

How Much Distance Should Be Kept Between the Feet During Qiyām?

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: How much distance should be kept between both feet during qiyām? Some people keep a wide gap between their feet, and some keep a smaller gap. What is the correct method? Please provide guidance. Muhammad Ahmad (Okara)

Answer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

Salāh is a noble act of worship in which a person engages in communication with his Lord. For this very reason, salāh has been described as the Mi‘rāj of a believer. Sharī‘ah has instructed that this worship be offered with full inward attention, khushū‘ [i.e., humility], and khudū‘ [i.e., reverence]. Furthermore, the prescribed method for offering each rukn is such that it reflects utmost respect. Thus, regarding how much distance should be between the feet during qiyām, the Ḥanafī jurists رحمة الله عليهم have stated that it is sunnah and mustaḥab to keep a distance of four fingers between both feet because standing in this manner is most respectful and reflects greater humility. Therefore, we should act upon this.

Furthermore, keeping such a distance that appears odd is disrespectful. None of the four Imāms (i.e., Imām A‘zam as well as Imām Shāfi‘ī, Imām Mālik, and Imām Aḥmad Bin Hanbal رحمة الله عليهم) hold this view (of keeping an exaggerated gap) as Imām Shāfi‘ī رحمة الله عليه holds the opinion that the distance of one hand-span should be kept, and Imām Mālik and Imām Aḥmad رحمة الله عليهما hold the opinion that a moderate distance should be kept. Therefore, keeping too much distance between the feet without necessity should be avoided.

The creator of the universe Almighty states regarding those who offer salāh with humility and reverence:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خُشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾﴾

Translation (Kanz al-‘Irfān): Certainly, the believers have succeeded: those who are deeply humble in prayers. (Part 18, Sūrah al-Mu‘minūn, Verse 1-2)

While teaching proper etiquette to the one offering salāh, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ stated:

ان المصلی یناجی ربه فلینظر ما یناجیه به

Translation: Undoubtedly, the one offering salāh engages in communication with his Lord so he should consider what he communicates. (Mishkāt al-Masābīḥ, Book of prayer, Topic: recitation in salāh, Ch. 2, p. 81, Publ. Karachi)

Under the above-mentioned ḥadīth, ‘Allāmah ‘Alī Qārī Ḥanafī رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 1014 AH/ 1605 CE) writes:

ای یحادثه ویکالمه وهو کنایه عن کمال قریه المعنوی لان الصلاة معراج المؤمن

(Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ, Vol. 02, p. 856, Publ. Dār al-Fikr, Beirut)

Regarding the placement of the feet during qiyām, there is a ḥadīth in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*:

عن زرعة بن عبد الرحمن، قال: سمعت ابن الزبير يقول: صف القدمين ووضع اليد على اليد من السنة

Translation: It is narrated that Zur‘ah Bin Abdul-Raḥmān states: I heard Ibn Zubair رضي الله تعالى عنه saying: It is sunnah to straighten the feet and place one hand on the other. (Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Vol. 01, Hadith No. 754, Publ. Al-Maktabah al-‘Asriyah, Saida, Beirut)

Under the above cited ḥadīth, ‘Allāmah Badr-Uddīn ‘Aynī رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 855 AH/1451 CE) writes:

وفيه مسألتان، الأولى: صف القدمين في القيام، وعن هذا قال أصحابنا: يستحب للمصلي أن يكون بين قدميه في القيام [قدر] أربع أصابع يديه، لأن هذا أقرب للخشوع

Translation: Two rulings have been mentioned in this ḥadīth. First: Aligning the feet in qiyām. Our scholars state regarding this that it is mustaḥab for the one offering salāh to keep a distance of four fingers between the feet, as this reflects greater humility. (Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd Lil-‘Aynī, Vol. 03, p. 354, Publ. Maktabah al-Rushd, Riyadh)

It is similarly stated in *Bināyah*, *Sharḥ Hidāyah*, *Khizānah al-Muftīn*, *Fatāwā Hindiyah*, and *Maraq al-Falāḥ* (cited from *Maraq al-Falāḥ*):

"و"يسن" تفريج القدمين في القيام قدر أربع أصابع "لأنه أقرب إلى الخشوع

(Maraq al-Falāḥ ‘Alā Nūr al-Īdāḥ, p. 98, Publ. Al-Maktabah al-‘Asriyah)

A‘lā Ḥazrat, the Imām of Ahl as-Sunnah, Imām Aḥmad Razā Khān رحمه الله تعالى عليه (d. 1340 AH/ 1921 CE) states:

چارہی انگل کا فاصلہ رکھنا چاہئے یہی ادب اور یہی سنت ہے اور یہی ہمارے امام اعظم رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہ سے منقول ہے۔۔۔ مگر

ایک ہاتھ کا فرق نہ کسی مذہب کی کتاب میں نظر سے گزرانہ کسی طرح قابل قبول ہو سکتا ہے کہ بدابہت طرز و روش ادب و خشوع سے جدا ہے۔

Translation: Only the distance of four fingers should be kept; this is respectful, this is the sunnah, and this has been reported from our Imām A‘zam رضي الله تعالى عنه... I did not come across the opinion of keeping the distance of one cubit in the book of any Mazhab, neither can it be accepted in any way as it is clearly contrary to the etiquettes of respect and humility. (Fatāwā Razawiyah, Vol. 06, p. 155-157, Publ. Razā Foundation, Lahore)

How much distance should be kept between both feet during salāh? Mentioning the opinions of the four Imāms in this regard, it is stated in *al-Fiqh al-Islāmī Wa Adillatih* and *al-Fiqh ‘Alā Mazāhib al-Arba‘ah* (cited from the first):

تفريج القدمين: قال الحنفية: يسن تفريج القدمين في القيام قدر أربع أصابع؛ لأنه أقرب إلى الخشوع وقال الشافعية: يفرق بين القدمين بمقدار شبر، وقال المالكية والحنابلة: يندب تفريج القدمين، بأن يكون بحالة متوسطة بحيث لا يضمهما ولا يوسعهما كثيراً حتى يتفاحش عرفاً

(Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī Wa Adillatīh, Vol. 02, p. 881, Publ. Dār al-Fikr, Sūriyah, Damascus)

وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَرَسُوْلُهُ اَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّمَ

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ knows best.)

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