

Reciting Quran In The Prayer

The jurisprudents disagreed upon reciting Quranic suras in the prayer. Abu Bakr al-Assamm, Isma'eel bin Olya, Sufyan bin Oyayna and al-Hasan bin Salih thought that reciting Quran in the prayer was not wajib but it was mustahab.

This was irregularity in thinking, contradicting the evidences and violating the consensus of the umma.

They depended upon a tradition narrated by Abu Salama and Muhammad bin Ali that once Omar bin al-Khattab had offered the maghrib prayer and he didn't recite the suras in it. He was asked about that. He said: "How about the ruku' and sujood?"¹ They said: "Alright." He said: "Never mind then!"

This was Omar's own thought and he didn't ascribe it to the Prophet (s). He might think that leaving reciting the suras inattentively wouldn't invalidate the prayer. Allah is the most aware.

Al-Hasan al-Basri and others thought that reciting suras was obligatory (wajib) in one rak'a.² This was like the previous thought in its irregularity and violating the consensus.

They justified their thought by interpreting the Prophet's saying: "No prayer (will be correct) except with (reciting) al-Fatiha." They thought that if al-Fatiha was recited in the prayer even one time, the prayer would be correct.

The answer: this tradition didn't regard the prayer when it was offered with al-Fatiha and didn't decide whether it was valid or not but it regarded it when it was without al-Fatiha and decided that it was not a prayer like the Prophet's saying: "No prayer (is accepted) without wudu' (or tayammum)." The tradition "No prayer (will be correct) except with (reciting) al-Fatiha" showed the obligation of reciting al-Fatiha in the prayer. Al-Fatiha was a necessary part of the prayer whereas wudu' was a condition determining the validity of the prayer.

Imam Abu Haneefa and his companions thought that reciting al-Fatiha was not wajib in the prayer. They thought that reciting anything of the Quran would be enough. Abu Haneefa was satisfied with reciting one verse of the Quran even if it was one word like ("*Mudhammatan* 55:64": both inclining to blackness) but his companions Abu Yousuf and Muhammad bin al-Hasan ash-Shaybani were satisfied with three

short verses like (***Then he looked. Then he frowned and scowled. Then he turned back and was big with pride.*** 74:21–23) or with one verse that was as equal as three short verses or a little more. The Hanafites kept to this in their prayers.³

Abu Haneefa permitted translating the Quran that was to be recited in the prayer into any foreign language for those, who couldn't speak Arabic well,⁴ but his two companions permitted translating just for those, who were unable to speak Arabic, not for those, who could speak bad Arabic.

Reciting the Quran in the prayer was wajib according to their doctrine in the two rak'as–prayers like Fajr prayer, Friday prayer and the traveler's prayers (Qasr)⁵ but as for three or four–rak'as prayers, reciting the Quran was wajib in any two rak'as of the prayer. The prayer had the option to choose between the first two rak'as, the last two rak'as, the first and the third, the first and the fourth, the second and the third or the second and the fourth. If a prayer recited the Quran in the first two rak'as, he would be free in the last two rak'as whether to recite the Quran, recite tasbeeh⁶ or to be silent as long as the time of one tasbeeh.

They depended upon a tradition narrated by Abu Hurayra when saying: “One day the Prophet (s) entered the mosque. A man came in, offered the prayer and then came to greet the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) replied his greeting and said to him: “Go back and offer your prayer because you didn't offer it (correctly).” The man came back and offered his prayer as same as the first one. Then he came to the Prophet (s) and greeted him. The Prophet (s) replied his greeting and said to him: “Go back and offer your prayer because you didn't offer it.” He did that for three times. The man said to the Prophet (s): “I swear by Him, Who has sent you with rightness! I don't know more than this. Please teach me!” The Prophet (s) said: “When you stand up to offer the prayer, say Takbeer then recite what is easy of the Quran as possible as you can, then bow then stand erect then prostrate yourself then sit. Do this throughout your prayer.”

They depended upon the Prophet's saying (recite what is easy of the Quran as possible as you can) as their evidence in this matter.

Neither Abu Hurayra nor his traditions had any value near us. He was not trusted or reliable. We detailed all the facts about him in a book called (Abu Hurayra). Whoever liked to know the shiny truth, let refer to it.

This tradition might be not true because it was confused and not clear. We examined the tradition and didn't find any clear explanation that might fit the prophets (s). The tradition lacked many necessary things that the umma had agreed upon unanimously. It didn't mention anything about the intention of the prayer, sitting during the last tashahhud⁷, saying (blessing and peace be upon Muhammad and his progeny), tasleem⁸ and other things. It didn't fit the Prophet (s) with his high morals to let that man offer invalid prayer for three times and that might not be permissible for him (s).

Abu Dawood mentioned this story narrated by Rifa'a bin Rafi' al-Ansari⁹ that the Prophet (s) had said to

the man, who didn't offer his prayer correctly: "When you stand up towards the Qibla, say takbeer and then recite al-Fatiha and whatever you like to recite."

Ahmad bin Hanbal and ibn Habban mentioned this story narrated by Rifa'a that the Prophet (s) had said to the man, who didn't offer his prayer correctly: "...then recite al-Fatiha and then recite whatever you like." [10](#)

It was certain that Abu Hurayra would never equal Rifa'a whether in his doings or sayings. When there was any contradiction, the traditions of Rifa'a would certainly be preferred to the traditions narrated by Abu Hurayra. Therefore we found that al-Qastlani when explaining the tradition of Abu Hurayra in his book *Fat-hul Bari* tried his best to interpret the tradition to be in accordance with the tradition of Rifa'a.

Whoever looked for the sayings of the ancestors and the successors when talking about Abu Hurayra's tradition, would find them all, except the Hanafites, either refuting [11](#) or interpreting [12](#) the tradition to be in accordance with their thoughts. Refer to *Sharh Sahih* al-Bukhari and *Sharh Sahih* Muslim to see their sayings about Abu Hurayra's tradition in details. [13](#)

Abu Hurayra himself contradicted his tradition when he narrated other traditions saying: "I heard the Prophet (s) saying: The prayer won't be correct unless al-Fatiha is recited in it." [14](#) Abu Hurayra also said: "The Prophet (s) ordered me to announce in Medina that no prayer (would be correct) without (reciting some of the) Quran, even if it was al-Fatiha and something more." [15](#) He also said: "I heard the Prophet (s) saying: Whoever offers a prayer without reciting al-Fatiha, his prayer is aborted, his prayer is aborted, his prayer is aborted, his prayer is aborted." [16](#)

Then why did the Hanafites depend upon the outward meaning of the saying (recite what is easy of the Quran as possible as you can) mentioned in Abu Hurayra's tradition and give up the clear and true prophetic traditions talking about the prayer? In fact they depended upon what contradicted the many true traditions and objected to all the other sects of the Muslims and what they gave up was confirmed by the true prophetic traditions and by all the other sects of the Muslims.

The Hanafites might depend upon the Quranic verse (***therefore read what is easy of the Quran*** 73:20) as their evidence for this matter.

The answer: this verse had nothing to do with the subject of reciting Quranic suras in the prayer at all. The interpreters had explained this verse clearly. Let him, who wants to see its real meaning, refer the interpretations of the Quran.

The Hanafites justified the permissibility of reciting the translation of the Quran in the prayer according to some sayings;

First: Ibn Mass'ood recited to some foreigners: (***Surely the tree of the Zaqqum is*** (ta'am al-atheem) ***the food of the sinful*** 44:43-4). One of the foreigners recited (ta'am al-atheem) as (ta'am al-yateem;

the orphan). Ibn Mas'ood said to him: "Say: Ta'am al-fajir).¹⁷ Then ibn Mass'ood said: "It is no mistake to recite (al-hakeem; wise) instead of (al-aleem; aware). The mistake is to put a verse of mercy instead of a verse of torment."

The answer: this was too far from our subject and if the saying was true, it would just show ibn Mass'ood's own thought and it would never be taken as evidence.

Second: the Quranic verses (***And most surely the same is in the scriptures of the ancients*** 26: 196) and (***Most surely this is in the earlier scriptures; the scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa*** 87: 18-9).

Their evidence out of these verses was that the umma agreed upon that the Quran had not been in its Arabic wordings whether in the scriptures of the ancients or the scriptures of Abraham and Moses but it was its meanings that had been mentioned in those scriptures in Hebrew and Syriac.

The answer: this was like the previous justification in not having anything to do with the subject. In fact it was much farther than that one.

Third: the Quranic verse (...***and this Quran has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you.*** 6: 19) and the foreigners didn't understand Arabic unless the meaning would be translated to them into their language; therefore the warning was to be in their language.

The answer: this would be possible as evidence for the permissibility of translating the holy Quran into the foreigners' languages so that they could make use of its maxims, morals, orders and prohibitions. This was something and jargoning in the prayer would be something else. Would any Arab or foreigner not understand that reciting al-Fatiha did mean to recite the sura as it had been revealed with its original wording written down in the holy Quran? Would any one of good tact not feel that the spirit of the Quran would be deprived of if it was recited in a foreign language whether eastern or western?

I didn't think that Imam Abu Haneefa would fail in his justifications to a degree that he might fall down to the bottom! It was because he relied upon analogy and approval in deducing the legal verdicts. Hence he found that it would be nice for the foreigners if the Quran was translated into their languages in order to be recited in their prayers. He found that it would be easier for them to understand the meanings and to be more submissive in their prayers. He compared the foreigner's reciting the Quran in his language with his listening to the sermons and learning the lessons in his language. This was the theory of Atatürk in offering the prayer. He didn't take it from Abu Haneefa but it was just telepathy! What helped Atatürk with this theory that he didn't appreciate the legal evidences; in fact he didn't know them and didn't want to know them. He determined what he approved. If the Sharia had something leading to the permissibility of acting according to the approval, they would justify their thought but how far!

Ash-Shafi'iy, Malik, Ahmed and others thought that reciting al-Fatiha in all wajib and mustahab prayers in Arabic was obligatory. Their evidence for that was Abu Hurayra's tradition talking about the story of the nomad, who couldn't offer his prayer correctly and then the Prophet (s) taught him how to offer the

prayer, ordered him to recite some of the Quran in his prayer and then said to him: “Do this in all of your prayers.”¹⁸

You already knew our thought about this tradition when we said that we had brushed it aside and that it had no value near us.

The Shia believed, according to their infallible imams, that reciting al-Fatiha in correct Arabic was obligatory in the first two rak'as of every wajib and mustahab prayer¹⁹ for the single prayer (one, who offers a prayer alone) and for the imam (one who leads the others in offering the prayer).

As for the ma'moom,²⁰ he didn't have to recite al-Fatiha because the imam²¹ would undertake that instead of him. As for the last two rak'as, it would be obligatory for the ma'moom either to recite the sura or to recite tassbeeh.²² The imam was not to undertake reciting the sura or tassbeeh instead of the ma'moom in the last two rak'as.

Our evidence (the Shia's evidence) in all of that was the sayings of our infallible imams, who were the equal of the Quran.

Reciting al-Fatiha by the Prophet (s) in the first two rak'as of the prayer was confirmed by all the Sihah and Musnads (the books of Hadith) according to the tradition narrated by Abu Qatada al-Harth bin Rib'iy and others.

What the Prophet (s) used to do in his prayer would be obligatory²³ for the all because he had said: “Offer the prayer as you saw me offering it.” As it was proved that the Prophet (s) had recited al-Fatiha in the last two rak'as, it was also proved that he had recited tassbeeh in them. The wording of tassbeeh was as the following (subhanal-lah wel hamdu lillah wela ilaha illallah wel-lahu akbar) according to the imams of the Prophet's progeny (s). The tradition, narrated by Sa'd bin Abu Waqqass and mentioned in al-Bukhari's *Sahih* and other Sihah and Musnads, confirmed this.

The people of Kufa complained to Omar against Sa'd until they said to him that Sa'd hadn't offered the prayer correctly. Sa'd said: “By Allah, I offered the prayer in a way like the prayer of the Prophet (s) without a bit of difference. I expatiated (on reciting al-Fatiha and the other sura) in the first two rak'as and I lightened in the last two rak'as (hastening in them by only reciting tassbeeh or al-Fatiha alone without the second sura).” Allah is the most aware!

^{1.} Ruku' : bowing in prayer. Sujood: prostration.

^{2.} One unit of the prayer.

^{3.} Refer to their jurisprudence especially the book (Ghunyatul Mutamalli).

^{4.} Refer to at-Tafseer al-Kabeer by ar-Razi, vol. 1 p. 108. Ar-Razi said: “Know that the thought of Abu Haneefa about this matter was so odd; therefore the jurisprudent Abul Layth as-Samarqandi and the judge Abu Zayd ad-Daboosi declared to avoid his doctrine.”

^{5.} Qasr: is a shortened form of prayer. The traveler is to offer two rak'as instead of four in Dhuhr, Assr and Isha' prayers.

^{6.} Tasbeeh means glorifying Allah with certain wordings.

^{7.} Saying shahada.

8. Tasleem: saying (as-salaamu alaykum...) at the end of the prayer.
9. He fought with the Prophet (s) in the battle of Badr, Uhud and all the other battles. His two brothers Khallad and Malik fought with him in Badr. He fought with Imam Ali (s) in the battles of al-Jamal and Seffeen. He was one of the best supporters of Imam Ali (s).
10. Irshad as-Sari fee Sharh Sahih al Bukhari, vol.2 p.441.
11. like some of the Mu'tazilites and all the Shia.
12. The scholars of the Sunni sects other than the Hanafites.
13. Imam an-Nawawi said in Sharh Sahih Muslim: "...and as for his saying: (recite what is easy of the Quran as possible as you can), it referred to al-Fatiha or something besides al-Fatiha because it was possible for the ordinary people." Imam as-Sindi said in his Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari: "...his saying: (recite what is easy of the Quran as possible as you can) was because what was possible for people like that man was al-Fatiha. It was mentioned in other traditions that the Prophet (s) had specified al-Fatiha for that man."
14. Refer to Sahih of Abu Bakr bin Khuzayma and an-Nawawi's Sharh Sahih Muslim.
15. Sunan of Abu Dawood.
16. Mentioned by Abu Dawood in his Sunan and Muslim in his Sahih.
17. Fajir and atheem nearly have the same meaning; fajir means dissolute and atheem means sinful.
18. Imam an-Nawawi ash-Shafi'iy said in his book Sharh Sahih Muslim when talking about the obligation of reciting al-Fatiha in the prayer: "All the ulema-the ancestors and the successors-agreed upon the obligation of reciting al-Fatiha in every rak'a according to the Prophet's saying to the nomad, who couldn't offer his prayer correctly: "Do this in all of your prayers." An-Nawawi, ash-Shafi'iy and others, who thought that al-Fatiha must be recited in every rak'a of the prayers, couldn't justify Abu Hurayra's tradition unless by considering the Prophet's saying "Recite what is easy of the Quran as possible as you can" to refer to al-Fatiha especially.
19. It is obligatory among the Shia to recite a complete sura after al-Fatiha in the first two rak'as of the five wajib prayers. This had been confirmed by the Prophet (s) according to the tradition narrated by Abu Qatada and mentioned by al-Bukhari in his Sahih and by others. It is possible among the Shia not to recite the second sura in some cases. Not reciting the second sura becomes obligatory when the time left for the prayer is very short or in some necessary cases. As for mustahab prayer, al-Fatiha only is obligatory. This means that reciting al-Fatiha is a condition determining the validity of the prayer.
20. Ma'moom is one, who offers the prayer behind an imam.
21. According to the Prophet's saying: "Who offers the prayer behind an imam, the imam's reciting (of the Quran) will suffice him." This tradition was mentioned in the jurisprudential books of the four Sunni sects. There was a saying related to Imam Ali and eighty of the great companions mentioned in the same books that the ma'moom was forbidden from reciting (Quran) in the prayer. In fact there was another saying showing that the prayer of the ma'moom would be invalid if he recited of the Quran after his imam. Among the Shia the strongest choice for the ma'moom is not to recite the Quranic suras in the first two rak'as of the soft-recited prayer and in the first two rak'as of the loud-recited prayers if the ma'moom can hear the reciting of the imam or even the humming of his reciting according to the Quranic verse (And when the Quran is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you) 7:204. When the ma'moom can't hear the sound of his imam, he may recite the suras. In fact it will be mustahab for the ma'moom to recite them.
22. Tassbeeh is saying (subhanal-lah-glory be to Allah- wel hamdu lillah-(and) praise be to Allah- wela ilaha illallahu-(and) there is no god but Allah- wellahu akbar-(and) Allah is great).
23. As it was said by Imam as-Sindi in his commenting on the tradition of Sa'd mentioned in al-Bukhari's Sahih.

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