

SALAT IN CONGREGATION [Jama'at]

Allah's Messenger, *sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam* said that:

صَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ فِي جَمَاعَةٍ تَرْبِدُ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِ فِي بَيْتِهِ، وَصَلَاتِهِ فِي سُوقِهِ، بِضْعًا وَعِشْرِينَ دَرَجَةً، وَذَلِكَ أَنَّ أَحَدَهُمْ إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ فَأَحْسَنَ الْوُضُوءَ، ثُمَّ أَتَى الْمَسْجِدَ لَا يَنْهَرُهُ إِلَّا الصَّلَاةُ، لَا يُرِيدُ إِلَّا الصَّلَاةَ، فَلَمْ يَخْطُ خَطْوَةً إِلَّا رُفِعَ لَهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةٌ، وَحُطَّ عَنْهُ بِهَا خَطِيئَةٌ، حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ الْمَسْجِدَ، فَإِذَا دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ كَانَ فِي الصَّلَاةِ مَا كَانَتْ الصَّلَاةُ هِيَ تَحْبِسُهُ، وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى أَحَدِكُمْ مَا دَامَ فِي مَجْلِسِهِ الَّذِي صَلَّى فِيهِ، يَقُولُونَ: اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْهُ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ، اللَّهُمَّ تَبَّ عَلَيْهِ، مَا لَمْ يُؤْذِ فِيهِ أَوْ يُخْبِثْ فِيهِ

Praying in *Jama'at* [congregation] has twenty-five times more virtue than praying at one's home or workplace. For this one should undertake *wadhu* properly and proceed to the mosque with the sole purpose of prayers. Then Allah raises his status for each step he takes towards the mosque and mitigates all his sins. When he stands to pray, the angels pray for his safety and well-being and so long as he remains in the place of worship the angels continue praying for him soliciting Allah's protection and mercy. When a man keeps waiting for the next salat he remains in the state of salat till then (*Al- Bukhari and Muslim*). Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said in another hadith: "Prayer in congregation is greater than an individual prayer by twenty-seven times." (*Al- Bukhari and Muslim*).

The Imperative of Salat in Congregation

To perform salat in *Jama'at* [congregation] is an emphatic *sunnah* of the Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). According to the opinion of the majority of the jurists and theologians a *jama'at* [congregation] for this purpose is formed even if the Imam [the leader of the prayers] is joined only by one male or one female or one conscious minor. The Hanbali school of jurisprudence regards the formation of *jama'at* as obligatory and indispensable. They base their stand on this narration: Once a young blind companion came to Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and sought his permission to perform salat in his home alone because there was nobody to take him to and bring him back from the mosque. Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) allowed him to do so. But as he was leaving, the Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) called him back and asked him whether he hears the call to prayers. He replied in the

positive. Then the Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) asked him to come to the mosque (*Muslim*).

According to another narration, Allah's Messenger, (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that if three Muslims are living in a hamlet or village and they do not pray in jama'at then they are overtaken by the devil. So you must maintain the jama'at, as the wolf which strays from its group devours a Sheep. (*Abu Dawood, Nasai*)

Acts Which are Desirable before Going to Jama'at

1. One must consciously hurry up on the call to prayer lest he misses it or becomes late. One must aspire to take his place in the first row. Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«لَوْ يَعْلَمُ النَّاسُ مَا فِي الْأَذَانِ وَالصَّفِّ الْأَوَّلِ، ثُمَّ لَمْ يَجِدُوا إِلَّا أَنْ يَسْتَهْمُوا عَلَيْهِ لَاسْتَهْمُوا عَلَيْهِ»

Had the people known what the reward in the call to prayer and joining the first row was and that there was no other way but to draw the lots to get then they would have resorted to drawing of lots (*Bukhari*).

2. When a man comes out to go to the mosque he should keep equanimity.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«إِذَا سَمِعْتُمُ الْإِقَامَةَ فَاَمْشُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالسَّكِينَةِ وَالْوَقَارِ وَلَا تُسْرِعُوا، فَمَا أَدْرَكْتُمْ فَصَلُّوا وَمَا فَاتَكُمْ فَأَتِمُّوا»

When a man comes out to go to the mosque he should keep equanimity and should not be running to join the jama'at. He can join in the middle of the prayer and whatever portion is missed can be completed afterwards (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*).

3. A man should aim at praying in a mosque which has the biggest congregation even if it is far from his house. Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that: «صَلَاةُ الْجَمَاعَةِ تَفْضُلُ عَلَى صَلَاةِ الرَّجُلِ وَحْدَهُ، بِسَبْعٍ وَعِشْرِينَ دَرَجَةً»

praying in jama'at is 27 times better than praying solitarily (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*). On another occasion he said that the more distance one covers to arrive at a mosque the greater is his reward (*Bukhari*).

Excuses for Giving up Jama'at and the Jum'ah

1. If somebody is suffering from an acute sickness which prevents him from going to the mosque or his going entails a lot of inconvenience.
During his last illness Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) had ordered Hadrat Abu Bakr, *RadhiAllahu Anhu* to take up imamat (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*).
2. If it is raining or the path is muddy or weather is extremely cold or extremely hot or there is hailstorm or thunderstorm or it is too much darkness. When Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) was on journey and the night was too dark or it was raining then it was announced that every person should pray in his own place (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*).
3. If there is a threat to one's life, or property or honour. Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: «مَنْ سَمِعَ النَّدَاءَ فَلَمْ يَأْتِهِ، فَلَا صَلَاةَ لَهُ، إِلَّا مِنْ عُدْرٍ» whosoever hears the call for prayer must attend the mosque but if there is an excuse then there is no attendance' (*Ibn Maja, Ibn Habban*).
4. If one has consumed raw onion or raw garlic or any other odorous food, he should keep away from the mosque until its odour goes away. The Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: «مَنْ أَكَلَ ثُومًا أَوْ بَصَلًا فَلْيَعْتَزِلْنَا، أَوْ لِيَعْتَزِلْ مَسْجِدَنَا، وَلْيَقْعُدْ فِي بَيْتِهِ» those taking onion and garlic not to come to the mosque and to keep to their homes (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*).
5. If somebody is forcibly confined to a place or becomes a captive. Allah ordains:

﴿لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا﴾ البقرة: ٢٨٦

(Translation of meaning) “Allah does not burden anybody beyond his capacity” (*Baqarah: 286*).

6. If somebody is faced with natural calls or if food has been served. Because such conditions are a hindrance to concentration and devotion. As narrated by Hadrat Ayesha, *RadhiAllahu Anha*, Allah's Messenger (*صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم*) said that: «لَا صَلَاةَ بِحَضْرَةِ الطَّعَامِ، وَلَا هُوَ يُدَافِعُهُ الْأَخْبَتَانِ» if somebody was served with food or had to attend to the calls of nature then he need not pray at that time (*Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawood*).

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