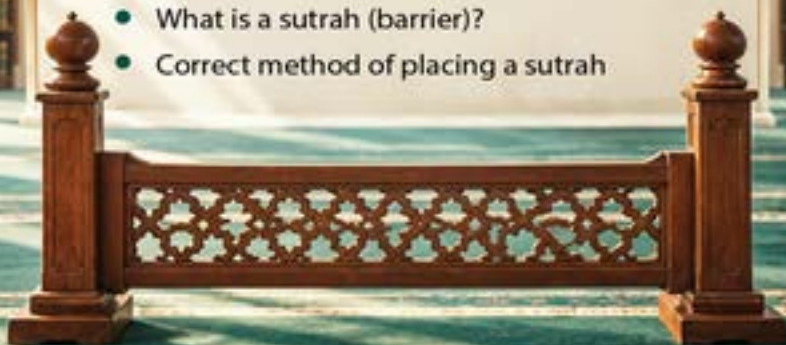




Rulings on Passing in Front of
a Person Offering

Salah

- Why is Passing Before a Person Offering Salah Forbidden?
- What is the Ruling on Facing Towards a Person Offering Salah?
- What is a sutrah (barrier)?
- Correct method of placing a sutrah



نمازی کے آگے سے گزرنے کے مسائل

Rulings on Passing in Front of a Person Offering Salah

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اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ وَالصَّلٰوةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلٰى خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّنَ
اَمَّا بَعْدُ فَاَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

Rulings on Passing in Front of a Person Offering Salah

Prayer of 'Attar

O Allah Almighty! Whoever reads or listens to the 28-page booklet, *Rulings on Passing in Front of a Person Offering Salah*, make him and his future generations steadfast in salah and true devotees of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and forgive them all without account, along with their parents.

اٰمِيْنُ بِجَاهِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّنَ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم

Virtue of Reciting Ṣalāt

The Final Prophet ﷺ said to a person who praised Allah Almighty and recited ṣalāt after salah: 'Supplicate! It will be accepted. Ask! It will be granted.'¹

صَلُّوْا عَلٰى الْحَبِيْبِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ

Destroyed the Building of Good Deeds

Sayyiduna Abū al-Dardā' رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ, a Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, said after completing his salah to a person who had passed in front of him during it: 'What made you do this?' The person asked: 'What did I do?' (Perhaps he did not

¹ Sunan al-Nasa'i, p. 220, Hadith: 1281

know that passing in front of a person offering salah is a sin.) Sayyiduna Abū al-Dardā' رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: 'You passed in front of your brother's salah, and you have demolished the building of your one or two years of deeds.'¹

Dear Islamic brothers! Passing in front of a person offering salah without a *sutrah* (an object serving as a barrier) is a severe sin, except in a few cases. Unfortunately, nowadays extreme carelessness is observed in this matter. Even some people who appear to have understanding fall into this sin. After the congregational salah finishes, some unwise individuals hurry to go to the back. Due to this, they leave the important opportunity of supplicating with the congregation and having prayers accepted, and they pass recklessly in front of those who are completing the rest of their salah.

Some people look sideways to convince themselves that they are not passing in front, whereas repeatedly a situation is created where they are indeed passing in front of the person offering salah. To understand what a terrible sin passing in front of a person offering salah is, you can gauge this from these blessed sayings of the Beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ:

Five Blessed Sayings of the Final Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ Regarding Passing in Front of a Person Offering Salah

1. If the one passing in front of a person offering salah knew the extent of the sin upon him, standing for forty (years) would be better for him than passing in front.²
2. It is better for a man to become ashes and be blown away by the wind than to intentionally pass in front of a person offering salah.³

¹ Tareekh Ibn 'Asakir, vol. 35, p. 355

² Sahiwal-Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 189, Hadith: 510

³ Al-Tamheed, vol. 8, p. 478

3. If anyone knew what lies in coming across his brother during salah, he would consider standing for 100 years better than taking a single step. ¹
4. Indeed, whoever intentionally passes in front of someone offering salah will wish on the Day of Resurrection that he had been a dried-up tree. ²
5. If the one passing in front of a person offering salah knew the extent of the sin upon him, he would consider it better for his thigh to break than to pass in front. ³

O Allah Almighty! Keep us forever safe from passing in front of a person offering salah and from every kind of sin.

اٰمِيْنُ بِجَاهِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم

صَلُّوْا عَلَيَّ الْحَبِيْبِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ

The One Passing in Front of a Person Offering Salah is a Devil

Read also the statements of the Noble Companions رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ and others regarding passing in front of a person offering salah. The second Caliph of the Muslims, Sayyiduna ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ stated: 'Do not let anyone pass in front of you during salah, because a devil is with him.' ⁴

The Companion of the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم, Sayyiduna Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ states that the Merciful Prophet صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم commanded that when any of you offers salah facing something that acts as a barrier (sutrah) to protect him from people passing, and someone wishes to pass in front of him, he should stop him. If

¹ Sunan Ibn Majah, vol. 1, p. 506, Hadith: 946

² Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabir, vol. 14, p. 106, Hadith: 14724

³ Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, vol. 2, p. 537, Hadith: 2928

⁴ Musannaf ‘Abd al-Razzaq, vol. 2, p. 14, Hadith: 2348

he does not stop, he should fight him, because he is a devil. ¹

The commentator of *Ṣaḥīḥ-Bukhārī*, ‘Allāmah Badr al-Dīn ‘Aynī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes in the explanation of this Hadith:

The meaning of this Hadith is that the devil urges this person to pass in front of the person offering salah. It is also possible that the person passing is himself called a devil here, because devils exist among both jinn and humans, and calling any rebellious and disobedient human a devil is common.²

Imam Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states regarding the part of the Hadith, "he should stop him", that this is commendable. To move the person passing away or to inform him that one is praying, one should recite tasbih or make a gesture. One must never fight during salah, as there is a fear of breaking the salah. What is stated in the Hadith, "If the person passing in front does not stop, he should fight him", is for emphasis (it does not at all mean to actually fight him). ³

If there is no sutrah in front of the person offering salah and someone wants to pass, or if there is a sutrah but the person wants to pass between the person offering salah and the sutrah, permission is granted to the person offering salah to stop him from passing. He may do this either by saying *tasbīḥ* (that is, سُبْحَانَ اللهِ) or by reciting aloud (that is, one or two words are permitted), or by gesturing with the hand, head, or eyes. More than this is not permitted, such as grabbing and pulling the clothing or hitting. Rather, if it becomes a major action (*‘amal kathīr*), the salah will break.⁴ Doing both tasbih and gesturing without need is disliked. ⁵

Mufti Aḥmad Yār Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states:

¹ Sahi al-Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 189, Hadith: 509

² 'Umdat al-Qari, vol. 3, p. 590, under Hadith: 509

³ Sharh Muslim, vol. 4, p. 223; Nuzhat al-Qari, vol. 2, p. 195

⁴ Radd al-Muhtar, vol. 2, p. 486

⁵ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 617

A person who disrupts religious activities is a major wrongdoer. Therefore, those who make noise or play radio songs near mosques should take a lesson from this, that the person passing in front of a person offering salah is a wrongdoer because he distracts the person offering salah.¹

Sinking into the Earth is Better, But...

The *tābiʿī*, Sayyiduna Kaʿb al-Aḥbār رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states: 'If the person passing in front of a person offering salah knew how much sin lay in it, he would consider sinking into the earth better than passing.'²

Mufti Aḥmad Yār Khān Naʿīmī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ mentions:

All these warnings are to stop people from passing in front of a person offering salah. If someone had full awareness of the punishment for passing in front, every person would wish for the earth to split open and to be swallowed into it rather than pass in front of the one offering salah. Here, the situation meant is only the one that is impermissible. Those situations in which Islamic law allows passing are excluded from this.³

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

Those Leaving Immediately After the Congregational Salah Should Reflect

Dear Islamic brothers! It is often witnessed in mosques that, as soon as the congregational salah is concluded, a large number of worshippers stand up to leave for the back. Due to no pathway or a narrow pathway, those completing the rest of their salah must feel distressed. Forget achieving humility and devotion in salah, even completing the salah must become difficult. Frequently, in such crowded

¹ Mirat al-Manajih, vol. 2, p. 5

² Muwatta Imam Malik, vol. 1, p. 153, Hadith: 371

³ Mirat al-Manajih, vol. 2, p. 10

environments, those offering salah get pushed. Therefore, it is humbly requested to those going to the back that they show patience and restraint, complete the remainder of their salah in their spot, and then go to the back. It is hoped that by that time, space to go to the back will also be created. If going to the back is necessary, be mindful of those completing their salah and pass in front of a sutrah.

Why is Passing Before a Person Offering Salah Forbidden?

‘Allāmah ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states:

Passing before a person offering salah is *makrūh taḥrīmī* (i.e. impermissible and a sin) solely because the person passing acts as an obstacle between the worshipper and his objective. When he passes in front of the worshipper, it is as though he becomes the focal point of devotion, and distracts the worshipper. Due to these reasons, passing in front of a person offering salah is impermissible and a sin.¹

Imam Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes, citing Islamic scholars: “The wisdom behind placing a sutrah is to prevent one's gaze from looking beyond it and to prevent anyone from passing close to oneself.”²

A Servant Meets his Lord in Salah

The eminent *tābi‘ī* saint, Sayyiduna Abū al-‘Āliyah رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ, stated: "Indeed, when a person offers salah, an angel is present before him who records what the worshipper recites, and he does not like for anything to pass in front of him."

This points towards the reason for the dislike of passing before a person offering salah, which is the proximity of the angels to him. Therefore, the person passing in front interferes between the worshipper and the angels appointed over him.³

¹ Kashf al-Mushkil min Hadith al-Sahihayn, vol. 2, p. 158

² Sharh Muslim li al-Nawawī, vol. 4, p. 216

³ Sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhi, vol. 3, p. 280, under Hadith 336, slightly adapted

Why Do People Pass Before a Person Offering Salah?

Regarding those fortunate Muslims who have a religious environment in their homes, it would perhaps not be an exaggeration to say that they prevent even small children from passing in front of a person offering salah. This is a good practice so that the child learns from a young age that one should not pass in front of a person praying. It is possible that some people might not know this religious ruling in their youth or even old age—that "passing in front of a person offering salah is a sin"—and thus fall into this sin. Some people, despite knowing the ruling, exhibit negligence and carelessness by passing before people offering salah, whilst others fall into this sin due to haste.

On Friday, Eid, during Ramadan al-Karim, or in mosques where there is a large number of worshippers, people—Allah forbid—pass in front of not just one, but multiple worshippers, making themselves guilty of countless sins. If you have ever committed this sin, repent to Allah Almighty right now before reading further. If you do not remember whether you have ever passed in front of a person offering salah or not, there is still no harm in saying: "O Allah Almighty! If I have ever knowingly committed the sin of passing in front of a person offering salah, I repent from it, and indeed from all my sins."

Sunnah for the Person Offering Salah

We should avoid passing in front of a person offering salah. If it is necessary to pass, arrange a sutrah (in some mosques, sutrahs are provided, which is a good practice). Otherwise, if there is no other way out, wait for a short while. Due to acting upon this Islamic ruling, through the mercy of Allah Almighty, you will receive a reward even for waiting. The Shariah has encouraged the person offering salah to place a sutrah in front of himself before beginning his salah so that the risk of people passing is minimised. Therefore, the worshipper should place a sutrah in front of himself before offering salah. He should also avoid praying in areas where people come and go; instead, he should pray behind a pillar or sutrah so that no one passes

in front of him even unintentionally.

Islamic scholars have stated that the reason both the person praying in areas where people come and go and the person passing before him are sinful is either the worshipper is negligent in stopping the passer-by, or he performs salah in a path designated for people's coming and going.¹

If a person offering salah prays behind a pillar or sutrah with a good intention, he will attain the "reward of acting upon an Islamic ruling."² However, if someone prays on a pathway or without a sutrah, the person passing is still not permitted to pass in front of him without a sutrah.

What Is the Ruling on Facing Towards a Person Offering Salah?

To leave quickly after the congregation or to avoid passing in front of a worshipper, some people stand facing the person offering salah so that they can leave as soon as he turns for salām. Standing facing a person offering salah in this manner is also a sin.³

The way to avoid this sin is to stand facing either towards the right or left side so that your face is not directed towards the worshipper, or to stand with your back towards the worshipper until he turns for salām, and then move to the back.

A Satanic Whisper

Upon reading or hearing these religious rulings, someone might say: "Brother, religion is not that strict." The answer to this satanic whisper is that religion is not "that" strict; in fact, it is not strict at all. Rather, religion is easy, but it does not allow us to do as we wish. Allah Almighty states in verse 286 of Surah al-Baqarah, *Juz' 3*:

¹ Sharh al-Zurqani 'ala al-Muwatta Imam Malik, vol. 1, p. 464, under Hadith 363

² Fatawa Razawiyyah, vol. 19, p. 658

³ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 626, part 3

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ط

Translation from Kanz al-'Irfān: Allah only burdens a life according to its capability.¹

If someone does not learn religious rulings himself, and when the Muftis and Islamic scholars كَثَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ convey correct religious rulings to us, he says that "religion is not that strict," this is a satanic whisper. Traffic rules across the world are numerous, and where the law is properly enforced, no one would even think of speaking against these rules. Why does this objection not arise then: "Brother, why so much strictness?"

On the contrary, if any sound-minded person reflects, he will conclude that adhering to these rules is for the protection of our own lives. Compliance with traffic laws is a means of physical protection, whereas compliance with religious commands is a means of physical and spiritual protection, and the one who acts upon them is successful in this world and the Hereafter.

To obtain a visa for any country, it is necessary to follow the rules of that country; otherwise, that country will not grant a visa, and if it has already been granted, it may sometimes cancel it. Thus, if one wishes to enter the Realm of 'Adn (i.e. Paradise), one must wholeheartedly accept and act upon the commands of Allah Almighty's beloved religion, Islam, and the blessed *aḥādīth* of His Beloved and Final Prophet, Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ. Entrance into Paradise can only be achieved by walking upon the path shown by Allah Almighty and His Beloved Prophet ﷺ. O Allah Almighty! Safely grant us the

¹ Al-Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 286; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

neighbourhood of Your Beloved and Final Prophet ﷺ in Jannat al-Firdaws.

امِينُ بِجَاهِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

How beautifully the Imam of Ahl al-Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Razā Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ, writes:

*Mufliso un ki gali mayn ja paro
Bagh-e-Khuld ikram ho hi ja'ay ga¹*

Explanation of Raza's Poetry: O poor, helpless, and grief-stricken people! Hold fast to the blessed cloak of benevolence of the Merciful Prophet ﷺ; through its blessings, you will certainly enter Paradise, إِنَّ شَاءَ اللَّهُ.

Is It Absolutely Forbidden to Pass Before a Person Offering Salah?

Dear Islamic brothers! It is not the case that "one cannot pass in front of a person offering salah at all." Where our beloved religion of Islam has forbidden us from passing before a person offering salah, it has also provided the correct method for passing before such a person.

Important issues regarding passing in front of a person who is performing salah are being presented in the form of questions and answers so that they may be remembered. Read them carefully. If you do not understand an issue, instead of trying to work it out yourself, go to a Mufti at your nearest Dar-ul-Ifta Ahl-e-Sunnat, ask him, and thereby act upon this Qur'anic command:

فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢٠﴾

¹ Hada'iq-e-Bakhshish, p. 41

Translation from Kanz al-ʿIrfān: "So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know."¹

Questions and Answers Regarding the Sutraḥ

Question: What is a sutraḥ (barrier)?

Answer: The literal meaning of a sutraḥ is a covering object, that is, a barrier. In Islamic Law, "a sutraḥ is that object which a person performing salah places in front of himself so that people can pass beyond it."²

Question: Did the Beloved Prophet ﷺ use a sutraḥ?

Answer: Yes, the Beloved Prophet ﷺ also used a sutraḥ. As Sayyiduna Abū Juḥayfah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ states: I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a red leather tent. I saw Sayyiduna Bilāl رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ bring out the ablution water of the Beloved Prophet ﷺ, and the people were taking it quickly. The one who got some of it would rub it (on his face and chest), and whoever did not get any would take moisture from another person's hand. Then Sayyiduna Bilāl رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ fixed a spear in the ground, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out wearing a red (striped) cloak and led two *rakʿāt* facing the spear. I saw people and animals passing from the other side of the spear.³

Question: What is the ruling on placing a sutraḥ in front of a person performing salah?

Answer: Where there is a fear of someone passing, it is recommended (*mustaḥabb*) for the person performing salah to place a sutraḥ in front of himself. It is stated in the famous book of Hanafi jurisprudence, *Tanwīr al-Abṣār*: "When the imam and

¹ Al-Quran, Surah Al-Naḥl, verse 43; translation from Kanz al-ʿIrfān

² Mir'at-ul-Manajeeh, vol. 2, p. 1

³ Muslim, p. 203, Hadith 1120

one performing salah alone offer salah in a desert or in a place where there is a fear of people passing, it is recommended that they fix a sutrah." ¹

The Final Prophet of Allah Almighty ﷺ said: "Each one of you should ensure that he places a sutrah in his salah, even if it is only an arrow." ² In another Hadith: "When any of you offers salah, he should offer salah having placed a sutrah in front of himself." ³

Question: How is it to not place a sutrah where a person performing salah thinks someone will pass in front?

Answer: Wherever there is a chance of someone passing, not placing a sutrah is *makrūh tanzīhī* (disliked). ⁴

Question: If there is no fear of [someone] passing from the front, is it still necessary to place a sutrah?

Answer: No! When there is no risk of people coming and going, nor is there a path in front, there is no harm in not placing a sutrah; even so, it is better to place a sutrah. ⁵

Question: What benefit is gained by offering salah having placed a sutrah in front of the person performing salah?

Answer: By offering salah having placed a sutrah, Satan will not become an obstacle in the salah. The second caliph of the Muslims, Sayyiduna ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ stated: "When any of you offers salah, he should offer it having placed a sutrah; in this way, Satan will not become an obstacle between him and his salah." ⁶

¹ Tanweer-ul-Absar ma'a Durr-e-Mukhtar, vol. 2, p. 484

² Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, vol. 2, p. 524, Hadith 2879

³ Ibn Majah, vol. 1, p. 510, Hadith 954

⁴ Tanweer-ul-Absar ma'a Durr-e-Mukhtar, vol. 2, p. 484

⁵ Tanweer-ul-Absar ma'a Durr-e-Mukhtar wa Radd-ul-Muhtar, vol. 2, p. 487

⁶ Musannaf ‘Abd-ur-Razzaq, vol. 2, p. 7, Hadith 2307

The Blessed Practice of Sayyiduna ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ

The second caliph of the Muslims, Sayyiduna 'Umar b. al-Khattāb رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, used to place a spear in front of himself as a sutrah. As it is narrated from Sayyiduna Aswad رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ: “Sometimes Sayyiduna 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ would fix a spear in the ground as a sutrah.”¹

Passing in Front of a Person Performing Salah Without a Sutrah

Question: How is it to pass in front of a person performing salah without a sutrah?

Answer: If the person performing salah is offering salah in a house or a small mosque, it is not permissible to pass in front without a sutrah from the feet of the person performing salah up to the qiblah wall. If he is offering salah in a desert or a large mosque (such as Masjid al-Aqsa, Masjid al-Nabawī, and Masjid al-Ḥarām), it is impermissible to pass without a sutrah from the feet of the person performing salah up to the *mawḍi‘ al-sujūd* (its explanation is present in the next question).²

Apart from the two Noble Mosques, that is, the Masjid al-Ḥarām and Masjid al-Nabawī, nowadays the general mosques that are in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, etc., are in the ruling of a small mosque, even though people use the term large mosque regarding some mosques; however, they are not included in a large mosque (with respect to the issue of passing in front of a person performing salah).

Question: What is meant by *mawḍi‘ al-sujūd*?

Answer: When the gaze is fixed on the place of prostration in the standing position, all the space encompassed by the gaze is *mawḍi‘ al-sujūd*. According to the understanding of Imam Aḥmad Razā Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ, this forms an area of approximately three yards in front of the person performing salah. Within that

¹ Musannaf 'Abd-ur-Razzaq, vol. 2, p. 6, Hadith 2319

² Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 615, part 3

area, it is not permissible at all to pass in front of the person performing salah without a sutrah. Outside that area, it is permitted to pass in a desert and large mosques; however, in a house and a small mosque, one cannot pass from the front up to the qiblah wall.¹

Question: How is it to pass in front of a person performing salah to complete a row in congregation?

Answer: Completing the row is necessary (*wājib*). Therefore, if the row cannot be completed without passing in front of a person performing salah, it is necessary to complete the row by passing in front of the person performing salah.²

At the time of congregation, despite space being vacant in the front row, people start salah in the rear row; the ruling in this is also that one should complete the row by passing in front of him. In this, the fault belongs to the person who started salah in such a place.³

The summary of the statement of Imam Aḥmad Razā Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ in simple words is that standing together in the rows and eliminating gaps is of utmost importance, and leaving gaps is forbidden and impermissible, to the extent that permission has been given to pass in front of a person performing salah to complete a row. Although it has been strictly forbidden in the noble *aḥādīth* to pass in front of a person performing salah, completing the row is such an important duty that permission to pass in front of the person performing salah has been given for it, because completing the rows is more important and essential than that, and leaving the row empty is a matter of severe deficiency.⁴

Which Things Can Become a Sutrah and Which Cannot?

¹ Malfuzat-e-A'la Hazrat, p. 133

² Durr-e-Mukhtar, vol. 2, p. 483

³ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 617, part 4

⁴ Fatawa Razawiyyah, vol. 7, pp. 46–49

Question: What should a sutrah be like?

Answer: Any object that is used as a sutrah must be at least one arm's length (that is, one and a half feet) and equal to one finger in thickness (or width).¹

An object of less size than the stated amount cannot become a sutrah, because that which is less than this will not be visible to someone looking from a distance. Therefore, the purpose (that is, not passing in front of the person performing salah) will not be achieved.²

Question: If one of the two conditions mentioned regarding a sutrah is found and one is not, can it become a sutrah? For example, if a stick or a piece of wood thinner than a finger is fixed in the ground in front of a person performing salah, the length of which is equal to one hand or more, is it sufficient for a sutrah?

Answer: No! Such a stick or piece of wood is not sufficient for a sutrah, and it is also not permissible to pass in front of the person performing salah behind the barrier of such a stick or piece of wood. Because both conditions mentioned for a sutrah must be found: at least one and a half feet in length and equal to one finger in thickness or width.

Question: Glass is fitted for doors or partitions inside some mosques, which is thinner than one finger. In such a situation, if a person is offering salah behind the glass, will it be permissible for anyone to pass from the other side of this glass?

Answer: First, it should be kept in mind that whatever is used as a sutrah must be at least one and a half feet long, and its thickness or width must be at least equal to one finger. Now, if we consider the glass panels installed in mosques, although their thickness is not equal to one finger, their width is many times greater than one finger, and the primary purpose of a sutrah is achieved through them. Therefore, it is permissible to pass in front of a person offering his salah behind such a glass

¹ Fatawa Razawiyyah, vol. 22, p. 479

² Hidayah, vol. 1, p. 63

panel, and the one passing will not be a sinner. Mentioning the thickness of the sutrah here is, in fact, intended to describe its width.

Question: If a person is offering his salah behind a curtain, will it be permissible to pass on the other side of the curtain?

Answer: Yes! A curtain that hangs down to the ground is sufficient for a sutrah. It is permissible to pass in front of a person offering his salah behind it because, although its thickness is not equal to a finger, its width is many times greater than a finger, and the primary purpose of a sutrah is achieved through it. Therefore, the one passing in front of it will not be a sinner.¹

Question: Some worshippers place a handbag or school bag in front of themselves as a sutrah whilst travelling and offer their salah. Will it be permissible to pass in front of them?

Answer: A bag whose length is one and a half feet or more can be made into a sutrah. However, a bag whose length is less than one arm's length cannot be used as a sutrah, nor is it permissible to place it and pass in front of a person offering his salah.

Question: In some mosques, there is a frame-like sutrah which has wood on both sides and wood on top. Is such a sutrah considered valid in Islamic Law, given that the middle portion is hollow?

Answer: Such a sutrah is valid. It must be at least one and a half feet in length and at least equal to the breadth of one finger in thickness (or width).

Question: If a person is sitting on one side of a charpoy, can that same charpoy be made into a sutrah?

Answer: If the portion of the charpoy facing the person offering his salah is one arm-span high, it can be made into a sutrah in this situation, even if someone is

¹ Durr-ul-Mukhtar ma' Radd-ul-Muhtar, vol. 2, p. 483

sitting or sleeping on it, provided their face is not turned towards the person offering salah. This is because intentionally offering salah facing someone's face is prohibitively disliked (makrūh taḥrīmī) and a sinful act. However, regarding avoiding offering salah behind a sleeping person, Imam Aḥmad Razā Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states:

If a person is sitting or lying on a charpoy with his back turned towards him (i.e. the person offering salah), there is no harm in spreading the salah mat behind him and offering salah. Similarly, if he is sleeping with his back turned towards that side, there is still no issue. However, avoiding offering salah behind a sleeping person is appropriate for two reasons: First, who knows whether he might turn over during his salah and face towards him (i.e. the one offering salah). Second, it is possible that something might occur from him while asleep that causes fear of laughter in his salah. ¹

Question: Can a tree, animal, or human being be made into a sutrah?

Answer: Yes, a tree, animal, human being, etc., can be made into a sutrah. ² However, a person should only be made into a sutrah when his back is turned towards the worshipper, as facing towards the person offering his salah is forbidden. ³

Question: Is it correct to use a pillow as a sutrah? Some people place a pillow in front of themselves when offering salah on a bed. In such a situation, is it permissible to pass in front of the worshipper behind the cover of that pillow?

Answer: Yes, a pillow can be used as a sutrah because the length of a pillow is generally one and a half feet or more. Therefore, if the pillow is placed upright, its height will be equal to or greater than one and a half feet, making it sufficient as a sutrah, and passing in front of the worshipper with it acting as a barrier will be

¹ Fatawa Razawiyyah, vol. 5, p. 346

² Ghunyah-tul-Mutamalli, p. 367

³ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 616, part: 3

permissible. However, if the pillow is laid flat or placed horizontally along its width, its height will remain less than one and a half feet, meaning the required length for a sutrah will not be met, and passing in front of it will not be permissible.

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

Miscellaneous Rulings Regarding Placing a Sutrah

Question: What is the correct method of placing a sutrah in front of a person offering salah?

Answer: The Sunnah is that the distance between the worshipper and the sutrah should be three hand-spans at most. The sutrah should not be directly aligned with the nose, but rather aligned with the right or left eyebrow, and aligning it with the right eyebrow is superior. ¹

Where to Place the Sutrah

The Companion of the Prophet, Sayyiduna Miqdād رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ states: "I did not see the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ offer salah towards a piece of wood, a pillar, or a tree except that he placed it in front of his right or left eyebrow and did not stand directly in front of it." ²

Explanation of Hadith: The sutrah was not kept directly aligned with the nose so as to avoid resembling idol worshippers, as they place idols directly in front of themselves during worship. The jurists state that the sutrah should not be directly in front of the worshipper, but rather slightly shifted to the right or left; this ruling is derived from this Hadith. ³

¹ Durr-ul-Mukhtar, vol. 2, p. 485

² Abu Dawood, vol. 1, p. 273, Hadith: 693

³ Mir'at-ul-Manajih, vol. 2, p. 8

Question: If a person offering his salah is standing on an elevated place, can one pass in front of him?

Answer: If the person offering his salah is at such a height that no part of the body of the person passing comes directly in front of the worshipper, it is permissible to pass in front of him. However, if any part of the body faces him, passing is not permissible.¹

Question: It is said that the sutrah of the imam is sufficient for the followers too. What is the reality of this?

Answer: The sutrah of the imam is also a sutrah for the follower; the follower does not need a new or separate sutrah. In this case, even in a small mosque, if someone passes in front of a follower in a congregation, provided he does not pass in front of the imam, there is no harm.² However, do not pass in front of one praying behind the imam without reason.

Question: If a person is offering salah in congregation and his ablution breaks, can he pass in front of a worshipper to leave the row?

Answer: If a person's ablution breaks during salah, it is recommended for him to hold his nose, lower his head, and leave the row. Now, whether he walks across the rows or moves backwards through the rows, this will not be considered passing in front of a worshipper in this situation, because the sutrah of the imam serves as a sutrah for the followers as well.

Question: Regarding the statement that the sutrah of the imam is sufficient for the follower, when a *masbūq* stands to complete his salah, is it necessary to place a sutrah in front of him as well? He too is a follower.

¹ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 615, part: 3

² Radd-ul-Muhtar, vol. 2, p. 487

Answer: First of all, remember that a masbūq (i.e. a follower who could not join the congregation with the Imam at the beginning and missed one or more rak‘āt) is like a mudrik (i.e. a follower who joined the congregation with the imam from the start) only as long as he is performing salah with the Imam. Therefore, when starting the salah, there is no need for the masbuq to place a separate sutrah, as the imam's sutrah is sufficient for him at that time. However, when the Imam performs the salām and the masbuq stands up to perform his remaining rak‘āt, he comes under the ruling of a *munfarid* (i.e. an individual worshipper). Therefore, after the imam's salam, he is no longer subject to the imam's sutrah. Now, if there is a risk of people passing in front of him, a sutrah should be placed for him, and passing in front of him without a sutrah will not be permissible.

Question: In a funeral salah, if a space is vacant in the front row and the salah has commenced, is it permissible to pass in front of a follower in such a situation to complete the row?

Answer: Yes, it is permissible to pass in front of followers in a funeral salah to complete the row, because the deceased person, their charpoy, or bier placed in front of the imam serves as a sutrah for the imam, and "the sutrah of the imam is considered a sutrah for the followers as well."¹

Question: If the person passing has a sutrah but cannot place it upright, what should he do?

Answer: If he has a stick but cannot place it upright, it is permissible for him to pass in front of a person offering salah while holding it upright, provided he passes before it falls upon leaving his hand.²

¹ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 616, part: 3

² Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 617, part 3

Question: If a person has completed his salah and someone is offering salah directly behind him, can this person stand up and move to the right or left, or will this also be considered passing in front of a worshipper?

Answer: If a person was already sitting in front of a worshipper and he stands up and moves to the right or left, this is not forbidden. Regarding passing in front of a worshipper, Mufti Aḥmad Yār Khān Naʿīmī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states in the commentary of a noble Hadith: "From this it is known that remaining seated in front of a worshipper, or coming and sitting down, or standing up from a seated position, or walking straight ahead is not forbidden; rather, crossing sideways in front of him is forbidden, meaning moving north-to-south in our country."¹ However, after moving to the side once, he cannot pass through again because now this will be considered passing in front of a worshipper.²

Question: If two people wish to pass in front of a worshipper and there is no sutrah, what should they do?

Answer: If two people wish to pass and there is nothing to act as a barrier, one of them should stand in front of the worshipper with his back turned towards him, and the second person should pass in front of him. Then, that second person should stand behind his back with his rear turned towards the worshipper, allowing the first person to pass. After this, the second person should move back in the direction from which he came.³

Question: Is passing in front of a worshipper a minor sin or a major sin?

Answer: Passing in front of a worshipper without a barrier is prohibitively disliked (*makrūh taḥrīmī*), impermissible, and a minor sin. If a barrier is present in front of the worshipper and someone intentionally passes between the barrier and the worshipper, it is severely disliked and sinful. As the famous jurist and Hadith

¹ Mir'at al-Manajjih, vol. 2, p. 10

² Madani Mashwarah: 28 Jamada al-Akhirah 1441 AH, 22 February 2020

³ Radd al-Muhtar, vol. 2, p. 483

scholar ‘Allāmah Badr al-Dīn ‘Aynī al-Ḥanafī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes: "Whether the person offering salah is an imam, an individual praying alone (munfarid), or praying facing towards a barrier, in all three cases passing in front of the worshipper is prohibitively disliked. However, out of all these scenarios, the strictest ruling applies to the case where a person passes between the barrier and the worshipper." ¹

Islamic scholars have clarified that every prohibitively disliked act is a minor sin. However, if a person makes a habit of it, this minor sin will become a major sin, because persistence in a minor sin turns it into a major one. ² Furthermore, if one performs it thinking, "It is only a minor sin, isn't it?", then it becomes a severely major sin. Some scholars have also stated that passing in front of a worshipper without a barrier is a major sin. As Imam al-Dhahabī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ noted in his book *Kitāb al-Kabā'ir* regarding certain sins presumed to be major, he included "passing in front of a worshipper." ³

Dear Islamic brothers! The pious predecessors رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِم state regarding sins, that do not look at whether it is minor or major; rather, look at Whom is being disobeyed. Therefore, when this thought is kept in mind, by the mercy of Allah Almighty, one's mind will not incline towards any sin. Just as sometimes a single matchstick can burn down a huge storehouse, similarly, a sin that appears small on the surface can also lead one to Hell. O Allah Almighty, protect us forever from acts of Your disobedience.

اٰمِيْنُ بِجَاهِ خَاتِمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Question: If a woman is offering salah and someone wishes to pass in front of her, how should she prevent them?

Answer: If someone passes in front of a woman, she should stop them using *tasfiq* (meaning tapping the fingers of her right hand onto the back of her left hand). If a

¹ Umdat al-Qari, vol. 2, p. 98, under Hadith 76

² Radd al-Muhtar, vol. 2, p. 182; Al-Muhit al-Burhani, vol. 10, pp. 180-181

³ Kitab al-Kaba'ir li al-Dhahabi, p. 279

man performed *tasfiq* and a woman said **سَمِعْتُ اللَّهَ**, the salah would not be invalidated, but it would be contrary to the Sunnah.¹

A Woman's Voice is Also Concealed (‘Awrah)

The renowned scholar of Hanafi jurisprudence, ‘Allāmah Ḥasan b. ‘Ammār al-Miṣrī **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ**, in his book *Nūr al-Īdāh*, explains the reason why a woman should perform *tasfiq* instead of reciting *tabīḥ* when someone passes in front of a worshipper: "A woman should avoid reciting *tasbīḥ* because in doing so her voice will be raised, and a woman's voice is a potential source of temptation."²

From this, those women should take a lesson of admonition who converse freely with non-mahram men when shopping, in neighbourhood interactions, and other matters. A woman should keep her voice low even within the four walls of her home so that people outside the door or neighbours do not hear it. Observe the same caution even when raising your voice at children.

Mufti Aḥmad Yār Khān **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ** states: "Unfortunate are those women who allow non-mahrams to hear their voices through singing and playing music! Remember that even if a worshipping woman's mahram calls her or starts to pass in front of her, the woman will still only strike hand against hand, because this is the prescribed rule for her."³

Question: If a person is passing in front of a worshipper, can another person pass by using him as a barrier?

Answer: If a person wishes to pass in front of a worshipper, and another person uses him as a barrier to pass right alongside him at his exact walking speed, the first person will be sinful, while that first person serves as a barrier for the second.

¹ Radd al-Muhtar, vol. 2, pp. 486-487

² Nur al-Idah ma'a Maraḥ al-Falah, p. 188

³ Mir'at al-Manajih, vol. 2, pp. 134-135

Note: This answer is provided according to the question asked. However, if someone is intentionally passing in front of a worshipper and we know that by explaining this to the passer-by he will accept it, then in such a scenario it is necessary (*wājib*) to advise him by calling him towards righteousness. If we do not advise him, we will be sinful.

The Issue of Passing in Front of a Worshipper During Tawaf and Sa‘ī

Question: During Tawaf and Sa‘ī, is it permissible to pass in front of worshippers without a barrier in the *Maṭāf* (the area for performing Tawaf) and *Mas‘ā* (the section between Safa and Marwah where people perform Sa‘ī)?

Answer: Many people perform salah in the Maṭāf and Mas‘ā. Passing in front of a worshipper during Tawaf is permissible, as Tawaf is like salah; however, passing during Sa‘ī is not permissible. On such occasions, one should stop and wait for the worshipper to finish his salah. Yes, one may pass by using another passer-by as a barrier.

Question: A person is offering salah while the person seated in front of him in the row ahead has completed his salah. Can the seated person extend his hand forward as a barrier to allow someone to pass in front of the worshipper?

Answer: If that seated person holds his hand out in front of the worshipper in such a way that his face is not turned towards the worshipper, but rather holds his hand upright to act as a barrier, it is then permissible for the passer-by to pass.

Some Misconceptions Regarding the *Sutrah*

Question: If someone mistakenly passes in front of a worshipper, what is the ruling? Will he be sinful?

Answer: No! If someone mistakenly or unknowingly passes in front of a worshipper, he will not be sinful. ¹

Question: It is a common misconception among the general public that if a person passes in front of a worshipper without a barrier, the salah breaks. Is this correct?

Answer: Passing in front of a person performing salah causes no defect in their salah, nor does it break it. It is stated in *Bahar-e-Shari'at*: "A person passing in front of a person performing salah—or even passing through *mawḍi' al-sujūd*—does not break the salah, whether the one passing is a man, a woman, a dog, or a donkey."²

Question: Sometimes it is seen that a person passes in front of a person performing salah by mistake. When someone draws his attention or tries to stop him, he attempts to pass back along the same path to undo his mistake—meaning he passes in front of the person performing salah again to return back. Is it correct to do this? And if someone does this, what will be the Islamic ruling regarding him?

Answer: Passing in front of a person performing salah deliberately without a sutrah is a sin. However, if someone's attention was not towards the person performing salah and he passed in front of him by mistake, he will not be a sinner. However, according to the scenario mentioned in the question, if he now intentionally passes in front of the person performing salah to rectify his mistake (which was not actually a mistake, as he passed forgetfully), he will become a sinner. He was not a sinner previously when he passed forgetfully, but now he will become a sinner due to his misunderstanding and lack of knowledge of the correct Islamic ruling. Therefore, if anyone passes in front of a person performing salah unknowingly, he should not turn back.

Question: Sometimes construction work takes place in mosques. In such a situation, a rope is tied between two pillars, and this same rope is used as a sutrah,

¹ Fatawa Ajmaliyyah, vol. 2, p. 25

² Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 614, part 3

while there is nothing beneath the rope. Builders and others pass in front of the person performing salah considering this rope to be a sutrah. What is the ruling regarding this?

Answer: The rope tied between two pillars is not sufficient to serve as a sutrah. This is because the command for a person performing salah is to fix the sutrah into the ground or to keep it standing vertically from the surface of the ground, rather than keeping it horizontally above the ground. ¹

The rope tied between two pillars remains above the ground, and the space between the rope and the ground is empty. Therefore, a rope tied between two pillars cannot be used as a sutrah, nor is it permissible to pass in front of a person performing salah using it as a barrier.

Question: Can one use his hand as a sutrah? Some people hold out their hand in front of a person performing salah while passing in front of him, thinking that this acts as a sutrah. Is it permissible for them to do so?

Answer: No! The one passing in front of a person performing salah cannot use his hand as a sutrah. This is because the hand of the person passing is a part of his body and is subject to him, whereas the directive for a sutrah is to fix it separately into the ground in front of the person performing salah or to stand it vertically on the ground. Scholars have even stated that if a person has a walking stick but it is not possible to plant it into the ground, in such a case, it is permissible to stand it upright in front of the person performing salah as a sutrah, provided that one releases it from his hand and passes in front of it immediately before it falls. ²

Here too, it is clearly instructed to pass after releasing the stick from the hand; making it a sutrah by holding it with one's hand is not intended. Therefore, a person passing cannot use any part of his body as a sutrah.

¹ Majma'-ul-Anhur, vol. 1, p. 183

² Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 617, part 3

Question: Some people performing salah have been seen stopping someone with their hand when he passes in front of them without a sutrah. Is it correct to stop someone with the hand while in the state of salah? Will this have any effect on the salah?

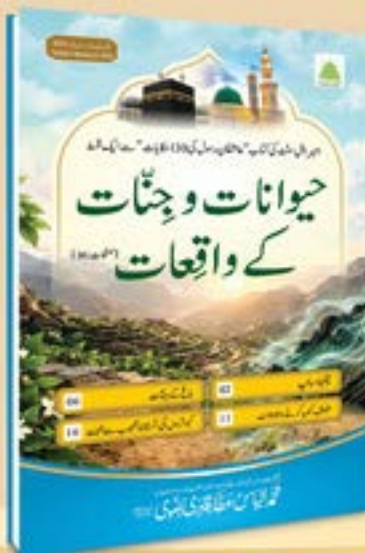
Answer: Stopping someone by grabbing them with the hand like this is not correct; it is an incorrect way. In fact, if it amounts to excessive action (*‘amal kathīr*), the salah will become invalid. Scholars have stated that the correct method for this is to stop the person by saying *tasbīh* (i.e. **سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ**) or by gesturing. Doing both without necessity is disliked (*makrūh*).¹ However, stopping a person passing in front is recommended (*mustahabb*).

Appeal

If possible, please distribute this short booklet, "Rulings on Passing in Front of a Person Offering Salah", in your respective mosques. If the imams and speakers read the religious rulings from this booklet and explain them to the worshippers on Fridays, Eid, or major nights, **إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ** this will create an inclination to act upon them. Download this booklet for free from Dawat-e-Islami's website, www.dawateislami.net, spread it via social media, and earn reward.

¹ Bahar-e-Shari'at, vol. 1, p. 617, part 3 summarized

Next Weekly Booklet



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