtadi Asr, then Imam-following will be invalid. In the reverse case also, Imam-following will be invalid.
5. There should not be a row of women between the Imam and male Muqtadis.
6. There should not be a river wide enough for a boat to sail in it between the Imam and his followers.

7. There should not be a road wide enough for a car or cart to pass through it between Imam and his followers.
 8. There should not be a barrier between the Imam and his followers which hides the Imam's posture-changes from the followers. However, if there is no confusion for the Muqtadis regarding the Imam's posture-changes on account of the followers' ability to listen to or view the changes, then following the Imam is valid.
- It is valid for an Muqtadi with Ablutional purity to follow an Imam with Tayammum-purity.
 - It is valid for a person who has washed his feet in Ablution to follow an Imam who has wiped his feet with wet hands during Ablution.
 - It is valid for a person performing Salah standing to follow an Imam performing Salah in sitting.
 - It is valid for a straight-backed Muqtadi to follow a hunchback.
 - It is a valid for a person performing Salah by gesture to follow an Imam performing Salah likewise by gesture.
 - If the Imam's Salah gets invalid due to any reason, the Salahs of Muqtadis too get invalid. It will be compulsory for the Imam to repeat the Salah. He should announce that his Salah was invalid so that the Muqtadis may also repeat their Salahs.

When the Muqtadi should follow his Imam and when he should not

- If the Imam stands up for the third Salah-unit before the Muqtadi completes his Tashahhud, then he should not follow his Imam in standing. Instead he should complete the Tashahhud, then stand up. When the Imam performs the ending Salam before the Muqtadi has completed his Tashahhud, the Muqtadi should not follow his Imam. Instead he should complete his Tashahhud, and then perform the ending Salam.
- If the Imam performs an extra prostration, the Muqtadi should not follow him in the extra prostration.
- If the Imam stands up forgetfully after the last sitting, the Muqtadi should not follow him in standing up.
- If the Imam continues with the extra Salah-unit and performs its prostration, the Muqtadi will then perform the ending Salam alone.
- If the Imam stands up after the last Salah-unit without performing the last sitting, the Muqtadi should not follow him. He should say Subhanallah to draw the Imam's attention towards the error and wait for his return to the last sitting.
- If the Imam performs a prostration of the extra Salah-unit, the Muqtadi should perform the ending Salam alone.
- If the Muqtadi performs the ending Salam before the Imam performs the a prostration of the extra Salah-unit, the Muqtadi's obligatory Salah will become invalid.

- If the Imam raises his head from bowing or prostration before the Muqtadi is able to complete Subhana Rabi'al Adheem or Subhana Rabi'al A'laa thrice, the Muqtadi should follow his Imam leaving his remembrance incomplete.
- It is Detestable for an Muqtadi to perform the ending Salam before his Imam.
- If the Muqtadi performs the ending Salam before the Imam completes his Tashahhud, his Salah will be invalid.

