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Following the Imam in Salah

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Following an Imam who is leading Salah over the radio

Fatwa no. 1759

Q: What is the ruling on standing in prayer behind an Imam who leads Salah from thousands of miles away over the radio?

A: Texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah (whatever reported from the Prophet) indicate the obligation of offering the five daily prayers in congregation. Allah (may He be Exalted) says, (When you (O Messenger Muhammad peace be upon him) are among them, and lead them in As-Salât (the prayer), let one party of them stand up [in Salât (prayer)] with you taking their arms with them; when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear and let the other party come up which have not yet prayed...) In this Ayah (verse) Allah orders Muslims to observe Salah in congregation even during the most serious situations of engaging in war with the enemy while granting concessions to leave some of its essential requirements undone for the sake of Jihad (fighting/striving in the Cause of Allah). This is indicative of the incumbency to observe Salah in congregation. Obligation to observe it at the Masjid (mosque) is indicated in the Hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said that he would have burnt the houses of the people who did not attend congregational Salah in the Masjid had it not been for the women and children who are not obliged to attend congregational Salah. The ultimate purpose for which Masjids are constructed is that they be frequently visited by congregations of Muslims who stand together for Salah. The following Qur'anic Ayah (verse) lends support to this fact: (It is not for the Mushrikûn (polytheists, idolaters, pagans, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allâh), to maintain the Mosques of Allâh (i.e. to pray and worship Allâh therein, to look after their cleanliness and their building), while they witness against their own selves of disbelief. The works of such are in vain and in Fire shall they abide.) The Mosques of Allâh shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allâh and the Last Day, perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and give Zakât and fear none but Allâh. It is they who are on true guidance.)

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Allah (may He be Exalted) also says, (In houses (mosques) which Allâh has ordered to be raised (to be cleaned, and to be honoured), in them His Name is remembered [i.e. Adhan, Iqamah, Salât (prayers), invocations, recitation of the Qur'ân, etc.]. Therein glorify Him (Allâh) in the mornings and

in the afternoons or the evenings.) Men whom neither trade nor sale (business) diverts from the Remembrance of Allâh (with heart and tongue), nor from performing As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), nor from giving the Zakât.)Allah (may He be Praised) clarifies that among the characteristics of true believers is that they construct Masjids wherein they constantly remember His Name and offer Salah. They have been encouraged by Him to observe it and have been promised great reward if they do so. Moreover, the Prophet (peace be upon him) reported in one of his Hadiths that among the seven whom Allah will cover under His Shade on the Day when there shall be no Shade save His is one whose heart is attached to Masjids. It is also authentically reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, (A blind man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and said: O Messenger of Allah! I have no one to guide me to the Masjid. He, therefore, asked the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to allow him to perform prayer in his house. He (peace be upon him) granted him permission. Then, when the man turned away he called him and said: Do you hear the call to prayer? He said: Yes. He (the Prophet) said: Respond to it.)

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It is authentically reported on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: (He who likes to meet Allah tomorrow as a Muslim, he should persevere in observing these prayers, when a call is announced for them, for Allah has laid down for your Prophet the paths of right guidance, and these (prayers) are among the paths of right guidance. If you were to pray in your houses as this man who stays away (from the mosque) prays in his house, you would abandon the practice of your Prophet, and if you were to abandon the practice of your Prophet, you would go astray. No man purifies himself, doing it well, then makes for one of the mosques without Allah recording a blessing for him for every step he takes raising him a degree for it, and effacing a sin from him for it. I have seen the time when no one stayed away from it, except a hypocrite, who was well known for his hypocrisy, whereas a man would be brought swaying (due to weakness) between two men until he was set up in a row.)

It is also authentically reported in the Two Sahihs (authentic books of Hadith compiled by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, (The Salah offered in congregation is twenty five times more superior (in reward) to the Salah offered alone in one's house or in a business centre, because if one performs Wudu' and does it perfectly, and then proceeds to the masjid with the sole intention of praying, then for each step which he takes towards the masjid, Allah upgrades him a degree in reward and (forgives) crosses out one sin until he enters the masjid. When he enters the masjid, he is considered in Salah as long as he is waiting for the Salah and the angels continue asking for Allah's forgiveness for him and keep saying, 'O Allah! Be Merciful to him, O Allah! Forgive him, O Allah! Accept his repentance,' as long as he continues sitting at his praying place and does not break his Wudu'.)

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It is also authentically reported in the Sahih of Muslim on the authority of Ubay ibn Ka`b (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, (There was a person among the Ansar whose house was situated at the farthest end of Madinah, but he never missed any prayer along with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). The narrator said: We felt pity for him and I said to him: O, so and so, had you bought a donkey, it would have saved you from the burning sand and would have saved you from the reptiles of the earth. He said: Listen! By Allah, I do not like my house to be situated by the side of Muhammad (peace be upon him). I took him to the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) and informed him about (these words). The Prophet called him and he said the same words he had told

me and added that he wanted a reward for his steps. Upon this the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) said: In fact yours is the reward which you expect.)

It is authentically reported on the authority of [Jabir ibn 'Abdullah](#) (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, (There were some plots of land lying vacant around the Masjid. The Banu Salamah decided to move to this land and come nearer to the Masjid. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) heard about it and said to them, "I have heard that you intend to move near the Masjid." They said: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah! We have decided to do that." Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "O Banu Salamah! Stay in your houses, because your footprints (when you come to the mosque) will be recorded. ") These and other similar Hadiths denote that the command to observe Salah is not confined to observing it in congregation so much so to observe it at the Masjid. Offering Salah at Masjids distinguishes a true believer from a hypocrite who abandons praying at Masjids.

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It is also a means through which one awaits reward from Allah, seeks forgiveness for his sins, increases the record of his good deeds and benefits from the angels' invocations of Allah to have mercy on him and to forgive his sins. Those at home, on a farm or at a warehouse who stand up in rows to offer Salah while being led by an Imam on the radio are neglecting the commands of Shari'ah and depriving themselves of having their reward doubled, their record of good deeds augmented, and their sins forgiven. They are opposing the evidence declaring the obligation to offer Salah at Masjids thus deserving the punishment Allah has threatened those who neglect offering it there.

In addition, things may happen which may render a person's Salah invalid according to the view held by some Fuqha' (Muslim jurists). Included among these things are praying alone behind a row with the possibility of joining it while at a Masjid, the possibility of praying in front of the Imam or being unable to continue following the Imam due to radio tuning problems or power outage, which would not be the case if he prays in a place where he can see the Imam.

Accordingly, it is not permissible to pray alone at home or to pray in a congregation dependant on someone at a Masjid or to follow the Imam over the radio.

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

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