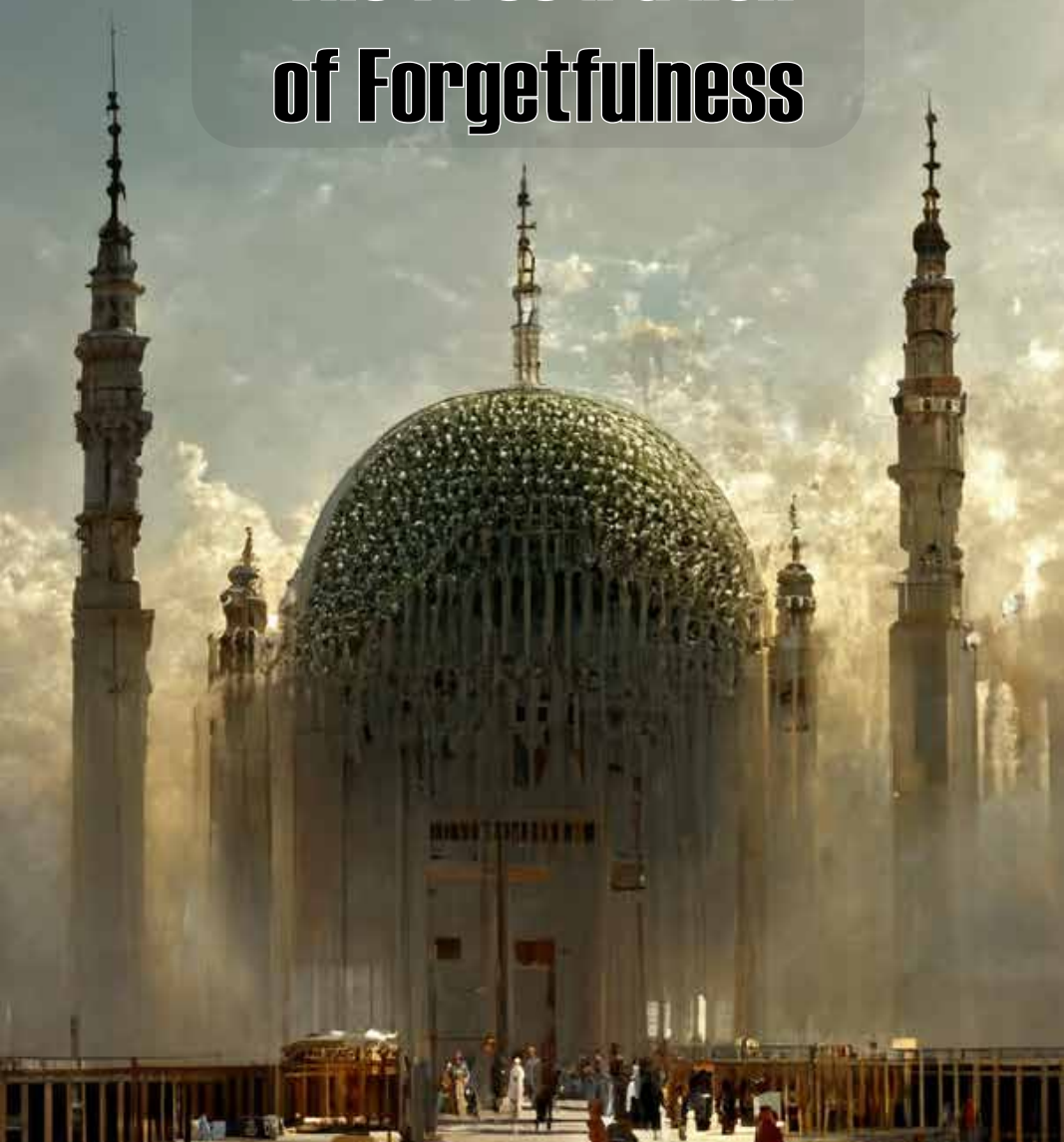


The Prostration of Forgetfulness



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All praise is for Allāh; we praise Him, seek His help, ask for His forgiveness and repent to Him. We also seek refuge with Him from the wickedness of ourselves and the evil of our actions and deeds. Whomsoever Allāh ﷻ guides, none can mislead and whomsoever Allāh ﷻ misguides, none can guide.

I testify that there is no God worthy of worship save Allāh ﷻ Alone, having no partners. I also testify that Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger and slave. May peace and prayers be upon Him, his family, his Companions and those who follow his guidance. I proceed, O people:

Fear Allāh ﷻ, the Most High, and learn your religion! Know the boundaries of what Allāh ﷻ has revealed to His Messenger ﷺ! As the Messenger of Allāh ﷻ said:

“...when Allāh wishes good for anyone, He instructs him in the understanding of religion.”

You must know that some of the most important things to learn are the issues and rulings related to the prayer, the second pillar of Islam and the core of the religion. Many Muslims know little about *Sujud as-Sahw* (the prostration for forgetfulness) so they tend to make too many errors in their prayers in this regard. There are cases and certain non-deliberate errors in the prayer that call for the prostration for forgetfulness. These can be categorized in three situations: adding something to the prayer, subtracting something from it, or having doubt regarding a part of the prayer. When a Muslim adds to any of the positions of the prayer, be it bowing, prostrating, standing, or even a whole *Rak'ah* (unit of prayer), then it becomes incumbent upon him to perform the prostration for forgetfulness after the *Salam* (completion of the prayer); one is to prostrate twice after the *Salam*. This occurred at the time of the Prophet ﷺ as Ibn Masood رضي الله عنه narrated:

قَالَ ابْنُ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: صَلَّى النَّبِيُّ ﷺ الظُّهْرَ حَمْسًا فَقِيلَ لَهُ: أَرِيدَ فِي الصَّلَاةِ؟ قَالَ: وَمَا ذَلِكَ؟ قَالُوا: صَلَّيْتَ حَمْسًا، فَسَجَدَ سَجْدَتَيْنِ بَعْدَهَا

سَلَّمَ .

“The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ [once] prayed the Noon prayer five [*Rak'ât*]. Upon that he was asked whether another *Rak'ah* was added to the prayer. The Prophet replied: “What happened?” They said: “You have prayed five *Rak'ât*.” Then the Prophet ﷺ prostrated twice after the *Salam*.”

It is important to note that when a Muslim realizes that he has added a *Rak'ah* to the prayer forgetfully while he is still praying, he must stop and return back to his last position before this addition. He must still perform *Sujud as-Sahw* [prostration for forgetfulness].

If the *Musalli* (the Muslim who is praying) performs *Salâm* unintentionally and forgetfully before the prayer is completed and after a short time he remembers what he did wrong, then it will be incumbent upon him to complete his prayer and perform *Sujud as-Sahw* after *Salâm*. Abu Hurraira رضي الله عنه narrated that:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ صَلَّى بِهِمُ الظُّهْرَ أَوْ العَصْرَ رَكَعَتَيْنِ ثُمَّ سَلَّمَ، فَأَخْبَرُوهُ بِأَنَّهُ نَسِيَ، فَتَقَدَّمَ وَصَلَّى مَا بَقِيَ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ ثُمَّ سَلَّمَ ثُمَّ سَجَدَ سَجْدَتَيْنِ ثُمَّ سَلَّمَ.

“The Prophet ﷺ had prayed the Noon prayer, or the Afternoon prayer, two *Rak'ât* then performed *Salâm*. The people then informed him, upon which he ﷺ proceeded and completed his prayer and then prostrated twice after *Salam*. He also said *Salam* after completing the two prostrations.”

However, if a long time has passed, or the person has lost his purity (meaning he needs another ablution) before remembering what he did wrong, then he will have to repeat his prayer as if he did not pray. This is because he should not base the last part of the prayer on the first part being separated by a long time or by nullification of purity.

As for the lacking of a part of the prayer, the *Musalli* must make up for that part by performing *Sujud as-Sahw* before he ends it. If he forgets the first *Tashahhud* (the sitting position after the completion of the second *Rak'ah*), and stands up after completing the second *Rak'ah*, he must proceed in his prayer then perform *Sujud as-Sahw* before *Salâm*.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ بُحَيْنَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ صَلَّى فَقَامَ فِي الرَّكَعَتَيْنِ فَسَبَّحُوا بِهِ،
فَمَضَى فِي صَلَاتِهِ فَلَمَّا كَانَ فِي آخِرِ الصَّلَاةِ سَجَدَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُسَلَّمَ ثُمَّ سَلَّمَ.

“Abdullah bin Buheinah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ [once] rose up standing after the second *Rak'ah* without sitting for the recitation of the *Tashahhud*. The people tried to call his attention by saying (*Subhān Allāh*), yet he ﷺ proceeded in his prayer, and prostrated twice before concluding the prayer with *Salām*.” (Agreed upon)

The same may be applied if a person forgets to say ‘*Subhana Rabbiya al-‘Azeem*’ while bowing, ‘*Subhana Rabbiyyal-‘Ala*’ while prostrating, or any of the *Takbir* (saying *Allāhu Akbar*) save the opening *Takbir*.

If a person doubts how many *Rak'ât* he has completed—three or four—and cannot determine the correct number, he must consider the lesser number and complete his prayer accordingly. Then perform the prostration for forgetfulness before ending his prayer. The Prophet ﷺ said:

«إِذَا شَكَّ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِ، فَلَمْ يَدْرِ كَمْ صَلَّى ثَلَاثًا أَمْ أَرْبَعًا فَلْيُطِرِحِ
لِلشَّكِّ وَلْيَبْنِ عَلَى مَا اسْتَيْقَنَ، ثُمَّ يَسْجُدُ سَجْدَتَيْنِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُسَلَّمَ، فَإِنْ كَانَ
صَلَّى خَمْسًا شَفَعْنَ لَهُ صَلَاتَهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ صَلَّى إِتْمَامًا لِأَرْبَعٍ كَانَتْ تَرْغِيمًا
لِلشَّيْطَانِ».

“If one of you becomes uncertain while praying as to how many [*Rak'ât*] he has completed, three or four, he should cast aside his doubt and base his prayer on what he is certain of, then perform two *Sajdah* [for forgetfulness] before he concludes his prayer with *Salām*. If he has prayed five *Rak'ât*, this will complete his prayer, and if he has prayed exactly four, it will be humiliation for the devil.”

However, if he positively determines the correct number, he may complete his prayer according to this decision and then perform *Sujud*

as-Sahw after the *Salâm*. Ibn Masood ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

«إِذَا شَكَّ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِ فَلْيَحْزِرِ الصَّوَابَ فَلْيُمِّمْ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُسَلِّمْ ثُمَّ يَسْجُدُ
سَجْدَتَيْنِ» .

“If anyone of you is uncertain about his prayer (how much he has prayed), he should strive to achieve certainty, then complete his prayer accordingly and prostrate twice after *Salam*.”

By this, we may conclude that *Sujud as-Sahw* can be performed before the end of the prayer or after. There are three cases for which *Sujud as-Sahw* is done after the *Salam*.

The first, is when something is added to the prayer;

The second, is when a person ends the prayer before it is completed, which may also be considered an addition; and the third is when a person has doubt about how much has been completed of the prayer. In all other cases, *Sujud as-Sahw* must be done before ending the prayer.

Unfortunately, many people disapprove performing *Sujud as-Sahw* after *Salâms* and consider it weird, because they are not acquainted with the correct teachings about it. Some scholars regard both practices to be mandatory where one cannot substitute for the other. The responsibility lies with the *Imams* to teach the people the true teachings of Islam and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. It would be more pathetic if the *Imams* themselves know nothing about this ruling, thinking that all forms and cases of forgetfulness can be amended by performing the *Sujud as-Sahw* before *Salam*. To our surprise, some *Imams* know the ruling and the correct teaching in this regard, but they choose not to apply such because they do not want to cause confusion amongst their followers, so they say. This is not a genuine excuse for which one abandons a prophetic order and decree. The right thing to do here is to teach and practice the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ, which in this case, implies performing *Sujud as-Sahw* after the *Salâm* if the case calls for it, so that people may have the opportunity to learn the *Sunnah* and understand its application. This will definitely remove all kinds of

confusion and cause the people to be rewarded for practicing the *Sunnah*.

﴿يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّيبَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سَبِيلَ الذِّكْرِ مِنَ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝ وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ
الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ يُمِيلُوا مِيلًا عَظِيمًا ۝ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وِجْدَانَ الْإِنْسَانِ
سَعِيْفًا﴾

“Allâh wishes to make clear (what is lawful and what is unlawful) to you, and to show you the ways of those before you, and accept your repentance and Allâh is All-Knower, All-Wise. Allâh wishes to accept your repentance, but those who follow their lusts, wish that you (believers) should deviate tremendously away (from the Right Path). Allâh wishes to lighten (the burden) for you; and man was created weak (cannot be patient to leave sexual intercourse with woman).” (4:26-28)

O Allâh! Gather the hearts of the Muslims and cause them to cling to Your Book and the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet ﷺ! Unite them in obedience to You! Give them the blessing of Your Book and the understanding of Your Prophet’s *Sunnah*. Verily You are Most capable to do whatever You will.

Allâh commands justice, the doing of good, and giving to kith and kin, and He forbids all indecent behavior, evil and aggression. He instructs you, so that you may be admonished. So keep remembrance of Allâh the Almighty, the Most High and Exalted, and He shall remember you. Thank Him for His endless favors and He shall provide you with more. Verily, remembering Him is the greatest (thing) Allâh ﷻ is well acquainted with all that you do.