

# Congregational Prayers

## صلاة الجماعة

### Objectives >>>

#### Students should:

- Be reminded of the importance of congregational prayer
- Be reminded of the basic rules of congregational prayer
- Learn how to join the congregational prayer late through particular scenarios

## Congregational Prayers

The congregational prayer is one of the most emphasised aspects of the practical life of a Muslim. It is the way in which all of the Muslims gather in one location and offer their prayers in unison. The prayer in congregation becomes the symbol of the unity of the Muslims and is a very important way of enjoining people in the community to pray regularly. In this lesson we will discuss the importance of praying in congregation and elaborate on more rules of praying in this form.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

There are very few practical acts of worship emphasised in Islam as much as the congregational prayer. The Holy Prophet [s] had said:

"One prayer of a man in congregation is worthier than his forty years of prayers at home (alone)."

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4



### SOME GENERAL RULES OF CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Once the prayer leader has been established

- If there is only one follower, the follower should stand to the right, and slightly behind the one who leads the prayer
- If there are two or more followers, all must stand behind the Imam without a barrier (e.g. wall) separating them from the Imam.
- The gap between the Imam and the rest of the congregation must not be great. Similarly, the gap separating the worshippers standing side by side should not be large.
- The actions of those in the congregation must not precede those of the Imam. The parts of the prayer should be done in unison with the Imam or slightly after the actions of the Imam. This means one cannot go into Rukū' before the Imam or go into Sujūd before the Imam. At the same time one should not be too far behind the actions of the Imam, for example, if the Imam is going in Sujūd, one cannot remain in Rukū' and should join him in Sujūd quickly.

- When we are praying in congregation while the Imam is reciting the two chapters of the Qur'an (Surat al-Ĥamd and the second Surah) we should just listen to the Imam's recitation. If we can't hear the chapters being recited, it is permissible to say some dhikr under the breath. For all of the other parts of the prayer, one should recite the words quietly.
- The lines of the congregation should be straight, not from the place of prostration but from the position of the feet. Furthermore, one should not start another row, until the gaps of the first row are filled.

## JOINING THE PRAYER LATE

Let us review some scenarios in which we can join the congregational prayer. We will split up into groups and act out each of the following situations:

**I enter the Mosque and see that the Imam is in his first Rak'a, reciting the second Surah. If I join the prayer will that be considered my first Rak'a?**

Yes it will be. If you join at any time in the first and second Rak'a one simply joins and considers it his first. He does not need to recite anything, simply listen to the rest of what the Imam is reciting.

**The Imam is now in Rukū', if I join now would this be considered my first Rak'a?**

Yes, one is considered to have joined the Rak'ah as long as he joins at any time before or during the Rukū', as long as they join before the Imam begins to raise his head from Rukū'.

**The Imam has now stood from the Ruku', but he is still in the first unit of the prayer. If I join now, would that be considered my first Rak'a?**

No, if you join now, this will not be considered a unit of prayer for you. It is easiest to wait until the Imam gets up again for the second rak'a and join then.

**I joined the prayer and the Imam was reciting the second Surah. Since I missed Surah Al-Ĥamd, I should recite both chapters quietly to myself. True or False?**

False; when joining in the first or second Rak'a, you should just continue listening to the Imam recite the prayer. This is because in the congregational prayer, the Imam recites on your behalf.

**The Imam is in the Rukū' of the third Rak'ah of prayers. I do Takbiratul Iḥram and join the prayer. This is considered my first Rak'ah. True or False?**

True. If you join in the Rukū' of any Rak'a it will be considered your first.

**The Imam is reciting Tasbiḥatul Arba'a of the fourth Rak'a. When I join, should I recite Surah Al-Ĥamd and the other Surah?**

Yes you should recite these chapters because the Imam only recites on your behalf in the first and second Rak'a. If you only have time to recite al-Ĥamd, that is enough. However, if you feel you have no time to recite Surah al-Ĥamd, wait till the Imam goes into Rukū' and join then. That way, this counts as your first Rukū' and you don't have to recite anything.

**I joined the prayer while the Imam was standing in his 2<sup>nd</sup> rak'a. Now, the Imam is doing the Tashahhud. What should I be doing?**

This is considered your first Rak'a, thus you should not be doing the Tashahhud. You should be kneeling in a sitting

position, getting ready to stand. Your knees should not be touching the floor. You should recite the Tashahhud with the Imam under breath and then stand when he stands.

**I joined in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Rak'a of 'Isha prayer. The Imam is completing the fourth Rak'a with Taslim. Do I need to pray any more Rak'ah? If so, how many?**

Yes, you should pray one more Rak'a. This is because the Rak'a that you join at any time before the Rukū' is your first Rak'a. Thus, although it may be the congregation's second, third or fourth, it is still your first. You should therefore, after the Imam has finished the Tashahhud in the final Rak'a, or as per recommendation after Taslīm, stand and complete the Rak'a that has not been completed.



## Review Questions

### Q1. When praying in congregation, I should:

- a) Listen to the Imam reciting Surat al-Ḥamd and not recite it myself
- b) I should recite Surat al-Ḥamd myself aloud
- c) I should recite Surat al-Ḥamd in a very quiet voice

### Q2. When praying in congregation, I should:

- a) Go into Rukū' just before the Imam does
- b) Go into Rukū' just after the Imam does
- c) Go into Rukū' at the same time as the Imam does

### Q3. When praying in congregation:

- a) We should pray with some gaps between us so others can join in late
- b) We should form straight rows and pray without any gaps between us
- c) We should pray in different parts of the mosque