

Question 229) - What is the ruling of one who is doubting in his Salaah if he prayed three or four Rak'at?

A: If that is the first time that happened in his life he must start the Salaah anew. If it happened often then he should continue with what he thinks to be most probable and sit at every possibility of sitting. (Al-I'htayah gives an example: If the doubt arose in a 4 Rak'at Salaah whether it is the first or second Rak'ah he should act upon whatever his self examination says. If there is no conclusion then, he should make it the least, i.e. the first Rak'ah. Yet he should sit on the possibility that it is the second for the sitting is Wajib. Then in his next Rak'ah he must sit again because he has acted on it being the second. In his next Rak'ah he must sit on the possibility that it is the fourth Rak'ah. In the Rak'ah thereafter he must sit because he has acted on it being the fourth in which sitting is Fard. Deduce the same rule on a three Rak'at salaah.

If he does not have a probable thought then he should continue with what he is certain of, i.e. the least amount and make Sujud us Sahw in both situations.

Al-Quduri does not mention Sujudus Sahw when continuing on the least or on the most probable. Ad-Durr al-Mukhtar mentions that Sujudus Sahw is Wajib in all scenarios of doubt, whether it be self-examination or continuing on the least. As-Siraj states that Sujudus Sahw is made when one continues on the least, and when he acts on the most probable thought after thinking for the duration of a Rukn.

The text of al-fath is as follows, "If his examination reveals something he will complete his Salah upon that and make Sujudus Sahw. Similarly in all scenarios of examination or continuing on the least Sujudus Sahw will be made... if his examination does not reveal anything then he will continue on the least.

Ibn 'Abidin ash-Shami supports this in as-Siraj, "When he ponders and his thought reaches a probability, then it is compulsory for him to act upon it. There is no cause for Sujud to be Wajib on him except if he takes long to think as has been explained."

I say that what is in al-fath is correct because it is supported by an authentic Hadith of al-Bukhari and Muslim. 'Abdullaah bin Mas'ud RA narrates from Rasoolullah SAW, "When one of you doubts in his Salah let him ponder what is correct and complete upon that. Then he should make Salam and two Sajdah."

There is no Nass [explicit text] in the clause of Sajdah becoming Wajib when thinking long. It is however a cause for Sajdah according to the Ahnaf when one pauses for the duration of a Rukn without Qira-ah.

~ al-Quduri ~

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