

RECITING SURAH AL-FATIHAH BEHIND THE IMAM IN SALAAH

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SHAYKHUL HADITH JAMIA QASMIYYAH

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Foreword

All praises are due to Allah, Lord of the Universe, and Salutations be upon Rasulullah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Allah Ta'ala has preserved this *Deen* from all discrepancies and will continue to do so throughout time by means of Scholars. Many trials will come and the 'Ulama will provide solutions for, and act against these trials. One great trial today is an ideology and effort which can remove the general masses from the following of authentic Scholarship, whereas this is a command of Allah Ta'ala and something passed down from the first generation of Muslims up until today. Allah Ta'ala says, "O you who believe obey Allah, his Messenger and those of authority amongst you." *Sura Nisaa, verse 59*. The *Mufasssireen* have mentioned that this refers to the Scholars (*Tafseer Tabari*). The *Sahaabah* followed Rasulullah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam), the *Taabi'een* followed the *Sahaabah*, and the *Tab' Taabi'een* followed the *Taabi'een*. This chain of Knowledge remained unbroken till today. The 'Ulama have prescribed the complete way of following this *Deen* after studious and in-depth research of the sources of *Shariah*, namely the Qur'aan, *Hadith*, *Ijmaa'* and *Qiyas*. This is not something any layman can, is capable of, or obliged to do. The 'Ulama also understood the *Deen* better, as they were closer to the era of Rasulullah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Every layman cannot involve himself in the deep and intricate study of all the sciences of *Deen*, which is why Allah Ta'ala has mentioned in *Sura Tawba, Ayah 122* that only a group may take up this task.

We, at Darul Uloom New York, in order to keep this pristine *Deen* in its original form, under the supervision of Shaykh Arshad Madani; Teacher of *Hadith* in the great seminary of India, Darul Uloom Deoband and the President of Jamiatul Ulama, have taken up the task of translating a number of booklets. These booklets were given to us by the *Shaykh* and translated by the students of Darul Uloom New York. We hope that this will prove beneficial for the general masses and remove the confusion that has been created.

We are of the opinion that the *Ablus Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah* are on the correct path; and they comprise of those who follow Authentic Scholarship, which include the four Imams of Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), namely Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (Rahimahumullah). Although they may differ in many cases, all are correct in their effort to understand, implement, and present *Deen*.

The original articles discuss in detail, proofs of specific *Masaa'il* that are generally followed by the *Hanafi* School of Thought. This work is aimed towards educating the masses of the authenticity of their position and not to create friction, strife, and debates. As we are human, we are prone to err, therefore if anyone were to point out our mistakes, we would be ever grateful. *Inshaa-Allah* in the future we plan to reprint them omitting those errors. May Allah Ta'ala accept this effort and grant us all the true understanding of *Deen*. *Aameen*.

Translation Committee
Darul Uloom New York

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

*All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Universe, and Peace and Salutations be upon
Rasulullah (Sallallahu alibi wasallam)*

What is the ruling regarding congregants reciting *Surah Al-Fatihah* behind the *Imam*? Regarding this, there are two kinds of narrations found in the *Ahaadith*. In some narrations, it has been emphasized to recite *Surah Al-Fatihah* and in other narrations it has been prohibited to recite anything behind the *Imam*. Now, because of this, there have been many differences amongst the jurists of the *Ummah* in regards to reciting *Surah Al-Fatihah* or any other *Surah*. According to Imam Abu Hanifah (r), reciting behind the *Imam* in *Salaah* is not permissible, whether it be *Surah Al-Fatihah* or any other *Surah*. There are numerous narrations in the *Ahaadith* which substantiate this, which we will present shortly. According to Imam Malik (r), Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (r), Imam Sufyan Thauri (r), Abdullah bin Mubarak (r), and others, to recite behind the *Imam* is not *Wajib* (obligatory) nor is it *Mustahab* (recommended), and this is one of the narrations of Imam Shafi' (r). One of Imam Shafi's other narrations is that the *Muqtadi* will recite *Surah Al-Fatihah*. (*Al-Mughni li ibn Qudamah* 1/329)

The followers of each of the Four *Imams* (four juristic schools of thought) act according to the verdict of their *Imam*. None of them criticizes the others in any way. Today unfortunately, many who label themselves as upholders of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* present the interpreted or abrogated *Ahadith* to the general *Muslims*, causing confusion and doubt in their *Salaah*. They severely criticize the *Imams*, especially Imam Abu Hanifah (r) and his followers. Sometimes they criticize the respected companions of Rasulullah (Sallallahu alibi wasallam). This is why we have decided to present this topic to the public with correct, authentic, and reliable sources. First, we will present narrations of three Sahabah (RA) proving the authenticity of recitation of *Surah Al-Fatihah* behind the *Imam*. Thereafter, we will discuss how they were abrogated, and then we will present ten narrations of the Sahabah relating to the impermissibility of reciting behind the *Imam*. The ruling of reciting *Surah Al-Fatihah* behind the *Imam* was relevant only before

the revelation of verse number 204 in *Surah Al-A'raaf*. After that verse was revealed, the ruling of reciting behind the *Imam* was abrogated.¹

The narrations of the three Companions related to the recitation of *Surah al-Fatihah*

عن ابي هريرة رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال من صلى صلوة لم يقرأ فيها بأمر القرآن فهي خداج ثلاثا غير تمام فقليل لابي هريرة انا نكون احيانا وراء الامام فقال اقرأ بها في نفسك (رواه مسلم ، ترمذى)

- 1) Abu Hurairah (RA) narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) said: “The one who performed *Salaah* and did not recite *Surah Al-Fatihah* therein then it (*Salaah*) is incomplete (Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) said this three times).” It was said to Abu Hurairah “What if we are behind the *Imam* (meaning as a *Muqtadi*)?” He replied: “Recite it in your mind.” (*Muslim* 1/169, *Tirmizi* 1/71)

عن ابي سعيد الخدرى رضى الله عنه قال أمرنا ان نقرأ بفاتحة الكتاب وما تيسر (رواه ابو داؤد)

- 2) Abu Sa'eed al Khudri (RA) said, “We were ordered by Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) to recite *Surah Al-Fatihah* and whatever that is easy.” (*Abu-Dawud* 1/118, page: 1818)

عن عبادة بن الصامت رضى الله عنه قال صلى بنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم صلوة الفجر فتعابت عليه القراءة فلما سلم قال اتقروا خلفي؟ قلنا نعم يا رسول الله قال فلا تفعلوا الا بفاتحة الكتاب فانه لا صلوة لمن لم يقرأ بها (الطحاوى)

- 3) ‘Ubaadah bin Saamit (RA) relates, “Rasullulah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) prayed *Fajr (Salaah)* with us and reciting became difficult for him, so when he completed the *Salaam*, he asked, ‘Do you recite behind me?’ We replied: ‘Yes, O Rasulullah’ Then he said, ‘Don’t recite except the *Fatihah* of the book (Quran), because there is no *Salaah* for the one who does not recite it.” (*Tabaawi* 1/128)

¹ For the purpose of clarification, we state again that this is the view of the *Hanafi* school of thought which will be substantiated with proofs. Others hold the opposite view using proofs as well. We are not presenting this to debate, disregard, disrespect or negate other opinions but merely to establish ours.

Prohibition of the *Muqtadi* reciting behind the *Imam*.

Quran:

قال الله تعالى: واذا قرئ القرآن فاستمعوا له و انصتوا لعلكم ترحمون (٢٠٤) (سورة الاعراف)

Allah T'aala says, “And when the Quran is recited, listen attentively to it and be silent, so that you may receive mercy. (*Surah Al-A'raaf* Verse: 204)

Before this verse was revealed, the congregants used to recite behind the *Imam*. After its revelation, the command of reciting behind the *Imam* was abrogated. Now, only the *Imam* and the person who prays individually can recite while praying. We present to the readers numerous *Ahaadith* on the prohibition of reciting behind the *Imam*.

The narrations of Ten Companions concerning the prohibition of reading *Surah Al-Al-Fatihah* behind the *Imam*.

عن ابى موسى الاشعري رضى الله عنه (في حديث طويل) ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خطبنا فبين لنا سنننا و علمنا صلاتنا فقال اذا صليتم فاقيموا صفوفكم ثم ليؤمكم احدكم فاذا كبر فكبروا وفي رواية واذا قرأ فانصتوا (مسلم)

1) Abu Musa al Ash'ari (RA) narrates (in a lengthy hadith), “Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) advised us, and he clarified for us our *Sunnats* and he taught us our *Salaah*, then he said ‘When you perform *Salaah*, establish your rows, then one of you should lead the others, so then when (the *Imam*) makes *Takebeer*, then make *Takebeer*’. In another narration, Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) said ‘and when he (the *Imam*) recites, remain silent.’” (*Muslim* 1/173 page: 303-404, *Ibn Majah*/61 page: 746)

عن عبد الله بن مسعود رضى الله عنه قال كنا نقرأ خلف النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال خلطتم عليّ القرآن (الطحاوى)

2) Abdullah ibn Masu'd (RA) relates, “We used to recite behind Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) then he said “You are making the Quran

confusing to me.” (*Tabaawi* 1/128, 281, *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah* 3/276, 274)

عن ابي هريرة رضى الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انما جعل الامام ليؤتمّ به فاذا قرأ فانصتوا (الطحاوى)

3) Abu Hurairah (RA) relates, “Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) said ‘Indeed the *Imam* has been appointed to be followed, so when he recites, listen carefully.’” (*Tabaawi* 1/128 page 1257)

عن ابي هريرة رضى الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انما جعل الامام ليؤتمّ به فاذا كبر فكبروا واذا قرأ فانصتوا (ابن ماجه دار قطني, سنن الكبرى للنسائي)

Abu Hurairah (RA) narrates that, Rasullulah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) said “Indeed, the *Imam* has been appointed to be followed, so when he does *Takbeer*, all of you should do *Takbeer*, and when he recites, remain silent.” (*Ibn Majah* page 61, *Dar Qutni* 1/321, *Sunan Al Kubra of Imam Nasaai* 1/320)

عن عمران بن حصين رضى الله عنه ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم صلى الظهر فلما سلّم قال هل قرأ منكم احد "بسبح اسم ربك الاعلى" فقال رجل من القوم انا! فقال قد علمت ان بعضكم خالجنيتها (مصنف ابن ابي شيبة ، سنن الكبرى للنسائي ، مسلم)

4) Imran bin Husain (RA) relates, “Rasullulah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) lead *Zuhr Salaah*. When he gave *Salaam*, he said, ‘Did anyone amongst you recite *Surah AL-A’la*’, so one man amongst the people said ‘I did’, then Rasullulah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) replied ‘Indeed I have noticed that some of you have confused me during my recitation.’” (This is the silent *Zuhr Salaah* in which the *Muqtadi* is prevented from reciting).

(*Musannaf ibn Abi Shaibah* 1/376, 3/273, page: 3797, *Sunanul Kubra of Nasaai* 1/318, page: 989, *Muslim* 1/172, page: 398)

عن جابر بن عبد الله عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم انه قال من صلى ركعة فلم يقرأ فيها بأم القرآن فلم يصل الا وراء الامام ونقل الترمذى موقوفا وقال هذا حديث حسن صحيح (ترمذى ، الطحاوى)

Jabir bin Abdullah (RA) narrates from Rasulullah (Sallallahu alih wasallam) that indeed he said, “Anyone who prayed and did not recite *Surah Al-Fatihah* therein, then it is as if he has not prayed, except behind the *Imaam*. (Because behind the *Imaam*, a person is not allowed to recite *Surah Al-Fatihah*), Imam Tirmizi relates that this *Hadith* is *Hasan* and *Sahih*. (*Tirmizi* 1/71 page: 313, *Tabaawi* 1/128, 1/282, page: 1265)

عن مالك بن اسماعيل عن حسن بن صالح عن ابي زبير عن جابر رضى الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال كل من كان له امام فقراءته له قراءة (اسناده صحيح مصنف ابن ابي شيبة)

Malik bin Isma'il(r) narrates from Hasan bin Saalih(r) from Abu Zubair(r) from Jabir(RA) who relates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu alih wasallam) said, “For every person who has an *Imam*, the recitation of the *Imam* is his recitation.” (*Musannaf ibn Abi Shaibah* 3/282, page: 3823)

عن انس رضى الله عنه قال صلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم اقبل بوجهه فقال اتقروا والامام يقرأ؟ فسكتوا فسألهم ثلاثا فقالوا انا لنفعل قال فلا تفعلوا (الطحاوى)

5) Anas (RA) reported that after Rasulullah (Sallallahu alih wasallam) performed *Salaah*, he turned his face and asked “Do you recite while the *Imam* is reciting?” The *Sahabah* remained silent, so he asked them thrice, then they replied, “Indeed we do,” so he said “Don't do so”. (*Tabaawi* 1/128)

عن ابي الدرداء رضى الله عنه ان رجلا قال يا رسول الله في كل الصلوة قرآن؟ قال نعم فقال رجل من الانصار وجبت، قال ابو الدرداء ارى ان الامام اذا أم القوم فقد كفاهم (الطحاوى ، سنن الكبرى للنسائي)

6) Abu Darda (RA) relates that a man asked “O Rasulullah, is there recitation of the Quran in every *Salaah*?” He replied “Yes;” so a man from the Ansaar said, “It is obligatory;” so Abu Darda (RA) said, “I think that when the *Imam* is leading the people, then his recitation suffices for them.” (*Tabaawi* 1/127, *Sunanul Kubra of Imam Nasaai* 1/320)

عن نافع ان عبد الله بن عمر كان اذا سئل "هل يقرأ احد خلف الامام؟" يقول اذا صلى احدكم خلف الامام فحسبه قراءة الامام واذا صلى وحده فليقرأ قال وكان عبد الله بن عمر لا يقرأ خلف الامام (مؤطاً امام مالك ، الطحاوى)

Naafi' (RA) narrates that "Whenever Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) would be questioned, "Can anyone recite behind the *Imam*?" He would reply, "When one of you prays behind the *Imaam*, the recitation of the *Imaam* will suffice him, and when he prays alone, he should recite." Naafi' also said, "Abdullah ibn Umar would not recite behind the *Imaam*." (*Muwatta Imam Maalik/ 29, Tahaawi 1/284*)

عن محمد بن عجلان ان عمر بن الخطاب رضى الله عنه قال ليت في فم الذى يقرأ خلف الامام حجراً (مؤطاً امام محمد)

7) Muhammad bin 'Ijlaan (RA) narrated that Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) said: "If only (I wish) a rock was (placed) in the mouth of the one who recites behind the *Imam*." (*Muwatta Imam Muhammad/ 102*)

ان سعدا رضى الله عنه قال وددت ان الذى يقرأ خلف الامام في فيه حجرة (مؤطاً امام محمد)

8) Saad bin Abi Waqqas (RA) said, "I wish a piece of charcoal were placed in the mouth of the person who recites behind the *Imam*." (*Muwatta Imam Muhammad/ 101*)

Besides the narrations of these ten companions (RA), there are six other/more narrations of the Companions from, 'Ali (RA), 'Abdullah bin Bahina (RA), 'Abdullah bin Abbas (RA), Zaid bin Aslam (RA), Shaddad bin Ilhaad (RA), and Zaid bin Thaabit (RA), regarding the prohibition of reciting behind the *Imam*. These are in Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaibah, Musnad Ahmad, Dar Qutni, Musannaf Abdur Razzaaq, Muwatta Imam Muhammad, Tahaawi, Musnad bin Abi Ya'la as well as other books.

The *Fatwa* (verdict) of the *Khulafaa* (successors)

عن موسى بن عقبة ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم و ابا بكر وعمر وعثمان كانوا ينهون عن القراءة خلف الامام (مصنف عبد الرزاق)

Musa bin ‘Uqbah (RA) narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam), Abu Bakr (RA), Umar (RA), and Uthmaan (RA) used to prohibit recitation behind the *Imam*. (*Musannaf Abdur Razzaq* 2/139, page: 281)

An Analysis of the Narrations Proving Permissibility

The narrations of Abu Musa al Ash’ari (RA), ‘Imran bin Husain (RA), Jabir (RA) and Abu Hurairah (RA) (in favor of prohibition), narrated by Sahih Muslim and Musannaf ibn Abi Shaibah, are *Sahih* narrations. Other narrations have also supported them.

The narrations of the three Sahabah (in favor of recitation) have been abrogated. Now, putting forward both types of narrations and analyzing them, one can draw a clear and evident conclusion that the *Muqtadi* will not recite behind the *Imam*, and this is the preferred view of the *Al-Ahnaaf*.

(1) In those narrations which mention reciting *Surah Faatihah* behind the *Imam*, it is not clearly narrated directly from Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) that one should recite *Surah Al-Fatihah* behind the *Imam*, but recitation is mentioned in general. A possible corroboration of these seemingly contradicting narrations can be that when a person is performing *Salaah* alone, or he is an *Imam*, then it is obligatory for him to recite, but if he is a *Muqtadi*, he is not commanded to recite.

(2) After a thorough analysis of both narrations, we come to know that the narrations of reciting behind the *Imam* were before the revelation of the verse of *Surah Al-A'raaf*. Before the revelation of the verse it was permissible to speak, give *salaam* and for the *Muqtadi* to recite in *Salaah*. The second type of narrations were after the revelation of the verse, and because of this the *Muqtadi* has been prohibited from giving or responding to *salaam*, talking, or reciting. In this way, the correct interpretation of both types of narrations are corroborated and both are accepted without contradiction. Otherwise, it

would have been necessary for us to say that one of the two types of narrations is a false, whilst the other type is correct. However, this is not the case.

The result we achieve from this is that the verse of the Quran and the *Ahadith* of Rasulullah (Sallallahu alihi wasallam) both establish the command to not recite behind the *Imam*. Therefore, the Muslims should not be in any doubt or confusion because of the *Ghair- Muqallideen* or any others who present the narrations which have already been abrogated.

May Allah *Ta'ala* grant us the ability to understand and implement to the best of our abilities. *Ameen*.