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Placing the hands on the chest and by one's sides during Salah

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Praying with hands to the sides

Sixth question from Fatwa No. 181

Q 6: Is Salah offered by a person who places his hand by his sides valid? Is it permissible to follow these people or whoever places their hands on their chest? May a person who places their hands by their sides be declared a disbeliever? Is it better to place hands on the chest or to place them by the sides after rising from Ruku` (bowing)? What did the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to do?

A: Placing the right hand over the left hand is an act of Sunnah. It has been reported by [Al-Bukhari](#) in his Sahihon the authority of [Sahl ibn Sa`d](#) (may Allah be pleased with him) that (The people used to be ordered to place their right hands over their left (in Salah).) According to the narration of [Muslim](#): (He then placed his right hand over the back of his left palm.)

The Hadiths ordering the placement of the right hand over the left one are reported through many chains of transmission. For example, [Al-Tirmidhy](#) and [Ibn Majah](#) reported a similar Hadith on the authority of Qabisah ibn Halb from his father. [Al-Tirmidhy](#) ranked the Hadith as Hasan (a Hadith whose chain of narration contains a narrator with weak exactitude, but is free from eccentricity or blemish.) after reporting it. [Ibn `Abdul-Bar](#) reported a similar narration in his book, Al-Tamhid wa Al-Istidhkar on the authority of Ghutayf ibn Al-Harith. [Al-Daraqutny](#) also reported it on the authority of

Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman. He also reported it in the form of a Marfu` (a Hadith narrated from the Prophet with a connected or disconnected chain of narration) on the authority of Abu Al-Darda'. Likewise, Ibn Abu Shaybah reported it in the form of Marfu`. It is also reported by Ahmad and Al-Daraqutny on the authority of Jabir. It is reported by Abu Dawud on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Al-Zubayr.

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Al-Bayhaqy reported a similar Hadith on the authority of `Aisha. He ranked this Hadith as Sahih (a Hadith that has been transmitted by people known for their uprightness and exactitude; free from eccentricity and blemish). Al-Daraqutny and Al-Bayhaqy also reported it on the authority of Abu Hurayrah. It is reported by Abu Dawud on the authority of Al-Hasan and Tawus as a Hadith Mursal (a Hadith with no Companion of the Prophet in the chain of narration). Al-Nasa'iy and Ibn Majah also reported it on the authority of Ibn Mas`ud. Ibn Sayyid Al-Nas said: Its narrators are the narrators authenticated by Bukhari and Muslim. Al-Hafizh said in his book, "Fath al-Bari", 'It has a good chain of transmitters'. Al-Tirmidhy said in his book called, "Al-Jami`" after mentioning the Hadith reported on the authority of Qabisah from his father: "Scholars from among the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the followers acted according to these Hadiths. They believed that a person should place his right hand on his left hand during Salah. Some of them believe that a person should place both his hands directly above the navel while others believe that a person should place them under the navel. There is much flexibility in this regard."

It becomes clear that the Sunnah is to place your right hand over the left one. Therefore, if a person prays with their hands to their sides, then their Salah is valid, because placing the right hand on the left one is not one of the pillars, obligations, or requirements of Salah. Performing Salah behind an Imam who puts his hands to his side is permissible. Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said, "The so-called jurist from the followers of Madh-habs (Schools of Jurisprudence) who said that it is not permissible to be led by an Imam of other schools of Jurisprudence or by a person who may do anything that brings fault to Salah according to the school of the followers is falling into the abyss of dissension and heretical sects like Al-Rawafid, Al-Mu'tazilah, and Al-Khawarij who abandon Sunnah and support dissension and Bid'ah." He added, "Therefore, some extremists do not perform Salah behind an Imam who does not raise his hands upon starting Salah.

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Others may refuse to be led by an Imam who makes Wudu' by little water or he who does not safeguard himself against the least impurity that does not affect his Salah. There are also many misguided behaviors that compel the followers of the same Madh-hab to abstain from performing Salah behind each other. This means that a student is not permitted to perform Salah behind his teacher. Consequently, Abu Bakr is not permitted to pray behind `Umar or `Aly behind `Uthman, and Al-Muhajirun and Al-Ansar were not permitted to perform Salah behind each other." He also added, 'The misguidance and corruption of these Madh-habs are well-known to all Muslims even if some people do not recognize that.' The predecessors of the Ummah (nation) from among the Companions and the second generation of the Ummah have agreed upon performing Salah behind each other even if they differ in some branches of jurisprudence, and obligations and invalidators of Salah. He who forbids the nation from performing Salah behind each other due to differences in these supplementary matters is one of those who commit misguidance and Bid'ah."

If one performs Salah behind any one who places his hands to his sides while standing in Salah, his Salah will be valid as he abandons Sunnah. He is not a disbeliever.

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions!

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