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<u>Home</u> > <u>The Five Schools of Islamic Law</u> > <u>Part 1: Ibadah</u> > <u>2. Salat, Ritual Prayer</u> > <u>Error and Doubt</u> During Salat > Doubt in the Number of Rak'ahs

## **Error and Doubt During Salat**

The schools concur that a wilful violation of any *wajib* act in prayer invalidates it. However mistake (*sahw*) can be compensated by performing *sujud al-sahw* as described below.

The Hanafis state: The form of *sujud al–sahw* is that the *musalli* should perform two *sajdahs* followed by the recitation of *tashahhud* and *taslim*, prayer and benediction for the Prophet (S). This *sujud* should be performed after the *taslim*, provided there is sufficient time (for the *salat*).

Hence if, for instance, someone makes an involuntary error in *al-fajr* prayer and finds that the sun has risen before his performing *sujud al-sahw*, he is not required to perform it any more. The cause necessitating *sujud al-sahw* is the *musalli's* omitting an obligatory part or repeating an essential part (*rukn*) —such as *ruku'* or *sujud*. If numerous lapses occur (in a single *salat*), the two *sajdahs* will suffice for them all, because their repetition is not valid in their opinion. And if there occurs a lapse in the *sujud al-sahw* it requires no rectification (*Majma' al-'anhur*, vol. 1, "bab sujud al-sahw").

The Malikis observe: In its form, *sujud al–sahw* consists of two *sajdahs* followed by *tashahhud* without any supplication and benediction for the Prophet (S). As to the place of this *sujud*, in the event that it is on account of an omission or due to both an omission and an addition, it will be performed before the *taslim*; but if the cause is only an addition, then after the *taslim*.

Moreover, *sujud al-sahw* atones for an involuntary omission of a *mustahabb* part of *salat*; hence if the omitted part is a *fard* (obligatory) part of *salat*, it cannot be compensated by *sujud al-sahw* and must be performed.

However, if the mistake is one of involuntary addition — such as an extra *ruku'* or two, or one or two additional *rak'ahs* — it is atonable by *sujud al*—sahw.

The Hanbalis say: It is valid to perform *sujud al-sahw* before or after the *taslim*. It consists of two *sajdahs* followed by *tashahhud* and *taslim*. Its causes are involuntary addition or omission as well as doubt. An example of addition is to perform an additional *qiyam* (standing) or *qu'ud* (sitting). One who

sits where he is supposed to stand or vice versa will perform *sujud al-sahw*.

Where there is an omission, the following procedure is to be followed in their opinion. If he remembers the omission before starting the *qira'ah* of the next *rak'ah*, it is *wajib* for him to perform the part omitted as well as *sujud al-sahw*; and if he comes to remember it only after starting the *qira'ah* of the next *rak'ah*, the former *rak'ah* will be annulled and the latter will take its place and *sujud al-sahw* will also be performed.

To illustrate the same, if a person forgets *ruku*' in the first *rak*'ah and becomes aware of it after performing the *sujud* (of the same *rak*'ah), he will perform the *ruku*' and then repeat the *sujud*, and if he becomes aware of it only after starting the *qira*'ah of the second *rak*'ah, the former *rak*'ah will be considered null and void and the second *rak*'ah will take its place.

An example of doubt necessitating *sujud al-sahw* is the case when one doubts whether he has performed the *ruku*', or has a doubt regarding the number of *rak'ahs* performed. Here he will consider that portion of the *salat* he is sure of having performed as the basis and will perform the remaining, and carry out *sujud al-sahw* on finishing it. Two *sajdahs* suffice for several mistakes, even if their causes differ, and a lapse committed by someone prone to making mistakes will not be considered a lapse.

According to the Shafi'is, the place of *sujud al–sahw* is after the *tashahhud* and benediction of the Prophet (S) and before the *taslim*. Its mode of performance is like the one prescribed by the abovementioned schools. The reasons for its performance are: omission of an emphasized (*mu'akkadah*) *sunnah*, a little additional recital, the recital of *al–Fatihah* by mistake, the following of an imam whose *salat* is vitiated, a doubt in the number of *rak'ahs*, and the omission of a specific part.

The Imamis differentiate between the rules applicable to cases of doubt and those applicable to errors. They state: No attention will be paid to a doubt arising concerning any act of *salat* after its completion, or the doubt of a *ma'mum* regarding the number of *rak'ahs* if the imam has ascertained their number and vice versa, with each of them referring to the memory of the other.

No significance is attached to the doubts of a person who doubts excessively, and similarly to a doubt with respect to any act of *salat* arising after entry into its subsequent act. Hence if a doubt occurs regarding the reciting (*qira'ah*) of *al–Fatihah* after starting the *qira'ah* of the subsequent *surah*, or regarding the *surah* after having gone into the *ruku'*, or with respect to the *ruku'* after having entered the *sajdah*, the *salat* will be continued without heeding the doubt.

But if the doubt occurs before starting the performance of the subsequent act, it is *wajib* to rectify it. Hence a person who has doubt regarding the recital of *al-Fatihah* before starting the subsequent *surah*, will recite it, and similarly the *surah* if he has a doubt concerning its recital before entering the *ruku'*.

As to *sujud al-sahw*, it should be done for every omission and addition, except for reciting aloud instead of in a low voice and vice versa — as it does not entail anything — and except for any omission or

addition that does not pertain to the essentials (*arkan*) of *salat* because their omission or addition invalidates the *salat* irrespective of its being wilful or by mistake.

The *arkan*, in their opinion, are the following five: *niyyah* (intention), *takbirat al-ihram*, *qiyam*, *ruku'* and the two *sajdahs* of a *rak'ah*. It is not obligatory to perform any part omitted by mistake after the *salat* except *sajdah* and *tashahhud*, which are alone required to be performed among the forgotten parts.

These will be performed after the completion of the *salat* followed by *sujud al-sahw*, which consists of making two *sajdahs* and reciting

in the state of prostration, followed by tashahhud and taslim.

The number of *sujud al–sahw* required is equal to the number of causes entailing it. They consider the mistake of a person committing excessive mistakes and a mistake committed while rectifying one, as no mistake.

## **Doubt in the Number of Rak'ahs**

The Shafi'is, Malikis and Hanbalis observe: If the *musalli* has a doubt regarding the number of *rak'ahs* performed, he will consider the number of *rak'ahs* he is certain of having performed as the base and will complete the *salat* by performing the rest.

The Hanafis state: If the *musalli's* doubt in *salat* is for the first time in his life, he will repeat it from the beginning. But if it occurs to him that he has doubted in *salat* earlier as well, he will think for quite a while and will act in accordance with what seems more probable to him. But if the doubt remains (even after thinking), he will consider the number of *rak'ahs* he is certain of having performed as the base.

The Imamis state: If the doubt concerning the number of *rak'ahs* performed occurs in a two-*rak'ah salat* (such as *salat al-subh*, the *salat* of a traveler, *salat al-jumu'ah*, *salat al-'idayn* and *salat al- kusuf*, or in *salat al-maghrib* or in the first two *rak'ahs* of '*isha'*, *zuhr* and '*asr* prayers, the *salat* will become invalid and it will be *wajib* to start it again from the beginning. But if the doubt occurs in the *rak'ahs* subsequent to the first two *rak'ahs* of the four-*rak'ah* prayers, he will perform *salat al-ihtiyat* after completing the *salat* and before performing any act incompatible with *salat*.

For example, if a doubt arises after the completion of the two *sajdahs* of the second *rak'ah* as to whether it is the second or the third *rak'ah*, he will take the greater number of *rak'ahs* as his basis and complete the *salat*. He will then perform as *ihtiyat* (caution) a single *rak'ah* while standing or two *rak'ahs* while sitting. If the doubt concerns his being in third or fourth *rak'ah*, he will consider it the fourth *rak'ah* and complete the *salat* and follow it up with a single *rak'ah* standing or two *rak'ahs* sitting by way of caution.

If the doubt concerns his being in second or fourth *rak'ah*, he will consider it the fourth *rak'ah*. He will then offer two *rak'ahs* standing. If there is a doubt regarding its being second, third or fourth *rak'ah*, he will assume it to be the fourth *rak'ah*, and offer following it two *rak'ahs* standing and two *rak'ahs* sitting.

According to them, the reason for performing these *rak'ahs* is to preserve the prescribed form of *salat* and avoid additions and omissions. Their point is illustrated by the example of a person who has a doubt between its being third or fourth *rak'ah*. He will consider it to be the fourth *rak'ah* and perform a single *rak'ah* separately after completing the *salat*. If his *salat* has been complete, the additional *rak'ah* performed separately will be considered as *nafilah*, and if the *salat* had been incomplete, the separate *rak'ah* will complement it.

However, this manner of performing *salat al-ihtiyat* (cautionary prayer) is particular to the Imamis. They limit this procedure to the obligatory *salats*, and among them to *zuhr*, 'asr and 'isha' prayers only. As to the *nafilah* prayers, the *musalli* is free to consider the minimum or maximum *rak'ahs* probably performed as the basis, provided such supposition does not invalidate the *salat* (such as where he doubts his being in second or third *rak'ah* with the knowledge that the *nafilah* comprises only two *rak'ahs*; here he will consider the minimum number of *rak'ahs* probably performed as the basis).

It is better in all *mustahabb* prayers to consider the minimum ascertainable number of *rak'ahs* as the basis. If a doubt concerning *rak'ahs* arises in *salat al-ihtiyat*, the maximum number of *rak'ahs* probably performed will be made the basis, except where doing so invalidates the *salat*, in which case the minimum number of *rak'ahs* will be the basis. Some Imamis observe: One is free to choose as the basis either the minimum or maximum *rak'ahs* probably performed.

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