

On Stepping Over People on Jumu'ah and in General Sittings to Get to the Front

Article taken and slightly adapted from: thealbaani.site - (Al-Huda wan-Noor, 220.)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Questioner: Someone's asking about stepping over people's shoulders during the Friday prayer.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رحمه الله): The questioner is alluding to an authentic hadeeth stating that the Prophet ﷺ was delivering the Friday sermon when a man entered the mosque and started to walk past the people and step over them. So he ﷺ said, "**Sit down because you have come late and [also] harmed the people.**"

[The Arabic word the Prophet ﷺ used] 'آتَيْتَ' means you were late in coming [to the mosque], and then you wanted to advance through the rows by harming your Muslim brothers by stepping over them, and this is not permissible. That is why he ﷺ said to him, "**Sit where you are and do not harm the Muslims by stepping over their necks.**"

Now the question is asked about a gathering like this one [of ours]: is it allowed for someone in the back to step over [lit: step over the necks of] those in front in order to reach a place in the front rows?

The answer is that this moving forward through the rows [in this sitting] is the same as that moving forward done during Friday prayers, both have the same ruling, both share the same common factor which is that it is causing harm—and harming the believers is not permissible, whether on Friday or any other day. [Harming them is not allowed] for example in the 'Eed prayer area or in a sitting in a central mosque like this: both of these are causing harm equally, so it is not permissible.

It is only permissible if those sitting in the gathering—whether in the mosque or in any such gathering in a Jaami' mosque like this—[it is only permissible] if there is a gap in the front rows, and we do see this often in many mosques, then in this case it is permissible to move forward to fill the gap in the front rows. However, if there is no gap then one should sit at the end [where there is room].

In any case, the answer is that causing harm is not permissible, whether on a Friday or any other day, except in the case where those listening are being neglectful and leaving gaps in the front rows, in which case it is permissible to step over them—gently and with patience—in order to fill the gaps in the front rows or at the front of the gathering.

And it is pertinent for us to remember on this occasion that harming a [single] Muslim, let alone many of them, is not permissible even during acts of worship. It is not allowed to harm a Muslim through an act of worship.

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For example, when he ﷺ was in his room, which as you know was near his mosque, he ﷺ heard raised voices in the mosque reciting the Qur'aan, so he ﷺ said, "**O people, each one of you is communing with his Lord, so do not raise your voices while reciting one over the other lest you harm the believers.**"

Namely, it is not permissible to raise one's voice doing dhikr because of the harm it causes some worshippers. And this kind of harm occurs in most mosques today, especially those whose congregations, following on from their Imaam, are among the furthest from knowing the Sunnah. Significant harm occurs in these mosques when, after the Imaam gives salaam, people raise their voices seeking forgiveness or when saying Laa ilaaha illallaah ten times after Fajr, for example, and Maghrib, where they raise their voices with these ten repetitions.

Saying this ten times after Maghrib and Fajr is from the Sunnah and it has extremely great virtue, but it should be done quietly and silently not out aloud, because saying it with raised voices causes harm to some worshippers.

How so?

It often happens that some of the people praying are those who have missed one or more rak'ahs ... and then when those who have completed their prayers with the Imaam raise their voices in dhikr it distracts those who have stood up to make up the part of the salaah they missed. In fact the disturbance can be even greater than that, because [it also harms] those who [actually] finished [the salaah along] with the Imaam [and who] have dhikr they want to perform [quietly after the salaah] between themselves and their Lord not wanting to disturb others so they say their adhkaar quietly whilst those others are raising their voices in dhikr and disturbing them and the Prophet ﷺ, as you heard earlier, said, "**Do not raise your voices reciting over one another harming the believers by doing so.**"

This hadeeth which explicitly forbids harming believers even by raising one's voice during dhikr ... because this raising of the voice during dhikr is, at best, permissible on some occasions—but if this permissible act results in any harm to a Muslim, then it must be avoided due to this explicit hadeeth, "**... each one of you is communing with his Lord, so do not raise your voices while reciting one over the other ...**"

Even those people who say Laa ilaaha illallaah in unison ten times disturb themselves too. This can be seen when a person thinks about what happens when the tahleel [Laa ilaaha illallaah] is performed in unison in one voice: one of them might cut his sentence short [due to being out of breath etc.,] and not be able to complete it entirely, causing him some confusion, and then due to the sound of the others reading in unison, he can't finish it. And as a result this very person who was reading with them in unison and whose breath was cut off is himself harmed by the loud reading.

But if he kept it to himself he would read deliberately and quietly, secretly between himself and his Lord. And Allaah, the Blessed and Most High, knows what is secret and what is even more hidden, as stated in the Qur'aan.

Some books of the scholars mention a very important warning taken from this hadeeth.

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They said that if there is a person sleeping in the mosque, tired, [who has been busy] working, or a stranger who has been cut off on his travels, then it is not permissible to raise one's voice when doing dhikr so as not to disturb him sleeping—[remember] he is sleeping not [even] doing dhikr [and you still can't disturb him] so what about [disturbing] someone who is doing dhikr of Allaah—someone [sitting] reciting the Qur'aan and then people raise their voices doing dhikr which results in them falling into the prohibition that you just heard from the Prophet ﷺ, i.e., "*O people, each one of you is communing with his Lord, so do not raise your voices while reciting one over the other lest you harm the believers.*"

Thus, harming the believers is not permissible even through the recitation of the Qur'aan so what about stepping over people's shoulders, whether on Fridays as we mentioned or in general gatherings?

This is the answer to your question.