66504 - Is It Necessary to Recite the Entire Quran in Tarawih?

the question

Our Imam recites from various places in the Quran during Tarawih prayer each night.
What is the ruling on choosing passages from various Surahs in Tarawih?.

Summary of answer

While it is recommended to complete the Quran in Tarawih, it is not a requirement. Scholars suggest that completing it benefits the congregation, but the Imam should consider the capability of the worshippers. It is permissible to recite from different parts of the Quran instead of completing it fully. Ultimately, the focus should be on devotion and attentiveness rather than speed.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Virtue of Completing the Quran in Tarawih

It is better when reciting in Tarawih to complete the Quran once. This may be understood from the reports in Al-Bukhari and Muslim which state that Jibril used to study the Quran with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Ramadan, and review it with him.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said (15/325):

It may be understood from this that if the Imam recites the entire Quran to the congregation during Ramadan, this is a kind of this studying together, because this lets them benefit from hearing the entire Quran. Hence Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) used to like to complete the Quran with those whom he led in prayer, and this is akin to what the Salaf did,

namely liking to hear the entire Quran. But this does not mean that he should rush and not be deliberate in his recitation, and not seek to be focused and calm, rather seeking these things is better than seeking to complete it. (Majmu` Fatawa Ash-Shaykh Ibn Baz, 11/331-333)

Scholarly Opinions on Completing the Quran in Tarawih

It says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah (27/148):

The Hanbalis and most of the Hanafi Shaykhs – and it was also narrated by Al-Hasan from Abu Hanifah – are of the view that the Sunnah is to complete the Quran in Tarawih prayer so that the people can hear the entire Quran in that prayer. The Hanafis said: The Sunnah is to complete it once. So the Imam should not forsake completing it because of the people's laziness, rather he should recite ten verses or so in each Rak`ah, and thus he will be able to complete it. (This is based on the assumption that he prays twenty Rakahs each night.) And it was said that in each Rak`ah thirty verses should be recited, because `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) enjoined that. In that case the Quran can be completed three times in Ramadan.

Al-Kasani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What `Umar enjoined was by way of doing more of a good thing, which is to complete the Quran more than once. This is what was suitable for their time. But in our time it is better for the Imam to recite on the basis of the people's situation; he should recite whatever will not put them off from joining the congregation, because increasing the size of the congregation is better than lengthening the recitation. (End quote)

What Al-Kasani (may Allah have mercy on him) said is good, and the Imam should pay attention to the situation of the people behind him.

Balancing Length and Congregation's Ability

It is not permissible for the Imam to put people off by making the prayer so long that it becomes difficult for them and to think that if he does not do that he has done badly! What he should do is to encourage the people to pray even if that is by making it shorter, so long as the prayer is

complete.

It is better for the people to offer a short but complete prayer than not to pray at all.

Abu Dawud (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Ahmad ibn Hanbal was asked about a man who recited the Quran twice in Ramadan, leading the people in prayer. He said: In my view this depends on the people's energy level, and whether there are workers among them.

Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The words of Imam Ahmad indicate that attention should be paid to the state of the people with regard to recitation; he should not make it too hard for them. This view was also echoed by other fuqaha' among the companions of Abu Hanifah and others. (End quote from Lata'if Al-Ma`arif, p. 18)

The Flexibility in Tarawih Recitation

Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

What is your opinion about what some Imams do, choosing a certain amount of Quran to recite in each Rak`ah each night?

He replied:

I do not see anything wrong with that, because it depends on the Imam's own assessment of the situation. If he thinks it is better to recite more on some nights and in some Rak`ahs, and that this will benefit those who are praying behind him, and he feels that he has the energy for that and he feels that he is enjoying the recitation and wants to recite more verses to benefit himself and others, then he may do so. If his voice is good and he started to enjoy the recitation and feels humble and focused and hopes that this will benefit himself and those who are praying behind him, then if he recites some extra verses in some Rak`ahs or on some nights, we do not know of any reason why he should not do so. The matter is broad in scope, praise be to Allah. (End quote from Fatawa Ash-Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz, 11/335, 336)

Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was also asked:

Should the Imam pay attention to the situation of the weak such as the elderly etc., when praying Tarawih?

He replied:

This is something which is required in all the prayers, in Tarawih and in the obligatory prayers, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When any one of you leads the people in prayer, let him make it short, because among them are the weak, the young and those who have needs.” So the Imam should pay attention to the congregation and be kind to them with regard to praying Qiyam in Ramadan and during the last ten nights. People are not all the same, rather they vary. So he should pay attention to their different situations and encourage them to come. When he makes the prayer too lengthy, he makes it difficult for them and puts them off from attending. He should pay attention to that which will encourage them to attend and pray, even if that is by making it short and not making it long. If the people concentrate during the prayer and find peace in it only for a short time, that is better than a long prayer in which there is no concentration and people only feel bored and tired. (End quote from Fatawa Ash-Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz, 11/336, 337)

Reciting Portions vs. Whole Surahs in Tarawih

In the answer to question no. 20043, we stated that reciting part of a Surah in prayer is permissible, but it is better to recite the Surah in full, because this is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) usually did.

Some scholars – such as Ibn As-Salah – made an exception in the case of Tarawih prayer, and said that it is better to recite part of a Surah in them, so that (the Imam) may achieve the Sunnah of completing the Quran in these prayers.

It says in Tuhfat Al-Muhtaj Sharh Al-Minhaj (2/25):

From this it may be understood that if he wants to recite the whole Quran in Tarawih it is better to recite part of the Surahs (in each Rak`ah), otherwise it is better to recite the whole Surah (in one

Rak`ah). (End quote)

It says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah, 33/49:

In one of the two reports narrated from him, Malik regarded it as disliked to recite only part of a Surah,

The Shafi`is and Hanbalis are of the view that it is not disliked to recite only part of a Surah, because of the general meaning of the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

{So, recite you of the Quran as much as may be easy for you.} [Al-Muzzammil 73:20]

And Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to recite {Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us} [Al-Baqarah 2:136] in the first Rak`ah of Fajr and {Say (O Muhammad): O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you} [Al `Imran 3:64] in the second. But the Shafi`is clearly stated that a complete Surah is better than a passage of equivalent length from a long Surah... This applies in prayers other than Tarawih. But in Tarawih reciting part of a lengthy Surah is better. They explained that by saying that the Sunnah in Tarawih is to complete the whole Quran in this prayer. (End quote)

In conclusion, so long as your Imam is not going to complete the Quran in Tarawih prayer, it is permissible for him to recite from various places in the Quran and that is not disliked, although it is better for him to recite a Surah in full.

Examine these answers for additional information: (65754, 69670, 221797, 156490, 221797, 52876, 108242, 125619)

And Allah knows best.