

WOMEN'S PRAYER DIFFERENCES

The traditional scholars of Islam have always recognized that there are differences in the manner of prayer for a man and woman. These can best be summed up but the saying of Imām Baihaqī that “The separating factor between the laws of salāh of men and women is that of concealment; a woman is commanded to do all those actions which are more concealing for her” (As-Sunan al-Kubrā Lil Baihaqī). Insha’Allah some of the narrations below, as well as the opinions of the scholars, should make this point clear.

NARRATIONS REGARDING SAJDH

Yazīd ibn Abī Habīb reports that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) once passed by two women who were praying and said to them, “When you prostrate, keep your body attached to the ground because a woman has not been created like a man” (Marāsīl Li Abī Dāwūd).

Abdullāh Ibn Umar reports that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said, “When a woman sits during salāh, she should place one thigh over the other and when she prostrates, she must attach the stomach to her thighs, since that is more concealing for her. Indeed, Allah looks at her and tells the angels, “Oh My angels! Bear witness that I have forgiven her” (As-Sunan al-Kubrā Lil Baihaqī).

It is narrated from Alī that “When a woman prostrates, she should perform ihtifāz (i.e. to lean on one side and rest on the posterior) and keep her thighs close together” (Musannaf Abd al-Razzāq).

Ibrāhīm an-Nakā’ī said that “When a woman prostrates, she should join her thighs to her stomach without raising her posterior and without stretching her limbs out like a male” (As-Sunan al-Kubrā Lil Baihaqī).

Considering the above narrations, the following hadīth is then understood to refer to men specifically, “The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) prohibited that a man should spread his arms (in sajdah) like a dog spreads its arms” (Sahīh Muslim).

Hanafi Madhhab

“And a woman will contract herself in her rukū and her sajdah. She will spread her forearms on the ground (in sajdah)” (Radd ‘l-Muhtār).

Shafi'i Madhhab

“And in Majmū’, a text from al-Umm, it is quoted saying, ‘A female will contract herself in the salāh. In other words, her elbows will be on her sides’” (Hāshiyah al-Shīrānwī).

It is also mentioned in Umdat ‘s-Salik (Reliance of the Traveler) that a women will keep her feet together while standing, keep herself contracted during sajdah, etc.

Mālikī Madhhab

“It is preferred for a woman to contract herself in such a way that her stomach is attached to her thighs and her elbows are attached to her knees (in sajdah)” (Hāshiyah al-Dasūqī).

Hanbalī Madhhab

“A female should contract herself in rukū and sajdah” (Sharh Muntaha al-Irādāt).

NARRATIONS REGARDING OTHER PRAYER POSITIONS

Raising the Hands

Wā’il ibn Hujr states that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said to him, “Oh Ibn Hujr, when you perform salāh, raise your hands till your ears while a woman should raise her hands till her chest” (Majma’ az-Zawā’id and I’lā as-Sunan).

“Atā (one of great tābi’īn of Makkah) was asked how a woman should raise her hands in salāh. He replied that she should raise them till her breast” (Musannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah).

The Sitting Position

“Abdullāh ibn Umar was asked how women performed their salāh during the era of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam). He replied that initially they performed tarabbu’ (i.e. to sit cross-legged). Then they were ordered to close together and lean onto one side by resting on their left buttock and contracting themselves” (Jāmi’ ‘l-Masānīd).

“When Ibn Abbās was asked about the salāh of a woman he replied, ‘She must draw herself close together and lean onto one side by resting on her left buttock’” (Musannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah).

“As for a woman, she will bend slightly in rukū without spreading her fingers out. She will keep them together on her knees by merely placing the palms. She will bend her knees slightly and not spread her arms out. She should not spread out in rukū and sajdah, while she will sit on her legs. In sajdah she will make her stomach rest on her thighs. A woman will sit on her left buttock and position her legs out to the right side” (Fatāwā Alamgiriyyah).