

199988 - He wants to move from being Ibaadi to being Sunni (Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah)

the question

I follow the Ibaadi madhhab and I want to change my madhhab to Sunni but there are many obstacles, including the fact that I grew up with the Ibaadi madhhab, and my family and the people of the region where I live all follow this madhhab. My question is: what should I do?

Can I pray with my arms by my sides, without raising them, clasping my hands on my chest and saying Ameen, whilst doing all of these things in my heart?

What about my duties towards my parents and my family?

I hope that you can explain the differences between the four madhhabs and how to pray according to each madhhab.

What is the most famous of these madhhabs?

Which madhhab do you advise me to follow?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Wisdom and kindness are the essence of the answer and advice that we will give you. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “He grants Hikmah (wisdom) to whom He pleases, and he, to whom Hikmah is granted, is indeed granted abundant good. But none remember (will receive admonition) except men of understanding” [al-Baqarah 2:269]. We hope that you will be one of the men of understanding, whom Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, guides and enables to bring about change at a personal level and at a community level, affecting the people around him too. That may be attained by reflecting, researching and pondering, and calling others to look critically at what they were brought up with and to re-examine it. Perhaps the greatest means that will help you to achieve that is learning the true differences between

contemporary Ibaadis and the Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah (the Sunnis), who are the overwhelming majority of the Muslim ummah, namely the followers of the well-known madhhabs and the leading imams. If you study these matters, you will realise what you must do and the direction which you must take.

On our website, in fatwa no. [11529](#), we have previously discussed these differences, but we may sum them up here as follows:

1.

The Ibaadis believe that the one who commits a major sin will abide forever in the fire of Hell and will never emerge from it, like the disbelievers and polytheists. Hence they will never attain the intercession of those who intercede or the intercession of our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)

2.

They misinterpret the attributes of Allah, may He be exalted, that are confirmed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and also deny the meanings thereof that are befitting to the majesty of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. In that regard they are close to the Mu'tazilis, because they say that the Holy Qur'an is created; they deny that the believers will see Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, in Paradise; and they misinterpret some matters of the unseen, such as the Balance (for weighing good and bad deeds on the Day of Resurrection) and the Siraat (bridge over Hell over which all must pass).

3.

Some of their books contain distorted readings of history and accusations against some of the senior Sahaabah such as 'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan, 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib, Talhah and az-Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with him). This led some of them to take a hostile stance and disavow Ahl as-Sunnah and disregard them completely. All of this is proven in some of their books; were it not for fear of making this article too lengthy, we would have quoted all of that.

But the questioner is not asking for detailed research on this matter.

What concerns us here is to explain what we always point out and highlight, which is that being in a good position before Allah, may He be exalted, on the Day of Resurrection can only be attained by following the middle path and adopting moderation in thought, belief and action. All of that has to do with following the overwhelming majority who constitute the Muslim ummah from the time of the Sahaabah and Taabi'een, until the present day. This is an easy standard to follow, which the ordinary Muslim who is not specialised in the study of Islamic sciences can use in order to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, exactly like the way in which he may feel revulsion in his heart if he hear some people speaking about the benefits of smoking, when he knows that all the doctors, east and west, speak of the harmful effects of smoking. He will find himself with no choice but to accept what medicine has determined in most medical schools and scientific centres about the harms of smoking.

In the same way, it is a basic standard by which all Muslims may measure the details of beliefs, so that they will not divert to the right or left. There are innumerable sects and groups who have always been present throughout the entire history of Islam. The one who reflects will clearly see that all of them, without exception, remain aloof, with their leaders and their few scholars, from the main school of thought of the Muslim ummah, which is the school of thought of the Sahaabah, Taabi'een and leading scholars whose biographies we read in the great books of Islam. Why would a Muslim take the risk of choosing to separate himself from the main body of the ummah and choose to follow one of these sects, no matter how much it claims to be following the truth, and no matter how much effort they put into producing proof to support their school of thought? In that case he will have separated himself from the majority of the ummah and its path, which was followed by the leaders and scholars of Islam. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, advising Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan of what he should do at times when people are confused between truth and falsehood: 'Adhere to the jamaa'ah (main body) of the Muslims and their imam (leader).' I asked, 'What if there is no jamaa'ah and no leader?' He said, 'Then keep away from all those groups, even if you have to bite on the roots of a tree until death overtakes you whilst you are in that state.'"

Narrated by Muslim (1847)

Imam at-Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: According to the scholars, what is meant by the jamaa'ah (main body of the Muslims) here is the scholars of fiqh, knowledge and hadith. Then he narrated with his isnaad from Ibn al-Mubaarak that he was asked about the jamaa'ah and he said: Abu Bakr and 'Umar. It was said to him: Abu Bakr and 'Umar are dead. He said: So-and-so and So-and-so.

End quote from al-Jaami' as-Saheeh by at-Tirmidhi (4/37).

What Mubaarak was trying to do was to give the names of some of the imams of Islam whom the non-specialist may take as examples and follow so that he may be guided to the straight path.

It was narrated from the great Sahaabi 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: You should follow the overwhelming majority.

Narrated by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad 32/157). This was narrated as a marfoo' report (i.e., attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) via da'eef (weak) isnaads.

Imam ash-Shaatibi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

All are unanimously agreed that the view that matters is the view of the scholars and mujtahids. ... Rather the overwhelming majority are the scholars whose ijtihaad carries weight. Whoever differs from them and dies, his death is a kind of jaahiliyyah. The phrase "overwhelming majority" may also refer to the ordinary people who are followers of these scholars, because they have no knowledge of share 'ah, so they have no choice but to refer to the scholars concerning matters of their religion.

End quote from al-I'tisaam (3/217)

So the best advice we can give you is to believe in general terms in what was brought in the Qur'an and saheeh Sunnah, in the way intended by Allah, may He be exalted, and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), without distorting or misinterpreting anything, and to avoid indulging in that in which the Sahaabah, Taabi'een and leading scholars of Islam throughout the centuries avoided, such as saying that the Qur'an is created, or that those who commit major sins will abide forever in Hell. In fact you should disavow these beliefs that were

introduced at a later stage and are contrary to the Islamic texts and the consensus of the overwhelming majority, namely Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, and which were the cause of many sects splitting from Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, such as the Mu'tazilis and Khaarijis.

When you do that, you will feel reassured and content, and you will belong to the history of this great ummah and its leading scholars. You will feel yourself connected to its civilisation and path throughout the long centuries going back to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). You will realise that you had been isolated from that civilisation and culture, limited to a small school, with few scholars and few classical books and a narrow view of history. That is sufficient reason to instil doubt in the heart of anyone who belongs to a group or sect, and make him check himself and wonder about the best generations, namely the generation of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), then those who came after them, then those who came after them, and the overwhelming majority of the ummah and scholars – does it make sense that this huge multitude could all have gone astray from the truth, throughout the entire history of Islam, then no one followed the truth except this particular sect?! Thus he will come back to the standard of truth and justice which Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, described in the verse in which He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers way. We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell - what an evil destination”

[an-Nisa' 4:115].

This is the idea which we advise you to use in discussions with your people and your family, but you should use a cautious and gradual approach, by raising questions which will illuminate the path for those around you to rethink the matter once more, so that they will gradually accept from you your being different from them in your ideas and beliefs. If you are not able to do that, then at least you should believe in your heart what we have explained above, so that you can be reassured by returning to the moderate Sunni path.

Secondly:

During all that, there is nothing wrong with you delaying adhering to some Sunnah and mustahabb actions, such as placing the right hand over the left when praying, or raising the hands when saying takbeer, or saying Ameen out loud. All of these are Sunnah and mustahabb actions for which a person does not incur sin if he does not do them, and his prayer is not invalidated thereby.

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Placing the right hand on the left in prayer is one of the Sunnahs of prayer according to many of the scholars. That was narrated from ash-Shaafa'i and ashaab ar-ra'y, and was narrated by Ibn al-Mundhir from Maalik. This also appears to be the view of his madhhab, as followed by his companions who keep their arms by their sides (when praying). That was also narrated from Ibn az-Zubayr and al-Hasan.

End quote from al-Mughni (1/341).

But no one said that this is obligatory. Please see al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (27/86)

Similarly, we have not come across anyone who said that it is obligatory to raise the hands with the opening takbeer (takbeerat al-ihram) or other takbeers (in the prayer); rather this is one of the actions that are Sunnah and mustahabb – apart from the view narrated by Ibn Hazm in al-Muhalla (2/264). Please see al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (27/84). The same also applies to the ruling on saying Ameen out loud. No one said that it is obligatory; rather the view of the Hanafis is that it is mustahabb to say it quietly. See: al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (16/184)

In all cases, these Sunnahs are not the distinguishing feature to which attention must be paid, so you should not be striving to introduce outward changes that may put off the people around you. Rather you should strive to change the proper way of learning about Islam and interpreting texts, and change the way you understand the beliefs of Islam, which we hope will be a means of salvation in this world and the hereafter, and a step towards a new way of thinking.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There may be a single action which sometimes it is mustahabb to do and sometimes it is mustahabb not to do, depending on what interests are best served by doing it or not doing it, according to the shar‘i evidence. A Muslim may sometimes refrain from doing something that is mustahabb, if doing it is most likely to be detrimental to his interests, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) refrained from rebuilding the Ka‘bah on the foundations laid by Ibraaheem, and he said to ‘Aa’ishah: “Were it not that your people have only recently left Jaahiliyyah behind, I would have demolished (and rebuilt) the Ka‘bah, brought its door down to ground level, and given it two doors, one through which the people could enter it and one through which they could exit from it.” The hadith is narrated in as-Saheehayn. So the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) decided not to go ahead with the better of the two options with good reason, namely the fact that Quraysh had only recently embraced Islam, and this would have been too strange and off-putting for them, so in this case the likely negative consequences outweighed the good.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (24/195). See also (22/407)

With regard to following one of the Sunni fiqhi madhhabs, we have previously discussed this matter in detail on our website in the following answers: [5523](#), [10296](#), [21420](#), [69836](#), [103339](#), [129109](#), [148057](#) .

And Allah knows best.