PERFORMING THE FRIDAY PRAYERS AT HOME AND ATTENDING THE FRIDAY PRAYERS BEING PERFORMED AT ANOTHER PLACE THROUGH TELEVISION OR INTERNET

One of the essential elements of Islam, the Friday prayer is a basic worship to be performed with congregation in the mosque or in an open area. It is not permissible to perform this prayer at home. A prayer which is performed at home does not become valid as a Friday prayer.

As it is obligatory for the prayers performed with congregation, including the Friday prayer, that the imam and those who follow him are present in the same place, it is not permissible to attend the prayers which are broadcasted by means of television, internet, etc. For this reason, if someone, who is in a place other than the place where the imam performs the prayer, attends the prayer by following that imam, this prayer will not be valid.

REASON

The Friday prayer is a worship which is fardh upon the men who have reached adolescence, are mentally and physically healthy, free and resident (non-guest). This prayer is also one of the most essential elements of Islam; one of the worships, signs and symbols that must be respected and protected. The Almighty Allah (swt) commands, “O you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu’ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew. And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed.” (Jumu’ah, 62/9-10).

As in all worships, the Friday prayer which is one of the basic worships of Islam is also performed as practiced and taught by the Prophet Muhammad (saw). Because the worships are provisions that do not fall within the sphere of mind in terms of both their conditions and pillars and the way they are performed, and whose content and reasons cannot fully be comprehended by the mind although some interpretations may be made regarding their wisdom.

In this context, the following points stand out since the revelation of the above verse and the first Friday prayer performed by the Prophet Muhammad (saw):

In the verse whose meaning is given above, addressing all the believers, it is mentioned to be called for the Friday prayer, to leave what they do at that moment and go to the place where the call was made immediately, and to remember Allah (swt), which means that the prayer will be performed outside the house and in a place where everyone can attend.

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) led the performance of this prayer in a masjid where everyone can enter and participate the prayer (Bukhari, Jumu’ah, 11). It has been always performed in the places that are open to the public, throughout the history, in the following Era of the Companions and until today.

Regarding other fardh prayers, it is not mentioned in the Qur’an nor in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) to respond it immediately as soon as hearing a certain call. On the contrary, it is just said to be performed when the time comes. As a matter of fact, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) clearly stated that the five daily prayers can be performed everywhere by saying, “The earth has been made for me a masjid and clean. Therefore, anyone of my ummah can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due.” (Bukhari, Tayammum, 1; Muslim, Masajid, 5) However, it is not the same for the Friday prayer. It is a prayer that is performed in a place and in community following an adhan/call with the participation of everyone to whom it is a fardh and are present there.

It is mentioned in several hadiths as “to go to the Friday prayer”, “to exit the house to attend the Friday prayer”, “to join the congregation”, “the angels standing at the door of the masjid and writing down the people coming in the order of precedence when it is Friday”, “to perform Tahiyyat al-Masjid prayer” after entering the masjid for the Friday prayer, “to be clothed fine,” “to wear nice scents,” and “to leave early for the masjid” when exiting the house for the Friday prayer. Each of these indicates that this symbolic worship must be performed not at home, but in a place open to everyone, that is, a musalla/open-air prayer place or mosque.

Some of the hadiths involving this ruling are as follows:

““When it is a Friday, the angels stand at the gate of the mosque and keep on writing the names of the persons coming to the mosque in succession according to their arrivals. The example of the one who enters the mosque in the earliest hour is that of one offering a camel (in sacrifice). The one coming next is like one offering a cow and then a ram and then a chicken and then an egg respectively. When the Imam comes out (for Jumua prayer) they (i.e. angels) fold their papers and listen to the khutbah.” (Bukhari, Jumu’ah, 31; Muslim, Jumu’ah, 10, 24).
“Whoever takes a bath on Friday, purifies himself as much as he can, then uses his oil or perfumes himself with the scent of his house, then proceeds (for the Jumu’ah prayer) and does not separate two persons sitting together (in the mosque), and takes care not to step over people, then prays as much as (Allah has) written for him and then remains silent while the imam is delivering the khutbah, his sins in-between the present and the last Friday would be forgiven.” (Bukhari, Jumu’ah, 6; Abu Dawud, Taharat, 343; Ibn Majah, Iqamat al-Salat, 83).

The fact that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) stated “Going to jumu’ah is obligatory for everyone who has reached the age of puberty.” (Abu Dawud, Taharat, 342; Nasa’i, Jumu’ah, 3) and then said, “However, the slaves, women, children and patients are exempted from this.” (Abu Dawud, Tafri Abwab al-Jumu’ah, 9; Bayhaqi, al-Sunan al-Kubra, No: 5578) implies that this worship shall be performed in a public place outside the home and that it is not fardh upon women, children, slaves, and patients.

The Friday prayer has always been performed in the mosques or musalla throughout the history, and the dominant majority of the Islamic scholars of all madhhabs allied on this provision. In other words, Islamic scholars have come to the conclusion that the Friday prayer must be performed with congregation and in a public place, based on the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the Companions (Serahsî, el-Mebsût, Istanbul 1983, II, 23; İbn Rüşd, Bidâyetü’l-müctehid, Cairo 2004, I, 167 onwards; Ibn Âbidîn, Reddü’l-muhtâr, Beirut 1992, II, 136-140; 151-152).

During the times when contagious diseases that emerged from time to time such as plague were common and gained a pandemic dimension, when the streets were emptied due to the quarantine practices and the mosques could not be used to perform prayers with congregation, the scholars did not give the fatwa that people could perform Friday prayers in their houses. For example, an infectious disease called Plague of ‘Amwas occurred in the Damascus-Palestinian region in the 18th year of the Hijrah and caused the death of twenty-five thousand people, including great Companions working in that region. After these deaths, Amr ibn al ‘As (ra), who was assigned there, took quarantine measures in the mountains by distancing those who are at risk of disease from the society, but did not mention that Friday prayers could be performed in the houses individually (Taberi, Tarih, Beirut 1387, IV, 101; İbnü’l-Cevzî, el-Muntazam, Beirut 1992, IV, 248). Likewise, during the epidemic in 827/1424 which surrounded Mecca as well, mosques remained empty, imams were not able to serve, but the subject of performing the Friday prayers in the homes was not brought to the agenda (İbn Hacer, Înbâü’l-ğumr, Beirut 1986, III, 326). Even though following the plague epidemic that broke out in Istanbul in 1812 and caused
the death of thousands, many fatwas were requested from the Shaykh ul-Islam Mekkizade Asım Efendi (d. 1262/1846) on many subjects, there was no fatwa regarding establishing the Friday prayers in the houses individually for the prayers that could not be performed, or for the people who could not establish prayers in the mosque due to quarantine (“Karantina”, DİA, XXIV, 463-465). Because the general opinion that the Friday prayer must be performed only in masjids or in the areas determined for this with the attendance of everyone has prevented this from coming to the agenda (Cassas, Şerhu Muhtasarî’t-Tahâvi, Medina 2010, II, 134; Merğînânî, el-Hidâye, Beirut undated (Dâru Ïhya’î’t-Tûrâsi’î-Arâbî), I, 82; Şîrbînî, Muğni’îl-Muhtac, Beirut 1994, I, 543; Karâfî, ez-Zehîra, Beirut 1994, II, 335; Sâvî, Haşiye ala’ş-Şerhi’s-Sağîr, Qairo undated (Dâru’îl-Meârîf), I, 499-500).

While there is a dispute in the minimum number of people for the congregation required for Friday prayers (Apart from the imam, this number is 3 to Hanafis, 12 to Malikis, and 40 to Hanbalis and Shafis), there is an alliance that the whole of this number must consist of people to whom the Friday prayer is fardh (According to Hanafis, at least those who are eligible to be a imam to the congregation), otherwise the Friday prayer will not be valid (Merğînânî, el-Hidâye, I, 83; İbn Âbidîn, Reddü’l-muhtâr, II, 151; Şîrbînî, Muğni’îl-Muhtac, I, 545-6; Sâvî, Haşiye ala’ş-Şerhi’s-Sağîr, I, 497). This common opinion of the Islamic scholars concludes that this prayer can only be performed in mosques which are open to everyone.

One of the wisdoms of why the Friday prayer is made a fardh is to ensure that the believers who are resident in a neighborhood come together once a week, to be informed of each other and the issues that concern them, and to find solutions to their problems. In this context, it is understood that it would not be permissible and possible to perform it at home, even considering the meaning and wisdom of the word “Jumu’ah”.

All these evidences and approaches show that the Friday prayer, which is one of the concrete social symbols of Islam, cannot be performed at home, on the contrary, it must be performed in mosques or musallas or open spaces where everyone can attend the general call.

When it comes to the issue of performing the Friday prayers and prayers with congregation by following the imam in another place through the communication tools such as internet, television, etc.: According to the common acceptance reached by the fuqaha (scholars of Islamic jurisprudence), based on the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the Companions (ra), the imam and the community must be in the same place in order to perform the prayers with the community.
The established practice since the ‘Asr al-Sa’adah is in this direction. Essentially, the notion of “a community following an imam” requires this, that is, the unity of space and to be aware of each other. The wisdom of establishing prayers with congregation is for enabling Muslims to meet and be informed of each other, to exchange information, establish love and solidarity among them, and perform the worship with the spirit of togetherness and lovingly. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) encouraged the prayers to be performed with congregation and declared that every step to be taken to attend the congregation will be rewarded (Bukhari, Adhan, 30; Masajid, 53; Abu Dawud, Salat, 47, 49). On the other hand, it was also stated by the Prophet Muhammad (saw) that the “congregation” could only be formed by two people coming together. (Bukhari, Adhan, 35; Nasa’i, Imamat, 43-45). As a matter of fact, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) stated, “If people were aware of the rewards of the first line, they would find no other way than drawing lots to stand in the front line. If they were aware of the reward of performing the prayer in the first time, they would compete for it. If they were aware of the merits of the ‘isha prayer and the fajr prayer, they would come to perform these prayers with the congregation, even if crawling.” (Bukhari, Adhan, 9, 32; Muslim, Salat, 129) and implied that the congregation is formed by the presence of everyone who joined the imam. The following hadith emphasizes the same fact: “Prayer performed by a man in congregation is twenty-five degrees more excellent than prayer performed by him alone in his house or in the market. This is because when any of you performs ablution and goes out to the mosque having no intention except praying, then at every step which he takes his rank is elevated by one degree on account of this (walking), and one sin is remitted from him for this (walking), till he enters the mosque. When he enters the mosque, he will be reckoned as praying as long as he will be detained by the prayer. The angels keep on invoking blessing on any of you so long as he remains seated in the place he prays, saying: ‘O Allah, forgive him; O Allah, have mercy on him; O Allah, accept his repentance’ so long as he does not harm anyone, or breaks his ablution.” (Abu Dawud, Salat, 49).
For these reasons, if a person who is outside the place where the imam establishes the prayers, performs his prayers by intending to follow the imam, this prayer will not be valid. As a matter of fact, according to the Islamic scholars, a river or a wide road passing between the imam and the community has been considered as an obstacle for the community to follow the imam (İbn Nüceym, el-Bahr, Cairo 1311, I, 384; II, 127; el-Fetâvâ’l-Hindiyye, Bulak 1310, I, 87). According to this, the prayer established by intending to follow the imam who is in another place via internet, TV or radio is not valid since the unity of space will not be realized and the concept of “congregation” will not be formed.

In conclusion, it is necessary to comply with all the rules and practices stated in the Qur’an and the Sunnah while performing the worships. In addition to adding and removing elements in worships, it is not correct to change the form and the ways of performing thereof.