314071 - What is the ruling on observing i‘tikaaf in more than one mosque so that he can pray behind more than one imam, to increase motivation?

the question

What is the ruling on observing i‘tikaaf during the last ten nights of Ramadan in more than one mosque, such as two nights in one mosque, two nights in another mosque, and so on, varying between mosques and imams, so as to increase motivation by going to a new place?

Summary of answer

It is permissible to observe i‘tikaaf in more than one mosque, although it is better to observe i‘tikaaf in one mosque; it is permissible to go out to another mosque if one stipulates that when beginning i‘tikaaf. However, it should be noted that the one who goes out of the mosque where he began his i‘tikaaf to observe i‘tikaaf in another mosque, for one or two nights, is missing out on doing i‘tikaaf for all ten nights, according to what is proven in the Sunnah. That is because his i‘tikaaf in the first mosque ends when he leaves the mosque, and his i‘tikaaf in the second mosque does not begin until he actually enters the mosque. For more details, please see the long answer.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Ruling on observing i‘tikaaf in more than one mosque

It is permissible for a person to observe i‘tikaaf for two nights in one mosque, then two nights in another mosque, and so on, because i‘tikaaf is valid if done for one night, or even for one hour or one moment, according to some scholars.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *al-Majmoo'* (6/514): As for the minimum duration of i'tikaaf, according to the correct and definitive view of the majority, it is stipulated that one should stay in the mosque, and it is permissible to do that for a long or short time, even an hour or one moment. End quote.

See also the answer to question no. 49002 .

But the one who does that, moving between mosques for his i'tikaaf, will miss out on following the Sunnah in a perfect manner, as was narrated concerning i'tikaaf. The practice of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with regard to i'tikaaf was to stay in the mosque for the entire period, continuously and with no interruption. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would go to great lengths to avoid going out of the mosque and would stay in it, except for unavoidable matters, to the extent that the Mother of the Believers 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to put his head out to me when he was in the mosque, and I would comb his hair, and he did not enter the house except to relieve himself when he was in i'tikaaf. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2029) and Muslim (297).

Compare this practice to the idea of moving from one mosque to another, or observing i'tikaaf for one night here and one night there.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 49007 and 12658 .

Secondly:

Going out of the mosque when observing i'tikaaf and stipulating a condition regarding that

The practice of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was to observe i'tikaaf continuously during the last ten nights of Ramadan, so the one who wants to follow the Sunnah properly should observe i'tikaaf in one mosque for all ten nights.

But he may stipulate that he will go out to pray Taraaweeh in another mosque, for the purpose mentioned above, which is to motivate himself, even though it is better for him to stay where he is, because the meaning of i'tikaaf is to stay in the mosque, seeking to draw closer to Allah, may He be exalted.

It says in *Zaad al-Mustaqni'*: The one who is observing i'tikaaf should not go out except for that which is unavoidable, and he should not visit anyone who is sick or attend any funeral, unless he stipulated beforehand that he would do that.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen said in his commentary (*ash-Sharh*, 6/523): It is known from the phrase "unless he stipulated beforehand" that it is permissible to stipulate such things at the beginning of i'tikaaf. So if he intends to begin i'tikaaf, and he says: O Lord, I will not go out except to visit a sick person or attend a funeral, that is permissible.

But this is not appropriate, because remaining in i'tikaaf is better, unless the sick person or the one who is dying has a right over him, in which case stipulating these things is more appropriate, such as if the sick person is one of his relatives and not visiting him when he is sick is regarded as severing the ties of kinship. In this case, he may stipulate an exception; the same also applies to attending funerals. End quote.

Similarly, there is nothing wrong with stipulating that he will go out to do some act of worship, or to do some permissible matter that is not essential .

It says in *Mataalib Ooli an-Nuha* (2/242): He – that is, the one who is observing i'tikaaf – may stipulate at the beginning of his i'tikaaf that he will go out for things that he does not have to go out for, such as Jumu'ah prayer, giving testimony, visiting a sick person and attending a funeral; or any act that will bring him close to Allah but is not obligatory for him, such as visiting a friend, upholding ties of kinship, and washing a deceased person; or something that he does not have to do, and is not an act of worship that will bring him close to Allah, such as stipulating that he will eat dinner and sleep overnight in his house, because it is akin to a waqf and because it is as if he has devoted only the time that he spends in the mosque as i'tikaaf, and because there is definitely

a need for dinner and a place to sleep, and he cannot delegate someone else to do that on his behalf. End quote.

To sum up, it is permissible to observe i‘tikaaf in more than one mosque, although it is more appropriate to observe i‘tikaaf in one mosque only; and it is permissible to go out to another mosque if you stipulate from the outset that you will do that.

However, it should be noted that the one who goes out of the mosque where he began his i‘tikaaf to observe i‘tikaaf in another mosque, for one or two nights, is missing out on doing i‘tikaaf for all ten nights, according to what is proven in the Sunnah. That is because his i‘tikaaf in the first mosque ends when he leaves the mosque, and his i‘tikaaf in the second mosque does not begin until he actually enters the mosque. During the time in between them, there is no i‘tikaaf!

So let him think about what he is missing out on, and how he is missing out by not following the Prophet’s example in a perfect manner, because of seeking to increase his motivation and find inspiration, which perhaps he may not find in the second mosque as he found it in the first.

Moreover, moving from one place to another leads to loss of focus, until he settles down in the second place and regains his focus.

Whatever the case, it seems that what he misses out on of goodness and virtue, because of this moving around, is greater than what he seeks of motivation and inspiration. This applies if he finds what he is looking for, so how about if he does not find it?

From the outset, he should seek the most suitable mosque for himself, then resolve to observe i‘tikaaf in it. Then if he wishes, he may go to a different mosque the following year, and observe i‘tikaaf somewhere else.

And Allah knows best.