



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله حمد الشاكرين، والصلاة والسلام على المبعوث رحمة للعالمين، وهدايا للناس أجمعين. صلاة وسلاماً دائمين إلى يوم الدين، وآله وصحبه ومن تبعهم بإحسان، وسلم تسليماً كثيراً، أما بعد:

﴿أقيموا الصفوف وحاذوا بين المناكب وسدوا الخلل﴾

In Salah with Congregation, It is Sunnah to Straighten the Rows by Joining Shoulder to Shoulder and Not Feet to Feet

In the Shariah of Islam, there is a very great and unique importance placed on the straightening of the rows when Salah is performed in congregation. In the Sahih Ahadith it is mentioned that the straightening of the rows in congregation is a part of performing Salah correctly and also a means of beautifying it. It is also stated in Fiqh that of all the Sunnah Muakkad of Salah, the straightening of the rows in Salah is the most important and in some rulings Wajib. (Dars'e Tirmidhi vol 1, p485)

Straightening the rows according to the Sunnah is as follows:

The Muqtadi should join their shoulders with others in the row either side of them (the feet should not be so far apart that shoulders cannot be joined) and not leave any space between each other. The feet and chest should face towards the Qibla. No individual should be slightly forward or behind the others (they should all be in one 'straight' line.)

The Imam should stand in a central position to the rows behind him the Muqtadis should form rows, completing the front rows first.

Rasullullah ﷺ stated that the Imam should be ahead of the rows in a central position and no gaps should left in the rows. (Sunan Abu Dawood, vol 1, p99)

We will now explain how to position the feet in Salah through the correct meanings and purpose of the Ahadith of the Prophet ﷺ, the actions of the companions رضي الله عنهم, statements of the Khulafa Rashideen رضي الله عنهم and the rulings of the four Imams of Fiqh رحمه الله تعالى اجمعين.

The Ahadith of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

Sayyidina Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه reported: The Prophet ﷺ stated "Straighten the rows! Align your shoulders to each others', fill the gaps and be soft to your brother's hand, do not leave an empty space for Shaitaan within the rows. Whoever joins the rows, Allah will join him. Whoever breaks the rows, Allah will break him" (Sunan Abu Dawood, vol 1, p97)

Sayyidina Bara bin Aazib رضي الله عنه reported: Before Salaah the Prophet ﷺ used to go from one side of the rows to the other and used to observe us (standing in the rows). To straighten the rows, the Prophet ﷺ used to place his blessed hands on our shoulders and chests and would say: "Do not differentiate by being behind and in front of each other, or your hearts will differentiate from each other. Allah ﷻ showers his blessings upon those in the first row and the angels pray for their forgiveness." (Sunan Abu Dawood, vol 1, p97)

Sayyidina Anas bin Maik رضي الله عنه reported: The Prophet ﷺ stated: "Join your rows, be close to each other, keep your necks in a straight line. By Allah! I see the Shaitaan coming between the spaces in the rows like a baby lamb does." (Sunan Abu Dawood, vol 1, p97)

Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه stated: The Prophet ﷺ used to straighten our rows just like an arrow is straightened. Rasullullah ﷺ would state: "Believing men! Be sure to keep your rows straight or Allah ﷻ will turn you away from each other (you will begin to hate one another)." (Sahih Muslim, vol 1, p182/ Sunan Ibn Majah #998)

In all the above mentioned Ahadith, it is clearly evident that the Prophet ﷺ stated and ordered to straighten the rows, close the gaps and join shoulder to shoulder with the person next to you. It is not proven from any Ahadith that the Prophet ﷺ personally stated verbally or through action to join feet to feet and/or ankle to ankle. However, some individuals who wish to enforce their own opinions thus deceiving the people; they relate the joining of the feet as an action which was encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ. This is wrong. In regards to this a very severe threat has been recorded from the Prophet ﷺ.

Sayyidina Ibn Aqwa رضي الله عنه related: ‘I heard the Prophet ﷺ state: “Whomsoever relates from me that which I have not stated, their abode will be the hellfire.” (Sahih Bukhari #109)

The Ahadith of the Khulafa Rashideen (رضوان الله تعالى اجمعين)

Just as it is not related anywhere from the Prophet ﷺ, after his demise, those who were given the responsibility of leading the prayers have not encouraged by speech or action the joining of the feet to feet or ankle to ankle. Nor did they enforce or propagate this amongst the masses.

It is stated about Sayyidina Umar bin Khattab رضي الله عنه that he had given the responsibility of straightening the rows in Salat to an individual. Sayyidina Umar would not give the Takbeer for prayer until he was not informed by this individual that all the rows were straight and correct. It is also related about Sayyidina Uthman رضي الله عنه and Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه that they too were very particular about ensuring the rows were straight prior to commencing prayer. They would instruct people to either move forward or back when checking the rows. (Jami Tirmidi, vol 1, p53)

Sayyidina Uthman bin Affan رضي الله عنه would state in his Khutbah: “When the prayer is established, straighten the rows and join your shoulders. (Muwatta Imam Muhammed, p86)

The Rulings of the Four Imams of the Ummah (رحمه الله تعالى اجمعين)

The Hanafi rule is that in the state of standing the two feet should be four finger widths apart, this is preferred for men. This is due to the fact that this state is closest to comfort and helps in attaining peace and serenity in prayer. The Shafi rule is that in the state of standing the two feet should be one hand span apart.

The Maliki and Hanbali rule is that in the state of standing the two feet should not be too close together nor too far apart. The stance adopted should not look unattractive or uncomfortable when looked upon by others. (Al Fiqhul Islami Wa Adilah, vol 2, p881- 882)

The very wording of the rulings of the four schools of thought prove that they are unanimous in that the feet should not be placed very wide apart as has become a custom today, nor is it proven to join feet to feet. This is a solid proof with regards to the Islamic ruling on the topic. (Imdadul Ahkam p290/ E'laaul Sunan, vol 4, p360)

Sahabi Sayyidina Abdullah Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه would not keep the distance between his feet very wide apart nor keep the feet together in Salah. (Al Mugni, vol 1, p698)

It is proven from all the above narrations that it is not from amongst the Sunnahs of Salah that the feet of the Muqtadi should be touching the individual either side.

Those individuals who encourage the joining of the feet within Salah use a Hadith from Bukhari related from Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir and Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه to support their case.

Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه stated: “I saw from amongst us, that each of us would join his shoulder and ankle to the one next to him.”

Sayyidina Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه stated: “We would join our shoulders and feet to the individual next to us.” (Sahih Bukhari, vol 1, p100)

In another saying of Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه: “We used to join our shoulders, knees and ankles with those on either side” (Sunan Abu Dawood vol 1, p97 #297)

Those people that use the sayings of Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه to advance their claims should try to join knees and ankles as well as feet; but they do not. They warn people that by not joining feet Shaitaan will come in between them without proof. Why then do these very people not join their feet during Sajdah and Qaidah (sitting position)?

Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani رحمه الله stated: “The purpose of the Hadith of Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه is to enforce strongly the straightening of rows and closing the gaps, it is not to encourage the joining of the feet and ankles.” (Fathul Bari Sharah Bukhari, vol 2, p247/ Irshadul Sari Sharah Bukhari, vol 2, p368/ Umdadul Qari Sharah Bukhari vol 5 p295)

المراد بذلك المبالغة في تعديل الصف وسد خلل (فتح الباري ص: 247, ج: 2/ عمدة القارى ص: 259, ج: 5/ ارشاد السارى لشرح صحيح البخارى ص: 368, ج: 2) قلت: وهو مراده عند الفقهاء الأربعة أى لا يترك فى البين فرجة تسع فيها ثالثا .. وهذه المسئلة اوجدها غير المقلدين فقط. (فيض البارى ص: 236, ج: 2) (لشيخ الإسلام علامه انور شاه كشميرى عليه الرحمه)

Who was Nauman bin Bashir (رضى الله عنه)?

He was an Ansari Sahabi رضي الله عنه, he was the first Ansari baby boy to be born after the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم migrated to Madinah Munawwarah. When the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم passed away, he was 8 years 7 months old. (Fathul Bari Shara Bukhari, vol 1, p126/ Tehzeeb Ul Tehzeeb, vol 10, p 447/ Taqzeebul Ul Tehzeeb, vol 2, p248)

Verily, the statement of a Sahabi رضي الله عنه in regards to a matter is a categorical proof. However, in the time of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم Sayyidina Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه was an immature child. During the presence of other great holders of knowledge and judgements amongst the Sahaba رضي الله عنهم including the Khulafa Rashideen, who were very much older, there is no narration verbally or through action in respect of joining the feet in Salah. Yet, these were the very Companions رضي الله عنهم who would be in the first row, under the very scrutiny of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم blessed gaze prior to the commencement of Salah. How can we then accept as a defined Sunnah the joining of the feet in Salah?

Sayyidina Abu Malik Ash'ari رضي الله عنه related: The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would take care of these things before commencing the prayer - that the rows of the men were at the front and the children behind them. The prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would then state “This is the Salah of My Ummah” (Sunan Abu Dawood, vol 1, p98/ Jami Tirmidhi #228)

It is proven from the above Hadith that the rows of the children would be behind those of the men in Salah. Nauman bin Bashir رضي الله عنه being a child at the time of Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would be in these rows at the back.

It is also proven from those Sahaba رضي الله عنهم above who have related opinions in respect of joining the feet in Salah, that after attaining maturity in age, they too left this practice.

وزاد معمر فى روايته ولو فعلت ذلك با حدهم اليوم لنفر كانه بغل شمس. (فتح البارى لشرح صحيح البخارى ص: 247, ج: 2)

It is related from Maa'mar رحمه الله: Sayyidina Anas رضي الله عنه stated “If today I join my foot to the one next to me, then out of repulsion he should run from me like a mule” (Fathul Bari Shara Bukhari, vol 2, p247)

If the joining of the feet in Salah was a Sunnah, the Sahaba رضي الله عنهم would never abandon such an action due to anyone disliking it for any reason. Hatred and repulsion of an action is done in that respect where an action is not advised/liked in Salah. The dislike of joining feet is not a recent action but existed since the time of the Sahaba رضي الله عنهم. The action of joining feet prevents solemnity and submissiveness in Salah due to the distraction.

There are also other factors that may prevent individuals from joining feet in Salah, for example certain medical problems are aggravated by even slight pressure being applied on a specific point on the body.

In conclusion, it is proven from the Ahadith related from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the sayings and actions of the Khulafaa Rashideen رضي الله عنهم and other Companions رضي الله عنهم and the rulings of the Salaf Saliheen رحمه الله تعالى اجمعين that the joining of the feet in Salah with congregation is not from amongst the Sunnahs of performing Salah.

والله وحده هو المسؤول والمستعان وهو الهادي إلى سبيل الخير والسلام .

محمد يوسف

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