



## **194500 - If someone prays behind the imam standing on his own, and he is unaware of the ruling, what is the ruling on his prayer?**

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### **the question**

If I prayed in congregation with the imam, and there was no one else with us, and I stood behind him on my own, with no one else with me, is my prayer valid?

### **Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The Sunnah for one who is praying behind an imam, if he is on his own and is male, is to stand to the right of the imam, because of the report narrated by al-Bukhari (726) from Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I prayed with the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) one night. I stood on his left, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took hold of my head and put me on his right side, then he prayed.

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: If the one who is praying behind the imam is on his own and is male, the Sunnah is for him to stand to the right of the imam, whether he is a man or a boy, because of the hadith of Ibn `Abbas.

End quote from *Al-Mughni* (2/25).

Secondly:

The ruling on your prayer behind the imam is the same as the ruling on one who prays standing on his own behind the row. The scholars (may Allah have mercy on them) differed concerning the ruling on his prayer, and there are several views:



The first view – which is the well-known view in the Hanbali madhhab – is that if someone prays behind the imam or behind the row standing on his own, his prayer is not valid and he must repeat it, and that applies equally to one who has an excuse and one who does not have an excuse.

Al-Bahuti (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The prayer of one who stands on his own behind the imam or behind the row is not valid, if he prays one or more rak`ahs, whether he does that deliberately or by mistake, whether he knows the ruling or not, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no prayer for the one who stands on his own behind the row.” Narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Majah. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw a man praying behind the row, and he instructed him to repeat the prayer. Narrated by Ahmad; narrated and classed as sound by at-Tirmidhi; also narrated by Ibn Majah. Its isnad includes trustworthy narrators.

End quote from *Ar-Rawd al-Murbi` Sharh Zad al-Mustaqni`* (2/337-338).

The second view – which is the view of the majority – is that the prayer of one who prays behind the row or behind the imam standing on his own is valid.

It says in *Al-Mawsu`at al-Fiqhiyyah* (27/184-185): Hence it is regarded as disliked for a person to pray standing on his own behind the rows with no excuse, but his prayer is valid, even though it is disliked. That is not regarded as disliked if there is an excuse, as we will explain below. This is according to the majority of jurists – the Hanafis, Malikis and Shafa`is – and the basis for that is what al-Bukhari narrated from Abu Bakrah (may Allah be pleased with him), that he came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when he was bowing, so he bowed before he reached the row [and kept walking whilst bowing until he reached the row]. He mentioned that to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and he said: “May Allah increase you in eagerness, but do not do it again.” The jurists said: From this it may be understood that it is not required to repeat the prayer, and that the command to repeat the prayer that is mentioned in the hadith of Wabisah ibn Ma`bad that was narrated by at-Tirmidhi – which says that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw a man praying behind the row [on his own], so he instructed him to repeat the prayer – was only by way of recommendation, so as to reconcile



between the two reports. End quote.

The third view – which is the view favoured by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and is the view of some of the scholars – is that it is not valid to pray behind the row on one's own, unless one has an excuse, and the excuse is that the row in front is full.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The fact that the imam and a woman stand on their own (in the congregational prayer) indicates that it is permissible for a man who is praying behind an imam to stand on his own for a reason, which is if there is no space for him to pray except standing on his own... And because the obligatory parts of prayer are waived when there is an excuse; standing in the row is only one of the obligatory parts of the prayer, so it may be waived when it is not possible to do it.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (23/246).

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin said, after mentioning the difference of scholarly opinion regarding this matter:

This view which was favoured by Shaykh al-Islam is the view favoured by our shaykh, `Abd ar-Rahman ibn Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him), and it is the view that we think is correct, which is: if the row is full, you should pray standing on your own, and not pull someone out of the row to stand with you, or go forward to stand with the imam. This is the correct view which we think is closer to the Sunnah than the view which says that the prayer is invalid regardless, or the view which says that the prayer is valid regardless.

End quote from *Liqat al-Bab al-Maftuh*.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. [11199](#).

Secondly:

The apparent meaning of the hadith which indicates that the prayer must be repeated by one who prays standing on his own behind the row indicates that this applies equally to one who is unaware



of the ruling and one who knows it.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: As for differentiating between the one who is aware of the ruling and the one who is not aware, as is the view of Ahmad, that is not justified, because the one who prayed standing on his own [meaning the one whom the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed to repeat the prayer] was not aware of the fact that that was not allowed, and he instructed him to repeat the prayer, just as he instructed the Bedouin who prayed badly to repeat the prayer.

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (23/397).

Shaykh Ahmad ibn `Abd ar-Rahman al-Qadi (may Allah preserve him) said: I asked our shaykh – meaning Ibn `Uthaymin – (may Allah have mercy on him): Is the one who prayed on his own behind the row excused if he was unaware of the ruling, based on the hadith of Abu Bakrah, to whom the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “May Allah increase you in eagerness, but do not do it again”?

He replied: No; rather he should be instructed to repeat the prayer, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did in the case of the one who did that. As for Abu Bakrah (may Allah be pleased with him), he walked and joined the row.

End quote from *Thamarat at-Tadwin min Masa'il Ibn `Uthaymin*.

Thirdly:

In the answer to question no. [45648](#), we previously noted that if someone prays incorrectly, but he is not aware of the ruling, he should be instructed to repeat the prayer if enough time remains. But if the time for the prayer has ended, then he does not have to repeat it, and it is sufficient for him to make sure to pray correctly in the future. In the same question, we quoted evidence for that from the Prophet's Sunnah.

Based on that, you do not have to repeat that prayer, but you should not do that again.



And Allah knows best.