6295 - He feels khushoo’ when on his own but not in the mosque

the question

I have a bit of a problem when I pray with others. Many times, when I pray in a group, whether I am the iman or just part of the jemaah, I find I lack in 'khushoo'. This is not the case when I pray alone, though. Alone, I believe my 'khushoo' is more. Is it okay for me to opt to pray alone, even when there is a jemaah waiting or in progress?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What you have mentioned, that you feel khushoo’ when you pray on your own but not when you pray in jamaa’ah, is the temptation of the Shaytaan which we are told not to fall prey to. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and follow not the footsteps of Shaytaan (Satan). Verily, he is to you an open enemy” [al-Baqarah 2:168]

Prayer in jamaa’ah is obligatory and the Shaytaan wants to distract you from fulfilling this obligation by making you doubt about your khushoo’. He makes the idea of praying alone so that you can have more khushoo’ appear attractive, but in fact he wants to keep you away from the house of Allaah and from the jamaa’ah of your Muslim brothers who pray in the mosque, so that you will be alone. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) explained that the Shaytaan has control over those who neglect praying in congregation. According to a hasan hadeeth narrated by Abu Dawood (may Allaah have mercy on him), Abu’l-Dardaa said: “I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say, ‘There are no three people in a town or in the countryside who do not establish (congregational) prayer, but the Shaytaan has gained control over them. You must adhere to jamaa’ah, for the wolf eats the sheep

that wanders off alone.’” (Sunan Abi Dawood, 547; see also Saheeh al-Jaami’. Zaa’idah said, al-Saa’ib said, jamaa’ah refers to praying in jamaa’ah).

With regard to praying in jamaa’ah, Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (mayAllaah have mercy on him) said:

Allaah has given prayer in jamaa’ah a high status in His Book, and His Messenger Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) also gave it a high status. Allaah commanded us to establish regular prayer, and to do prayer in congregation. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawaat (the prayers) especially the middle Salaat (i.e. the best prayer - ‘Asr). And stand before Allaah with obedience [and do not speak to others during the Salaat (prayers)]

[al-Baqarah 2:238]

What indicates that it obligatory to pray in jamaa’ah is the aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

“And perform As-Salaat (Iqaamat-as-Salaat), and give Zakaat, and bow down (or submit yourselves with obedience to Allâh) along with Ar-Raaki‘oon [Those who bow down or submit themselves with obedience to Allaah].”

[al-Baqarah 2:43]

At the beginning of the aayah, Allaah commands us to perform prayer, then He commands us to join other worshippers in their prayer, by saying (interpretation of the meaning), “bow down … along with Ar-Raaki‘oon [Those who bow down …].”

Allaah has enjoined us to do the prayer in congregation (jamaa’ah) with others even at times of war, so how about at times of peace? Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“When you (O Messenger Muhammad) are among them, and lead them in As-Salaat (the prayer), let one party of them stand up [in Salaat (prayer)] with you taking their arms with them; when

they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear and let the other party come up which have not yet prayed, and let them pray with you taking all the precautions and bearing arms…" [al-Nisaa' 4:102]

If anyone were to be permitted to not pray in jamaa'ah, it would be those who are engaged in combat.

It was narrated in al-Saheehayn from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I was thinking of ordering the prayer to be called and the iqaamah to be given, then I would appoint a man to lead the people in prayer, whilst I went out with some men carrying bundles of wood, to go to people who did not attend the prayer and burn their houses down around them." (Saheeh al-Bukhaari, 2/852, no. 2288; Muslim, 1/451, no. 651). In Saheeh Muslim (1/453, no. 654) it is narrated that 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "Whoever would like to meet Allaah tomorrow as a Muslim, let him uphold these five prayers whenever the call to prayer is given. Allaah has prescribed for you the ways of guidance, and these prayers are among the ways of guidance. If you pray in your houses like this man who stays behind in his house, you have abandoned the Sunnah of your Prophet, and if you abandon the Sunnah of your Prophet, you will go astray. There is no man who purifies himself and does it well, then sets out for one of these mosques, but for every step he takes, Allaah will write down for him one hasanah (good deed) and raise his status by one degree, and wipe out for him one sayi'ah (bad deed). There was a time when no one stayed away from (the prayers) but the hypocrites who were known for their hypocrisy. A man would come supported by others on each side, so that he could stand in the rows (of worshippers)…"

In Saheeh Muslim (1/452) it is narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that a blind man said, "O Messenger of Allaah, I do not have anyone to guide me to the mosque. Can I have a dispensation to pray in my house?" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Can you hear the call to prayer?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Then answer it."

Praying regularly in congregation brings a number of benefits, such as getting to know one another, cooperating in righteousness and piety, advising one another with the truth and to follow

it patiently, teaching the ignorant, manifesting the symbols of Islam, annoying the hypocrites, keeping away from their path, knowing who keeps away from praying in jamaa'ah, advising him and teaching him if it is because of laziness on his part or he has no excuse, visiting him if he is sick, and other benefits. Keeping away from praying in jamaa'ah may lead – Allaah forbid – to giving up prayer altogether. It is well known that not praying is kufr and misguidance which puts a person beyond the pale of Islam, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "All that stands between a man and kufr and shirk is his giving up prayer." (Narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh, 1/88, no. 82, from Jaabir ibn 'Abd-Allaah (may Allaah be pleased with him)).

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The covenant that separates us from them is salaah; whoever neglects it is a kaafir." (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, who said it is a saheeh hasan hadeeth. Saheeh Ibn Hibbaan, 4/305, no. 1454).

Know, my brother, that Allaah cannot enjoin a ruling upon His slaves and then goodness is to be found in something else. Allaah has enjoined prayer in jamaa'ah so this is what has to be done and we have to strive to feel khushoo' in it. But it may so happen that sometimes a person feels more khushoo' when he prays alone than when he prays in the mosque, as many worshippers feel during qiyaam al-layl, when they weep in their own houses in a way that they do not do in the mosque. This does not mean that they should not pray in the mosque. What is required of us is that we should strive to implement the means of feeling khushoo' when we pray in jamaa'ah and in other prayers, and we should do all the prayers as commanded by Allaah. For more information on the means of attaining khushoo' in prayer, see ""33 ways of developing Khushoo' in Prayer" ",

in the Books section of this web-site.

And Allaah knows best, and He is the Guide to the best Way. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.