127476 - Are Ladies Obligated to Pray in Congregation?

the question

What is the ruling on prayer in congregation for a woman? Please note that she finds that she focuses better in prayer when she prays alone. How about if she finds an opportunity to pray in congregation in her house with her father or brothers, and she prays with them a second time and counts this prayer as Nafl (optional)?

Summary of answer

Prayer in congregation is not obligatory for women, and a woman’s prayer in her house on her own is more rewarding than her praying in congregation in the mosque.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Prayer in congregation is not obligatory for women, and a woman’s prayer in her house on her own is better than her praying in congregation in the mosque .

Abu Dawud (567) narrated that Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do not prevent your women from going to the mosques , although their houses are better for them .” (Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Irwa’ Al-Ghalil, 515)

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas said:

“It is not mandatory for women to offer any of the five obligatory prayers in congregation, and their prayer in their houses is better for them than praying in the mosques, whether that is an obligatory or optional prayer. But if she wants to pray in the mosque, she should not be prevented from doing so, on condition that she observes proper Islamic etiquette when going out and when

praying, by going out fully covered, not wearing perfume, and praying behind the men."(Fatawa Al-Lajnah Al-Da'imah, 8/213)

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"With regard to women, their prayer in their houses is better for them, whether they pray individually or in congregation." (Majmoo' Fatawa Ibn Baz, 12/78)

If congregational prayer is held in the house, then it is better for the woman to pray with them and not to pray alone, whether the congregation is women or men who are her Mahrams.

In Al-Musannaf (4989), Ibn Abu Shaybah narrated from Umm Al-Hasan that she saw Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) leading the women in prayer. She stood with them in the same row. (Classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Tamam Al-Mannah, p. 154.)

Al-Bayhaqi (5138) narrated that `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) led women in praying the obligatory prayer. She led them standing in their midst. (Classed as authentic by An-Nawawi in Al-Khulasah, as stated in Nasab Ar-Rayah by Az-Zayla`i, 2/39)

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas said:

"If women pray in congregation in the house, that is better, and their (female) Imam should stand in their midst in the first row, and they should be led by the one who memorises the Quran the most and knows other rulings of Islam." (Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da'imah, 8/213)

Even if a woman feels that she focuses better when praying on her own, it is better if a congregational prayer is held in the house to pray with them , so that she may attain the virtue and reward of prayer in congregation -- which is a great bounty -- and so that her not praying with this congregation will not be a cause of them thinking badly of her or thinking that she dislikes the Imam or the congregation. Also, there is the fear that the feeling that she focuses better when she prays on her own is just an illusion by means of which the devil wants to deprive her of the virtue of praying in congregation.

So what she should do is to pray with the congregation in the house, and strive to focus properly in prayer.

And Allah knows best.