

Salaat al-Mareed

(Prayer of the Sick Person)

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The Prophet (ﷺ) has made clear the manner in which the sick person should pray. There is also a *Qaa'idah* (basic principle) in the Islamic law [which covers the prayer of the sick person], based upon the saying of Allah, the Most High: "...So, observe *Taqwa* of Allah (obeying His commands and avoiding His prohibitions) as much as you can..." [Qur'aan 64:16].

Similarly, there is the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ): "...Whenever I command you with any matter, do as much of it as you can." [al-Bukhaaree, no. 7288 and Muslim, no. 1337, on the authority of Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه)]

These textual proofs indicate that it is obligatory for the sick person to do as much as he can of the mandatory aspects of the Salaah, no matter if it is a pillar (Rukn), a pre-condition (Shart), or an obligatory duty (Waajib).

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has made clear the manner or description of the Salaah of the sick person, in the Hadeeth of 'Imraan ibn Husain (رضي الله عنه), where he (ﷺ) said: "Perform the Salaah *standing*; but if you are not able (to do it standing), then perform it *sitting*; and if you are not able to do it (sitting), then perform it *laying down on your side*. [al-Bukhaaree, no. 1117, Abu Daawood, no. 952, at-Tirmidhee, no. 372, and Ibn Maajah, no. 1223]

[General Guidelines for the Prayer of the Sick Person]

1. If he prays standing, then his bowing (Rukoo') and his prostration (Sujood) will be normal (i.e. the same way as people who are not sick).
2. However, if he is not able to perform the standing (Qiyaam), then he will perform the Salaah sitting (*Qaa'idan*). If he is able to stand up in order to perform the bowing (Rukoo') – then, he must stand up for the performance of Rukoo' (the bowing). And this is obligatory (wajib), due to the saying of Allah, the Most High: "...So, observe *Taqwa* of Allah (obeying His commands and avoiding His prohibitions) as much as you can..." [Qur'aan 64:16] – as long as he is in this condition of being able to bow.
3. If/when it is a hardship upon him to perform the Qiyaam (standing upright) and similarly the Rukoo' (bowing) – he should perform the bowing while he is in the sitting position.

Its description is that (the sick praying person) bends his back to the extent that he (i.e. his head and neck, etc.) moves beyond his knees, and he places his two hands upon his knees, just as he would do if he were bowing while performing the prayer *standing*.

4. In the condition (or position) of Sujood (prostration), he prostrates upon the floor [or ground, if he is outside]. But, if he is unable to prostrate (in the normal manner), he should prostrate by *gesturing* (i.e. bending the back, as a *sign* of prostration) - making his (bending over for) Sujood (prostration) lower than his

(bending over for) Rukoo'. In this condition, he places his **hands** (palms) **upon the floor**; and this is obligatory if he is able to bend down close to the floor. The evidence for this is the previously mentioned Aayah (verse 64:16).

5. If, however, he is *unable* to bend over to such an extent that he will be close to the prostration position (Sujood), in that case it is not obligatory for him to place his palms upon the floor, since there would not be any benefit (in this case), since he would not be in the prostration position or even close to it.

6. If he performs the Salaah from the sitting position, he sits **cross-legged (Muta-rab-bi')** in place of the standing (Qiyaam); and he should neither sit in the position of **If-ti-raash** (i.e. the right foot propped up, left foot flat on the floor, while sitting upon it) nor the **Ta-war-ruk** position (i.e. right foot propped up, with the left foot under the right shin, while sitting directed upon the floor).

7. As for when he has to perform a prostration (Sujood), and likewise for the sitting that is in between two prostrations – he should do it as previously mentioned.

The evidence for this is what was narrated by Anas (رضي الله عنه) from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that he (ﷺ) used to perform the Salaah in the cross-legged position (*Mu-ta-rab-bi-'an*) on the occasion when he was injured from falling from his horse or his donkey and he split his thigh. [Reported by al-Bukhaaree, no. 805, 1114 and Muslim, no. 411]

Note: The wording of al-Bukhaaree is as follows: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) fell from his horse and injured his right side. We went to him to visit him (while he was sick) and the time for Salaah arrived. He (ﷺ) led us in Salaah while sitting (Qaa'idan) and we also sat (while performing the Salaah)...”

As for the expression “**mu-ta-rab-bi-'an**” (sitting cross-legged), it was reported by an-Nasaa'ee (Hadeeth no. 1661), from the Hadeeth of Aa'isha (Radiyahallahu an-haa) who said: “I saw the Prophet (ﷺ) performing the Salaah sitting cross-legged.” An-Nasaa'ee said: ‘I don't know of anyone who narrated this Hadeeth other than **Abu Daawood**, and he is *Thiqah* (a very reliable narrator), yet I think that this narration is incorrect. And Allah, the Most High, Knows Best!’

This Hadeeth has also been narrated by Ibn Khuzaimah (no. 978 & 1238), Ibn Hibbaan (no. 2512) and others. Adh-Dhahabee – in '*al-Meezaan*', 2/387 – in the biography of Humaid ibn Tarkhaan said: ‘However, **Abu Daawood** was followed (by other narrators who narrated it just like him) in the collection of al-Baihaqee and others. Hence, the mistake *wrongly attributed* to him (by an-Nasaa'ee) is negated, as mentioned by al-Haafidh (ibn Haajah al-Asqaalaanee) in '*Talkhees*', 1/226. [This means that Abu Daawood's narration is correct]. This Hadeeth has also been narrated by other than Aa'isha (رضي الله عنها).

Finally, this act (of sitting cross-legged in Salaah) has also been reported to have been done by a group of the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) and the Taabi'een (Rahima-humul-laah). And Shaykh al-Albaanee (Rahima-hu-llah) classified it as *Saheeh* (authentic) in '*Sifatu Salaatun-Nabee*' ('The Prophet's Prayer Described').

From this we know that the types of sittings in Salaah are three: 1. *If-ti-raash*, 2. *Ta-war-ruk*, 3. *Ta-rab-bu'*.

8. If the sick person is not able to perform the Salaah *sitting*, then, he should perform the Salaah laying upon his side, with his face towards the Qiblah (direction of prayer, i.e. Makkah). If it is easy for him to lay on the right side, this is preferable; otherwise, (he may lie down) upon the left side.

9. In this situation, he merely gestures – with his head – signaling for the Sujood (prostration) as well as for the Rukoo' (bowing). This gesturing should be (a bowing) towards the chest, making the bending for the prostration lower than the bending for Rukoo'.

10. [Some of the scholars said:] If he is not able to gesture with his head, then he can make a sign (in place of the body movements) by blinking the eye, but not by gesturing with his finger.

However, those who said this actually do not have any evidence for this position. The scholars are divided – concerning this issue – into two groups:

- (a) Some of them said: He should make a signal with his eye,
- (b) Some of them said: He should not make a signal with his eye, since the Hadeeth which mentions gesturing with the eye is *Da'eef* (weak).

Among those who held this (second) opinion is Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (Rahimahu-llah). Those who hold this view say: If the sick person is unable to gesture with his head, then he should *not* gesture with his eye.

Issue

If a sick person is unable to gesture with his **eye** - or with his **head**, according to the second view – is he excused from performing Salaah, or does he perform the Salaah in his **heart** (i.e. just by *intention*, in the heart)?

The Scholars differed concerning this issue:

- A. Some of the scholars said: The obligation to perform Salaah (in this case) is **dropped**. The basis for this view is that the Salaah is an act of *Ibaadah* (worship) consisting of well-known sayings and actions, opening with *Takbeer* (i.e. saying: 'Allahu Akbar'), and closing with *Tasleem* (i.e. saying: 'As-Salaamu alaikum'). Hence, it is incumbent to have sayings (recited) in the Salaah. Whenever, a person is *unable* to recite these sayings, the (obligation of) Salaah is dropped, since there is no Salaah without its sayings. This is the view of Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (Rahimahu-llah).

B. Other scholars said: In this case, the Salaah is **not dropped**. Rather, he should make *intention* in the **heart**, say the Takbeer (Allahu Akbar) and recite al-Faatihah and whatever is easy for him to recite from the Qur'aan. Next, he says the Takbeer (Allahu Akbar) and makes intention that he is bowing, saying: 'Subhaana Rabbiyal-Adheem'...to the end (of the Salaah).

This is the strongest view (of the two views mentioned). We say: If the (obligation of) actions is dropped [due to ones inability to bow or prostrate or stand], what is it that necessitates the (obligation of) sayings to be dropped?!

Indeed, Allah, the Most High, said: "Observe Taqwa of Allah (i.e. by obeying Him) as much as you can."

As for the fact that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did not mention this in the Hadeeth of 'Imraan Ibn al-Hussain (رضي الله عنه) – we say: Indeed, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did say: 'Pray', but he did not say: 'If you are not able to (move the body to) gesture, then do not perform Salaah (at all).'

11. Some of the scholars said: If the sick person becomes unconscious (*Ugh-mi-ya 'a-lai-hi*), then he is not responsible/obligated to make up for the missed Salaah, since he is in the same condition or position as the insane person (majnoon), one who does not have control over his mind.

Imaam Ahmad (Rahima-hul-laah) held the view that such a person is responsible/obligated to make up the missed Salaah. Hence, if/when he regains consciousness; it becomes obligatory upon him to make up for the missed Salaah (*al-Qadaa'*).

The basis of this view is that unconsciousness (*al-Igh-maa'*) does not entail losing one's mind; rather, it is only a covering (of the mind) like sleep (*an-Nawm*). And the sleeping person is obligated to perform the Salaah (once he awakens).

The majority (of scholars) (i.e. those who hold the first view) responded by saying: The comparison (Qiyaas) between the one who is unconscious and the one who is sleeping is not correct since there is a (real) difference between the two of them.

If the sleeping person is awakened (by someone else), he wakes up, (proving that) his mind is still present. As for the unconscious person, he will not [and can not] awaken if someone else tries to awaken him, since his mind is not intact (i.e. not under his control while he is unconscious). He is in the same condition or position as the insane person (majnoon). And this is the *Raajih* (strongest view)!

12. The sick person is *not* allowed to *shorten* the Salaah (al-Qasr).

[Translation: Abu Muhammad. 4th Dhul-Qa'dah 1433 AH/Sept. 21, 2012CE]