



229225 - Is it obligatory to leave a conference or meeting in order to attend prayer in congregation in the mosque?

the question

Sometimes there is a meeting or conference, and the time for prayer comes. Do we have to leave this meeting and interrupt it in order to attend the prayer in the mosque, even though there is some difficulty in doing that, or not?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Praying in congregation is an individual obligation for adult men who are able to attend, according to the more correct of the two scholarly views, as we have explained previously in the answers to questions no. [40113](#) and [38881](#).

But if there is a group of people in some place to hold a celebration, or at a rest stop, or in a meeting or conference, and the like, and the time for prayer comes, do they have to leave what they are doing and go to pray in the mosque, or is it permissible for them to pray in congregation where they are?

The ruling regarding this matter depends on two things:

1. Is it obligatory to pray in congregation in the mosque, or is it sufficient to do it in any place?
2. Does this come under the heading of valid excuses that make it permissible not to pray in congregation in the mosque?

Secondly:



The scholars differed concerning prayer in congregation: is it obligatory to do it in the mosque or can the obligation be fulfilled by praying in congregation somewhere other than the mosque?

The view of the majority of scholars – including those Hanbalis who say that praying in congregation is an individual obligation – are of the view that praying in congregation in the mosque is Sunnah, and the obligation is fulfilled by praying in congregation even if that is done somewhere other than the mosque.

Imam ash-Shafa`i said: I do not think that there is a concession for one who is able to pray in congregation that allows him not to do it, unless he has a valid excuse... Any congregational prayer that a man joins, whether it is in his house or in a small mosque or a large mosque, and whether the congregation is small or large, is good enough.

End quote from *Al-Umm* (1/180).

Ibn Qudamah said in *Al-Mughni*: It is permissible to do it (prayer in congregation) at home and in the desert.

There is another report concerning it, which says that attending the mosque is obligatory, if the mosque is close by.

End quote from *Al-Mughni* (3/8).

Ibn Muflih said: Doing it in the mosque is Sunnah.

End quote from *Al-Furu`* (2/421).

Some of the scholars are of the view that it is obligatory to do it in the mosque, and this is one report from Imam Ahmad and the view of the literalists (az-Zahiriyyah), and it is the view favoured by a number of scholars. See: *Al-Muhalla* (4/188); *Al-Insaf* by al-Mawardi (2/213).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

If someone prays in congregation in his house, is the obligation to attend the mosque waived?



There is a difference of opinion concerning that, but he should not fail to attend the mosque unless he has a valid excuse.

End quote from *Mukhtasar al-Fatawa al-Masriyyah*, p. 52.

Ibn Daqiq al-Eid said: Rather the companions of ash-Shafa`i were not certain whether the one who prays in congregation in a place other than mosques will have done what is required of him.

It was narrated from some of them that the one who prays in congregation at home has not fulfilled what is required of him. What I mean is if we assume that prayer in congregation is a communal obligation.

Some of them said that it is valid if the place is known for congregational prayer, such as if he joins a congregational prayer in the marketplace, for example.

But the former view is more correct in my opinion, because in principle prayer in congregation is prescribed to be done in the mosques; this is important and cannot be overlooked.

End quote from *Ihkam al-Ahkam*, 1/191.

Ibn al-Qayyim thought this view more likely to be correct, as he said: Whoever studies the Sunnah and reflects on the hadiths that speak of this issue will realize that doing it in the mosques is an individual obligation, unless there is a reason that makes it permissible not to pray Jumu`ah and prayers in congregation. So not attending the mosque with no excuse is like failing to attend prayer in congregation with no excuse. Thus we can reconcile between all the hadiths and reports which speak of this issue...

What we believe is the correct view is that it is not permissible for anyone to stay away from praying in congregation in the mosque unless he has a valid excuse. And Allah knows best what is correct.

End quote from *Kitab as-Salah*, p. 416.

See also the answer to question no. [72398](#).



Thirdly:

The scholars mentioned many of the excuses that make it permissible not to attend prayer in congregation, such as heavy rain, severe cold, intense heat beyond what the people are used to, mud that makes it difficult for people (to reach the mosque), fear for one's life, wealth or family, the presence of food that one finds irresistible, suppressing the urge to urinate or defecate, the presence of an unpleasant smell emanating from yourself because of having eaten garlic or onions and the like, being preoccupied with taking care of a sick person, fear of becoming separated from one's travel companions when on a permissible journey... And so on.

See the answer to questions no. [106287](#), [129681](#), [127876](#).

Some of these excuses have to do with the potential for harm, or protecting your interests, or warding off harm from yourself, or being preoccupied with something that you cannot take your mind off.

These excuses are not limited to what the jurists mentioned. Rather an-Nawawi said: The excuses for not attending Jumu`ah and prayers in congregation are not limited; rather anything that could make it too hard to attend is a valid excuse.

End quote from *Al-Majmu`* (4/384).

These meetings and conferences are of different types: it may be the case that going to the mosque is easy and will not cause any trouble at all, in which case there is no concession allowing people not to pray in the mosque.

But in some cases and situations, going to the mosque may result in hardship and difficulty, in which case a concession is granted allowing the people to pray in congregation in the place where they are.

Based on that, it may be said:

If it is possible to go to a nearby mosque without too much trouble, then it is obligatory to go.



If that is not possible, either because it is too difficult to go or because it could cause trouble by ending the meeting prematurely, after which everyone will go their separate ways, or because it affects the schedule of the meeting or conference, or there is an interest to be served by continuing the meeting without interruption, then what appears to be the case is that there is a concession allowing them to pray in congregation in the place where they are.

What supports this concession is the fact that there is a considerable difference of opinion among the scholars as to whether it is obligatory to pray in congregation in the mosque, and that the excuses that the scholars mentioned which allow one not to attend congregational prayer indicate that the matter is flexible when there is a need, which is that these excuses practically mean that a person will not attend prayer in congregation in the mosque and will end up praying on his own, so how about when he cannot join the congregation in the mosque, but he will be able to pray in congregation in the conference? Undoubtedly in this case, it is more appropriate to allow a concession and regard the matter as flexible.

Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that Salih ibn al-Imam Ahmad said: I visited Ibrahim ibn Abil-Layth, and Ibn al-Madini, `Abbas al-Anbari and a large number of other scholars were present, and the call was given for Zuhri prayer.

`Ali ibn al-Madini said: Should we go out to the mosque or pray here?

Ahmad said: We are a congregation, so we should pray here, and they prayed.

The fact that the scholars who were present accepted the view of Ahmad, that they did not have to go out to the mosque, so they prayed in congregation in that place, is indicative of how much they respected Ahmad and respected his opinion.

End quote from *Al-Jarh wat-Ta`dil* (1/289).

Perhaps Imam Ahmad saw an interest to be served by continuing the gathering and discussing issues pertaining to hadith narration that may be lost by going to the mosque.

Similar to this is the concession that Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin granted to students and workers,



allowing them to pray in congregation in the places where they are, without having to go to the mosque, because that serves many interests.

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

But we are facing an issue at the moment: sometimes the mosques may be close to a government department or school, but if they go out to the mosque, firstly they may make the mosque overcrowded, and perhaps the students will mess about and disperse, and not pray. Is there a concession that would allow them, in this situation to pray, in the school?

Answer: Yes, firstly to ward off their annoyance; secondly, so that no one will avoid praying in congregation; and thirdly, this is not something that happens at every prayer; rather it is something temporary and only affects one prayer.

Something similar may be said about government departments that deal with the public. If the people working in the department close the office and leave (for prayer), no one will be there to serve the people, and some of these employees will leave and go home, as actually happens – some people go out as if they are going to go and pray, but then they go home.

Regarding people in this situation, we say: you have a concession allowing you to pray in your workplace, because of what will result from that of saving time and not wasting it; and because, if their work involves dealing with the public, people will be inconvenienced if they go and pray; and because there may be some important documents, and it may be difficult for the workers to lock the door and then come back and open it, but if they leave it unlocked, the documents may be lost or stolen.

Ta`liqat Ibn `Uthaymin `ala al-Kafi li Ibn Qudamah (2/29).

The best is for those who are in charge of organizing these meetings and conferences to organize them in such a way that they will not conflict with the times of prayer in congregation in the mosque, so that there will be scheduled breaks during which people can go and pray.

And Allah knows best.