

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

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It is clear from a Quranic perspective, that the notion of congregational prayer was well established amongst monotheists of earlier revelations and in situ before the advent of Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) ministry.

In a dialogue with the Children of Israel, one notes the instruction to "**bow with those that bow**'

002.043 (Part)

"... and bow down your heads (Arabic: ir'ka'u) with those who bow down (Arabic: raki'een) (in worship)"



Illustration - Joseph Islam

The act of 'rukka' in the language of the Arabs refers to a **physical act** of bending, bowing or falling on one's face in humility, particularly during prayer.

This act of congregational obedience finds historic roots. It remains attested since the time of Prophet Abraham (pbuh) (22:26) and would have most likely been followed by all true monotheists en masse.

In the case of Mary, one notes a historic directive, once again affirming the need for congregational prayer obedience.

003.043

"O Mary! Be obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow down (Arabic: wa-ir'ka'i) with those who bow down (Arabic: raki'een)"



Illustration - Joseph Islam

Thus as noted, monotheistic obedience to congregational prayer was clearly known at the time of the Prophet's ministry and most likely would have influenced the prayer of the early Muslims converting from polytheism.

One cannot but help note the similarity of the early Jewish and Christian prayers with those of Muslims today.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

The Jewish Prayer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aHWASyMjwg&feature=player_embedded

An Early Christian Prayer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRLFeldPG3Y&feature=player_embedded

In this regard at least, the requirement to assimilate during congregational worship along with its general form would have become entrenched into practice.

Albeit, the Quran does not prescribe 'form' and 'utterance' during prayer, the requirement to participate in a prevailing practice is tacitly supported by proxy of the requirement to offer congregational prayers.

Despite sectarian divides, today's congregational prayers in the main fulfil the basic components of prayer as stipulated by the Quran. Therefore, there would seem little need to reinvent a practice unless it blatantly contradicted the basic directives of prayer.

After all, the limits of a believer's obedience are fashioned by an expectation to follow the best meaning (39:18), to rely on clear proof and to do the best that they can with sincerity (64:16).

064:016

"So keep your duty to God as **best you can / what you are able (Arabic: ma is'tata'tum)**, and listen, and obey, and spend; that is better for your souls. And whoso is saved from his own greed, such are the successful"

Not only is support for congregational prayer found in verses such as those cited above and others such as 62:9-10, one further notes its importance underpinned by other conspicuous verses of the Quran.

In the following verse, despite impending danger, congregational prayer is expected to continue once suitable surveillance is established. Undoubtedly, one cannot perceive a greater risk to life than during armed conflict.

004.102

"And when you are with them, and you lead for them the prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with you and let them take their arms with them. Then when they finish their prostrations, let them take their position in the rear and let the other party come up which has not yet prayed and let them pray with you and let them take their precautions and bear arms. The disbelievers wish if you were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush (united attack). But there is no blame on you if you put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because you are ill; but take your precautions. Indeed, God has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment"

FINAL THOUGHTS

From the above short analysis, it appears absolutely clear from the Quran that not only was monotheistic worship known before the advent of Prophet Muhammad's ^(pbuh) ministry, the requirement for congregational prayer was equally well attested.

Whether at home or at a mosque, it remains incumbent for believers to endeavour to join a congregation of worshippers irrespective of numbers or sectarian divides. This remains a requirement for participation as opposed to a sanctioning of a particular Sunna of a believer's prayer methods. The Quran within its basic requirements certainly allows for the slight variations in form and content of different worshippers.

Sadly, differences in ideology often deter many from entering certain places of worship or establishing prayer congregation with others. The purpose of **prayer** remains far more important than any differences in ideology that may be apparent. In the end, all places of worship belong to God alone (72:18).

072.018

"And the places of worship (**Arabic: masjid**) are for God (alone): So invoke not any one along with God"

Therefore, individuals should only be seen as mere stewards, entrusted with temporary custodianship and not 'owners' of these places of worship. The right of the worshipper to worship remains ultimately paramount, as does the need to congregate.

077.047-50

Woe on that day to the rejecters. **And when it is said to them, "Bow down" (Arabic: ir'ka'u), they bow not down!** Woe on that day to the rejecters. Then what statement (Hadith), after this, will they believe?"

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