7198 - Do You Have to Recite Surahs in Order in Prayer?

the question

My question is regarding the order in which the Quran should be recited in a prayer, either out loud or quietly.

Should the worshiper recite the surahs or ayahs in the order that they are presented in the Quran. For example, is it permissible to recite surah Al-Nas in the first rak`ah followed by surah Al-Kawthar in the second rak`ah, or ayah 50-60 in surah al Baqarah (for example), followed by ayah 10-20 in the second rak`ah. Please clarify this and explain why.

Summary of answer

The order of Surahs is not binding when writing, praying, studying, teaching or learning. There is no report from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) concerning that which would make it forbidden to differ from it. Al-Bukhari reported that Al-Ahnaf recited al-Kahf in the first rak`ah and Yusuf or Yunus in the second, and he said that he had prayed Fajr with `Umar and he had done the same.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Types of Tankis

Reading later parts of the Quran before earlier parts is called Tankis (inversion). There are different types of Tankis:

· Tankis al-Huruf (inversion of letters)

· Tankis al-Kalimat (inversion of words)

- Tankis al-Ayat (inversion of verses)
- Tankis al-Suwar (inversion of Surahs)

What is Tankis al-Huruf (inversion of letters)?

Tankis al-Huruf (inversion of letters) means putting a later letter before a previous letter in one word, for example, instead of Rabb one reads Barr

Undoubtedly this is haram, and invalidates a person's prayer, because it changes the Quran from the way in which it was spoken by Allah, and usually alters the meaning in a drastic manner. ((Al-Sharh al-Mumti' by Ibn 'Uthaymin, 3/110)

What is Tankis al-Kalimat (inversion of words)?

Tankis al-Kalimat (inversion of words) means putting a later word before a previous word, for example, instead of Qul huwa Allahu ahad, one reads Ahad Allah huwa qul!

This also is undoubtedly haram, because it changes the Quran from the way in which it was spoken by Allah. (Al-Sharh al-Mumti', 3/110)

What is Tankis al-Ayat (inversion of verses)?

Tankis al-Aayat (inversion of verses) means reciting a later ayah before a previous ayah, for example, reciting min sharr il-waswas il-khannas before ilah il-nas!

Concerning this, al-Qadi 'Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"There is no dispute concerning the order of the verses in each Surah. This is something which is tawqifi, i.e., based on revelation [and is not open to ijtihad], and the order is that which now appears in the Mus-haf, and this is how the ummah transmitted it from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)." (Sharh al-Nawawi, 6/62. This was also the view of Ibn al-'Arabi, as stated in al-Fath, 2/257)

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin said:

Tankis al-ayat (inverting verses) is also haram according to the most correct view, because the order of the verses is tawqifi (something which is based on revelation [and not open to ijtihad]). The meaning of tawqifi is that it was dictated by the order of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). (Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 3/110)

What is Tankis al-Suwar (inversion of Surahs)?

Tankis al-Suwar (inversion of Surahs) means, reciting later Surahs before earlier ones, for example, reciting Al ‘Imran before al-Baqarah.

Ruling on Tankis al-Suwar

Those scholars who say that the order of Surahs is not tawqifi do not see anything wrong with this.

Those who think that it is tawqifi or that the consensus of the Companions on the order of Surahs is evidence, do not think that it is permissible.

The correct view is that the order of Surahs is not tawqifi; it is the result of ijtihad on the part of some of the Companions.

There was no ijma` (consensus) among the Companions on the order of Surahs; the order in the Mus-haf of ‘Abd-Allah ibn Mas’ud for example is different from that in the Mus-hafs of others.

In the Sunnah there is evidence that supports the view that it is permissible:

Hudhayfah said: I prayed with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) one night, and he started to recite al-Baqarah. I thought he would do ruku’ when he reached one hundred ayas, but he kept going. I thought he would complete it in one rak`ah, but he kept going. I thought, he would do ruku’ now, but he started to recite al-Nisa, and he recited all of it, then he started to recite Al Imran and recited all of it. (Narrated by Muslim, 772).

The evidence in this hadith is that he recited al-Nisa then Al Imran.

Al-Nawawi said:

“Al-Qadi ‘Iyad said: this contains evidence for those who say that the order of Surahs is the result of ijtihad on the part of the Muslims when they wrote down the Mus-haf. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not dictate the order of Surahs; he entrusted this task to his ummah after his death. This is the view of Malik and the majority of the scholars, and was the view favoured by al-Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani. Ibn al-Baqillani said: it is the more correct of the two views, although both are possible.

He said: what we say is that the order of Surahs is not binding when writing, praying, studying, teaching or learning. There is no report from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) concerning that which would make it forbidden to differ from it. Hence the order of Surahs in the various Mus-hafs differed, before the Mus-haf of ‘Uthman.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the ummah after him in all ages regarded it as permissible to differ from the order of Surahs in prayer , and when studying and teaching.

He said: with regard to the view of those scholars who say that (the order of Surahs) was set by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and that he put them in the same order as appears in the Mus-haf of ‘Uthman and that the different orders came about before they heard of his ruling and his final review of the Quran with Jibril they interpret the fact that he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) recited al-Nisa first and then Al Imran as meaning that this happened before the final ruling was dictated, and these two Surahs appear in this order in the Mus-haf of Ubayy.

He said: there is no dispute concerning the fact that a person who is praying may recite in the second rak`ah a Surah which comes before the Surah which he recited in the first rak`ah; but it is makruh to do this in one rak`ah, or when reciting Quran outside of prayer.

He said: but some of them permitted this.

The prohibition of the Salaf against reading the Quran backwards is interpreted as referring to those who read from the end of a Surah to the beginning.

He said: there is no dispute concerning the fact that the order of verses in each Surah is based on revelation from Allah and is as it now appears in the Mus-haf and as it was transmitted by the ummah from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).” (End of the comments of al-Qadi ‘Iyad). And Allah knows best.” (Sharh Muslim, 6/61, 62)

Al-Sindi said:

The phrase [in the hadith of Hudhayfah] then he started to recite Al ‘Imran means that it is not obligatory to follow the order of Surahs when reciting. (Sharh al-Nasai, 3/226)

· It was reported from Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) that a man from among the Ansar used to lead them in prayer in the mosque of Quba. Every time he led them in prayer, he would start his recitation with Qul huwa Allahu ahad, then when he finished it, he would recite another Surah. He did that in every rak`ah. His companions spoke with him and said, You always start with this Surah, then you do not think it is enough and you recite another. Either you should recite this Surah alone, or you should leave it and recite another. He said, I am not going to stop reciting it. If you like, I will lead you in prayer as I have been doing, and if you do not like it, I will leave you. They felt that he was one of the best of them, and they did not want anyone else to lead them in prayer. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to them, they told him about this. He said, O So and So, what is stopping you from doing what your companions tell you? What makes you keep on reciting this Surah in every rak`ah? He said, I love it. He said, Your love for it will grant you admittance to Paradise. (Narrated by al-Bukhari mu’allaqan, and by al-Tirmidhi with an isnad similar to that of al-Bukhari, 2901).

The evidence in this report is the fact that the man recited Surat al-Ikhlas in his prayer before any other Surah that comes before it (in the Mus-haf), and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) approved of that.

· This is the action of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him).

Al-Imam al-Bukhari said:

“Al-Ahnaf recited al-Kahf in the first rak`ah and Yusuf or Yunus in the second, and he said that he had prayed Fajr with ‘Umar and he had done the same.” (Bab al-Jam’ bayna Suratayn fil-Rak`ah, in Kitab al-Adhan)

With regard to the latter part of your question, we say:

It is permissible to recite verses 50-60 of al-Baqarah in the first rak`ah, then to recite verses 1-20 of al-Baqarah in the second rak`ah, because then the meaning of the passage will be complete.

But reciting verses 10-20 means that one is cutting off the meaning, so it is better not to do this. Perhaps you mentioned the numbers only by way of example and you did not mean these particular verses.

For more, please see these answers: 20043 , 69915 , 171060 , and 7198 .

And Allah knows best.