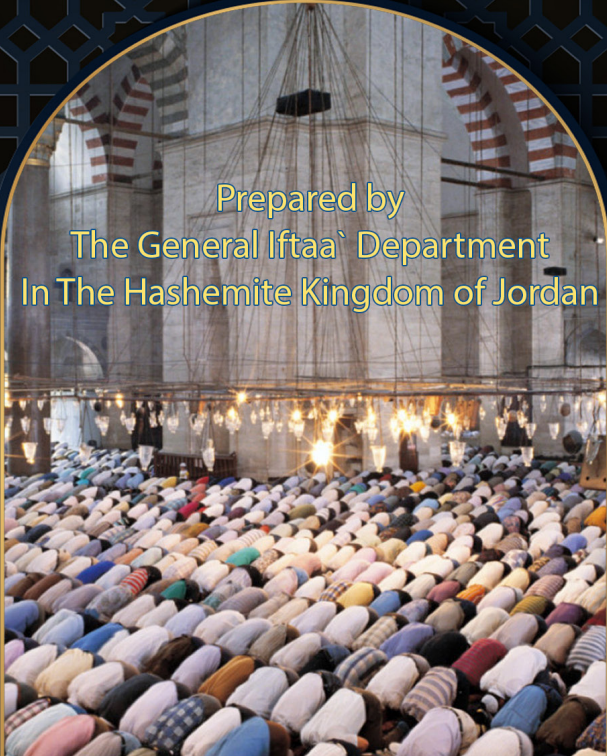


Rulings of I'tikaf

(Spiritual Retreat)



Prepared by
The General Iftaa` Department
In The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



In The Name Of ALLAH, The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful
All perfect praise be to Allah the Lord of The Worlds. May His peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Mohammad and upon all his family and companions.

This is a pamphlet addressing the most important jurisprudential questions commonly raised regarding the rulings of I'tikaf. Its content is derived from authoritative legal rulings (fatāwā) issued by the General Iftaa' Department, drawing upon the established juristic principles documented in the texts of the Shāfi'ī school in particular, and the recognized texts of the four major Sunni schools of thought in general.

I'tikaf and its Legitimacy in Islam

I'tikaf is defined as staying in the mosque with the intention of worship. The basis for the legitimacy of I'tikaf is the saying of Allah the Almighty {which means}: «And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques». [Al-Baqarah/187]. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: «The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) used to perform I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah the Almighty took his soul, and then his wives performed I'tikaf after him». [Reported by Al-Bukhari (No. 2026)].

I'tikaf is one of the ancient religious practices that were known before Islam, as Allah the Almighty says {what means}: «Purify My House for those who perform Tawaf and those who are staying for worship and those who bow and prostrate.» [Al-Baqarah/125].

The Wisdom Behind the Legislation of I'tikaf

It is necessary for a Muslim, from time to time, to attempt to restrain the soul from its permissible desires, confine it to the obedience of its Lord, and dedicate oneself to His worship. This is so the soul may become accustomed to the love of Allah the Almighty and prefer His pleasure over abandoning what is forbidden of its desires and the harms of its whims. The soul is indeed prone to evil, yearning for disobedience. Allah the Almighty says {what means}: «Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.» [Yusuf/53].

The Rulings of I'tikaf

I'tikaf has four rulings:



1. Recommended (Mustahabb): This applies to I'tikaf at any time, but it is more highly recommended during Ramadan, where it is more emphasized, especially during the last ten days. Allah the Almighty says {what means}: «The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months». [Al-Qadr/3]. This means it is better than the deeds performed in a thousand months that do not contain the Night of Decree.

2. Obligatory (Wajib): This applies when a Muslim makes a vow (Nadr) to perform I'tikaf; in this case, it becomes obligatory to fulfill the vow.

3. Disliked (Makruh): This is the I'tikaf of a woman with her husband's permission if she is of an appearance that attracts attention (Dhawāt al-Hay'ah) while there is no fear of Fitnah (temptation) for her.

4. Forbidden (Haram): This is divided into two categories:

- Forbidden but Valid: Such as a woman performing I'tikaf without her husband's permission, or with his permission but with a fear of Fitnah.
- Forbidden and Invalid: Such as the I'tikaf of a person in a state of major ritual impurity (Junub) or a menstruating woman (Ha'id).

The Pillars of I'tikaf:

I'tikaf has four pillars (Arkan):

1. The Intention (Niyyah): Based on the saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him): «Actions are but by intentions». [Reported by Al-Bukhari (No. 1)].

2. The Person Performing I'tikaf (Al-Mu'takif): The following conditions are required:

- Islam: I'tikaf is not valid from a non-Muslim.
- Discernment (Tamyiz): I'tikaf is not valid from a non-discerning child.
- Sanity ('Aql): I'tikaf is not valid from an insane person, even if he vowed it, because he is not held accountable for the obligations of the religion.
- Purity from Menstruation and Post-Natal Bleeding (Nifas) for a woman, and Purity from Major Ritual Impurity (Janabah) for both men and women.

3. Staying in the Mosque (Al-Lubth fi al-Masjid): The minimum duration is for the person performing I'tikaf to stand for a moment longer than the duration of Tranquility (Tuma'ninah) in prayer. Thus, I'tikaf is not valid merely by passing through without stopping. As for moving back and forth (Al-Taraddud), it is valid because its ruling is like that of



standing. However, it is preferable that the duration not be less than a full day and night, to avoid the difference of opinion among the jurists who made that obligatory.

•As for the maximum duration of I'tikaf, the Wise Lawgiver has not specified a limit. However, it is disliked to prolong it if this leads to the servant neglecting his family and being preoccupied from them, as it was reported in the Hadith: «It is enough sin for a man to neglect those whom he supports». [Reported by Al-Nasa'i in Al-Sunan al-Kubra (No. 9131)]. If one prolongs it excessively, it may necessitate abandoning the pursuit of livelihood, burdening others with his maintenance, and causing hardship in bringing his food and drink to him in the mosque, and other such matters. For this reason, it was not mentioned that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) increased his I'tikaf beyond ten consecutive days, except for what Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: «The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) used to perform I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan. One year he did not perform I'tikaf, so the following year he performed I'tikaf for twenty days». [Reported by Al-Tirmidhi (No. 803)].

4. The Place of I'tikaf (Mu'takaf Fih): This must be a mosque of pure mosque status (Masjid Khālis al-Masjidiyyah), which is any place dedicated as an endowment (Waqf) for prayer, even if the Friday prayer is not held there. It is not valid in a temporary prayer room (Musalla) or a center not endowed for prayer, even if the Friday and congregational prayers are held there, such as prayer rooms in workplaces or shopping centers.

The Ruling on Intending I'tikaf for the Duration of Stay in the Mosque
It is permissible for anyone entering the mosque to intend I'tikaf for the duration of his stay, as there is no specific minimum duration for I'tikaf. If he leaves the mosque without intending to return and then comes back, he must renew the intention. However, if he leaves the mosque with the intention of returning, he is not required to renew the intention of I'tikaf, because his intention to return takes the place of the renewal of the Niyyah.

Therefore, it is recommended for everyone who enters the mosque to intend I'tikaf for as long as he is there, and he will be rewarded with the reward of I'tikaf.



If a Muslim Enters the Mosque and Forgets the Intention for I'tikaf, is it Permissible to Intend it During Prayer?

It is permissible for one who enters the mosque and forgets the intention for I'tikaf to intend it in his heart during the prayer. However, it is not permissible for him to utter the intention verbally, as this isn't among the adkhar or remembrances legislated during the prayer.

Recommended Acts (Sunan) of I'tikaf

1. It should be in a congregational mosque where the five daily prayers are established.
2. The person should be fasting.
3. He should increase in supplication (Du'a) and glorification (Tasbih).
4. He should avoid idle talk and vain speech (Laghw) from which no benefit is expected.
5. It should be for a full day, and it is preferable to include the night with the day.

Is Fasting a Condition for the Validity of I'tikaf?

Fasting is not a condition for the validity of I'tikaf; rather, it is a recommended act (Sunnah). However, if a Muslim vows to perform I'tikaf while fasting, then it becomes obligatory upon him, based on what Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: «No fasting is due upon the one performing I'tikaf unless he makes it obligatory upon himself». [Reported by Al-Hakim, who authenticated it].

Disliked Acts (Makruhat) of I'tikaf:

1. Cupping (Hijamah) and Phlebotomy (Fasd): This is in case there is no fear of contaminating the mosque. If contamination is feared, it is forbidden.
2. Excessive engagement in crafts such as weaving wool, tailoring, and the like, and buying and selling, even if minimal.
3. Performing I'tikaf in a mosque or prayer room where congregational prayers are not held.
4. Saying anything that distracts from the remembrance of Allah the Almighty and His worship.

Invalidators (Mufsidat) of I'tikaf:

1. Intentional sexual intercourse, even without ejaculation. Allah the Almighty says {what means}: «And do not have relations with them as



long as you are staying for worship in the mosques». [Al-Baqarah/187]. As for intimacy other than intercourse, such as touching and kissing, it does not invalidate I'tikaf unless it leads to ejaculation.

2. Intentional departure from the mosque without a need.

3. Apostasy (Riddah), intoxication, and insanity.

4. Menstruation and post-natal bleeding (Nifas), as this contradicts the requirement of staying in the mosque.

What is Required of One Who Invalidates His I'tikaf?

If the I'tikaf was vowed (Mandhur), it must be made up (Qada`) according to the manner in which it was vowed. If he vowed it to be consecutive, he must make it up consecutively. If it was not vowed, nothing is required of him.

If Someone Vows I'tikaf for a Specific Period, is Consecutive Performance Required?

If someone vows I'tikaf for a specific period and stipulates that it must be consecutive, he must perform it consecutively. If he interrupts it, he must start it anew. However, if he did not stipulate consecutive performance, he is permitted to separate the days.

Matters That Interrupt the Consecutive Nature of I'tikaf

1. Apostasy, insanity, and intentional intoxication.

2. Intentional sexual intercourse.

3. Leaving the mosque without a need. However, if the departure is for a need, such as illness, ritual bathing (Ightisal), removing impurity (Najāsa), eating, drinking, or fulfilling a human necessity, then there is no harm in that.

Excuses That Do Not Interrupt the Consecutive Nature of I'tikaf

These are the excuses for which, if one leaves the mosque, he is not required to renew the intention of I'tikaf upon returning:

- Insanity and unconsciousness, if the person performing I'tikaf remains in the mosque or leaves due to necessity.

- Leaving due to unjust coercion.

- Menstruation, if the period of purity is not sufficient (i.e., the duration of I'tikaf usually includes it). In this case, she resumes based upon what preceded once she becomes pure, because it is not by her choice, and she is not permitted to remain in the mosque.

- The call to prayer (Adhan) by the regular Mu`adhdhin to the separate,



nearby minaret of the mosque.

•The obligation of the waiting period ('Iddah) upon the woman performing I'tikaf if she was not the cause of it, or the necessity for the person performing I'tikaf to give testimony, and he cannot do so inside the mosque.

If Someone Vows Consecutive I'tikaf and Stipulates Leaving the Mosque During the Period of I'tikaf, What is the Ruling on This Condition?

If the person making the vow stipulates consecutive I'tikaf and makes a condition for a permissible, intended purpose that does not contradict I'tikaf, his condition is valid, such as leaving to the mosque courtyards or to meet a relative. However, if he does not specify anything, it is permissible to leave for any permissible purpose.

Is I'tikaf Restricted to the Three Mosques?

I'tikaf is valid in any mosque, based on the general wording in the saying of Allah the Almighty {which means}: «And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques». [Al-Baqarah/187].

If one specifies a mosque for I'tikaf, it is valid for him to perform I'tikaf in another mosque, unless he specifies I'tikaf in the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Haram), the Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Nabawi), or the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Aqsa). In this case, it is specified due to their increased virtue and the multiplication of the reward for worship therein. However, the Sacred Mosque takes the place of the other two, but not vice versa, and the Mosque of Madinah takes the place of Al-Aqsa Mosque, but not vice versa either.

If Someone Vows I'tikaf in a Specific Mosque Other Than the Three Mosques, is He Obligated to Fulfill it There?

If someone vows I'tikaf in a specific mosque, it is permissible for him to perform I'tikaf in any mosque, and he is not obligated to fulfill the vow in that specific mosque, because all mosques are equal in virtue, and no mosque has a virtue over another except for the Three Mosques.

The Ruling on I'tikaf During the Night of Decree (Laylat al-Qadr)

I'tikaf during the Night of Decree has a great reward, because the Night of Decree has a special virtue, and the virtue of standing in prayer during this night is greater than all other nights of the year. This is confirmed by the saying of Allah the Almighty {which means}: «Indeed, We sent it



down during the Night of Decree. And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter. Peace it is until the emergence of dawn». [Al-Qadr/5-1].

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to seek the Night of Decree in the last ten days [of Ramadan], and he was keen on this due to the virtue of this night. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: «Whoever stands [in prayer] during the Night of Decree with faith and hoping for its reward will have all of his previous sins forgiven». [Reported by Al-Bukhari].

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