# Virtues of offering tarawih prayer

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to encourage us to pray at night in Ramadan, without making it obligatory. Then he said, "Whoever prays at night in Ramadan out of faith and the hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) died, this is how things were (i.e., Tarawih was not prayed in congregation), and this is how they remained during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), until the beginning of the Caliphate of `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). `Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhani said: "A man from Qudaa`ah came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said, "O Messenger of Allah! What do you think if I testify that there is no god except Allah, and that you, Muhammad, are His Messenger, and I pray the five daily prayers, and fast in the month (of Ramadan), and pray at night in Ramadan, and pay zakah?" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever dies on that will be among the siddeeqeen (those who tell the truth) and the martyrs."

# When is Laylat al-Qadr?

The best of its nights is Laylat al-Qadr. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever prays at night during Laylat al-Qadr {and manages to catch it} out of faith and the hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." According to the most correct opinion, Laylat al-Qadr is the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan. Most of the hadiths state this, such as the hadith of Zurr ibn Hubaysh, who said: "I heard Ubayy ibn Ka`b saying , and it was said to him that, `Abd-Allah ibn Mas`ood said: "Whoever follows the Sunnah will catch Laylat al-Qadr!" Ubayy (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "May Allah have mercy on him, he did not want people to take it for granted and only stay up to pray on one night. By the One besides Whom there is no other god, it is in Ramadan" he was swearing without a doubt and by Allah, I do know

which night it is. It is the night in which the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded us to pray (qiyam). It is the night the morning of which is the twenty seventh, and the sign of it is that the sun rises on that morning white and without rays." In another report, this was attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). (Reported by Muslim and others)

## Virtues of offering tarawih in congregation

It is allowed to pray qiyam in congregation, indeed it is better than praying individually, because this is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did himself and explained its virtues. Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "We fasted Ramadan with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he did not lead us in qiyam at all until there were only seven days left, when he led us in prayer until a third of the night had passed. When there were six days left, he did not lead us in qiyam. When there were five days left, he led us in prayer until half the night had passed. I said, "O Messenger of Allah, I wish that you had continued until the end of the night." He said, "If a man prays with the imam until he finishes, it will be counted as if he prayed the whole night." When there were four nights left, he did not lead us in qiyam. When there were three nights left, he brought together his family, his wives and the people, and led us in qiyam until we were afraid that we would miss al-falaah. I asked, 'What is al-falaah?' he said, 'Suhoor. Then he did not lead us in qiyam for the rest of the month." (Saheeh hadith reported by the authors of *Sunan*)

## Why the Prophet did not continually lead the people in praying qiyam in congregation

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not lead them in qiyam for the rest of the month because he feared that it would then become obligatory, and they would not be able to do it, as is stated in the hadith of `Aishah reported in *al-Saheehayn* and elsewhere. Following the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), that fear was no longer a factor,

because Allah had completed the religion. The reason for not praying qiyam in congregation during Ramadan no longer applied, and the previous ruling, that congregational prayer is something prescribed in Islam, remained in effect. So `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) revived the practice, as is recorded in *Saheeh al-Bukhaari* and elsewhere.

## Can women pray qiyam in congregation?

Women can attend the prayers too, as is stated in the hadith of Abu Dharr referred to above. Indeed, it is permissible to appoint an imam just for them, apart from the imam of the men. It was proven that when `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) gathered the people to pray qiyam, he appointed Ubayy ibn Ka`b to lead the men and Sulaymaan ibn Abi Hathmah to lead the women. `Arfajah al-Thaqafi said: "`Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) used to command the people to pray during the night in Ramadan, and he would appoint an imam for the men and an imam for the women. I was the imam for the women." I say: this is fine in my view so long as the mosque is big enough so that they will not disturb one another.

## Number of rak`ahs in Tarawih prayer

The number of rak`ahs in tarawih prayer is eleven, and it is preferable in our opinion not to exceed this number, following the practice of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), because he never did more than that in his life. `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was asked about how he prayed in Ramadan. She said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) never prayed more than eleven rak`ahs (of qiyam), whether during Ramadan or any other time. He would pray four, and don't ask me how beautiful or how long they were. Then he would pray four, and don't ask me how beautiful or how long they were. Then he would pray three." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and others) A person may do less than that, even if it is only one rak'ah of witr, because of the evidence that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did this and spoke about it. With regard to him doing it: `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was asked how many rak`ahs the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to pray in witr? She said, "He used to pray four and three, or six and

three, or ten and three. He never used to pray less than seven, or more than thirteen.” (Reported by Abu Dawood, Ahmad and others) With regard to him speaking about it, he said: “Witr is true, so whoever wishes can pray five, and whoever wishes can pray three, and whoever wishes can pray one.”

## Reciting Quran in tarawih prayer

As regards reciting from the Quran during qiyam, whether in Ramadan or at other times, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not set a limit or state what was too much or too little. His recitation used to vary, sometimes it would be long, at other times short. Sometimes in every rak`ah he would recite the equivalent of ‘*Yaa ayyuhaal-muzammil’*, which is twenty verses; sometimes he would recite the equivalent of fifty verses. He used to say, “Whoever prays at night and reads one hundred verses will not be recorded as one of the negligent.” According to another hadith, “and reads two hundred verses, will be recorded as one of the devout and sincere believers.” When he was sick, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) recited the seven long soorahs in his night prayers, i.e., al-Baqarah, Aal `Imraan, al-Nisaa, al-Maa’idah, al-An`aam, al-A`raaf and al-Tawbah. In the account of Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan praying behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), in one rak`ah he recited al-Baqarah, al-Nisa’ and Aal `Imraan, and he recited them in a slow and measured tone. It is proven with the soundest (most saheeh) of isnaads that when ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) appointed Ubayy ibn Ka`b to lead the people in praying eleven rak`ahs in Ramadan, Ubayy used to recite verses by the hundreds, so that the people behind him would be leaning on sticks because the prayers were so long, and they did not finish until just before Fajr. It is also reported in a saheeh account that `Umar called the readers during Ramadan, and told the fastest of them to recite thirty verses, the moderate ones to recite twenty-five verses, and the slowest ones to recite twenty verses. However, is a person is praying qiyam by himself, he can make it as long as he wishes; if others agree with the imam, he may also make it as long as he wishes. The longer it is, the better, but a person should not go to extremes and spend the whole night in qiyam, except on rare occasions, following the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him) who said: “The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad.” If a person is praying as an imam, he should make it only as long as is easy for the people behind him, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “If any of you leads the people in prayer, let him make it short, because among them are the young and the old, the weak, and those who have pressing needs. But if he is praying alone, let him make it as long as he likes.”

## When to offer qiyam prayer

The time for praying qiyam is from after `Isha until Fajr, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah has added one more prayer for you, which is witr, so pray it between Salaat al-`Isha’ and Salaat al-Fajr.” Praying at the end of the night is better, for those who can manage it, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever is afraid that he will not get up at the end of the night, let him pray witr at the beginning of the night, but whoever feels that he will be able to get up at the end of the night, let him pray witr at the end of the night, for prayer at the end of the night is witnessed [by the angels], and that is better.” If it is the matter of choosing between praying in congregation at the beginning of the night and praying alone at the end of the night, it is preferable to pray with the congregation,  because that is counted as if one had prayed the whole night through. This is what the Companions did at the time of `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). `Abd al-Rahmaan ibn `Abd al-Qaari said: “I went out with `Umar ibn al-Khattaab to the mosque one night during Ramadan, and saw the people scattered throughout the mosque, some praying individually, and some praying in small groups. He said, ‘By Allah, I think that if I gathered all of them behind one reader it would be better.’ So he resolved to do that, and he gathered them behind Ubayy ibn Ka`b. Then I went with him on another night, and the people were all praying behind their reader, and `Umar said, ‘What a good innovation this is. What they sleep and miss’ meaning the latter part of the night  is better than what they are doing,’  the people used to pray qiyam at the beginning of the night.” Zayd ibn Wahb said: “`Abd-Allah used to lead us in prayer in Ramadan, and he used to finish at night.” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade praying witr as three rak`ahs, and explained this by saying: “Do not make it resemble Maghrib prayer.” Therefore, the person who

wants to pray three rak`ahs for witr must find a way to make it different (from Maghrib). There are two ways he can do this: either by giving salam after the first two rak`ahs, which is the best way; or by not sitting after the first two rak`ahs (i.e., praying three rak`ahs non-stop). And Allah knows best.

## What to read during three rak`ahs of witr

It is Sunnah to recite *Sabbih ismi Rabbika al-`A`laa* in the first rak`ah, *Qul Yaa ayyuhal-Kaafiroon* in the second rak`ah, and *Qul Huwa Allahu ahad* in the third rak`ah. Sometimes *Qul a`oodhu bi Rabbil-Falaq* and *Qul a`oodhu bi Rabbil-Naas* may be added as well. It was reported in a saheeh report that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once recited one hundred verses of *Soorat al-Nisa`* in one rak`ah of witr.

## Du`a al-Qunut

A person may also humble himself before Allah by reciting the du`a which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught to his grandson al-Hasan ibn `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), which is: "*Allahumma hdinee fiman hadayta wa `aafinee fiman `aafayta wa tawallanee fiman tawallayta wa baarik lee fimaa a`tayta wa qinee sharra maa qadayt, fa innaka taqdee wa laa yuqdaa `alayk. Wa innahu laa yadhillu man waalayta wa laa ya`izzu man `aadayt. Tabaarakta Rabbanaa wa ta`aalayt. Laa majaa minka illa ilayk* (O Allah, guide me along with those whom You have guided, pardon me along with those whom You have pardoned, be an ally to me along with those whom You are an ally to, and bless for me that which You have bestowed. Protect me from the evil You have decreed for verily You decree and none can decree over You. For surety, he whom You show allegiance to is never abased and he whom You take an enemy is never honored and mighty. O our Lord, Blessed and Exalted are You. There is no refuge from You except with You)." Sometimes one may send blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and there is nothing wrong with adding other du`as that are known from the Sunnah. There is nothing wrong with reciting Qunut after rukoo`, or with adding curses against the disbelievers, sending blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or praying for the

Muslims in the second half of Ramadan, because it is proven that the imam used to do this at the time of `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). At the end of the hadith of `Abd al-Rahmaan ibn `Ubayd al-Qaari mentioned above, it says: “They used to curse the disbelievers in the middle, saying, ‘*Allahumma qaatil al-kafarata alladheena yasuddoona `an sabeelik wa yukadhdhiboona rusulak wa laa yu’minoona bi wa`dik. Wa khaalif bayna kalimatihim wa alqi fi quloobihim al-ru`b wa alqi `alayhim rijzaka wa `adhaabak ilaah al-haqq* (O Allah, destroy the disbelievers who are trying to prevent people from following Your path, who deny Your Messengers and who do not believe in Your promise (the Day of Judgement). Make them disunited, fill their hearts with terror and send Your wrath and punishment against them, O God of Truth).’ Then he would send blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and pray for good for the Muslims as much as he could, and seek forgiveness for the believers. After he had finished cursing the disbelievers, sending blessings on the Prophet, seeking forgiveness for the believing men and women and asking for his own needs, he would say: ‘*Allahumma iyyaaka na`bud wa laka nusalli wa najud, wa ilayka nas`aa wa nahfud, wa narju rahmataka rabbanaa wa nakhaafu `adhaabak al-jadd. Inna `adhaabaka liman `aadayta mulhaq* (O Allah, You do we worship, to You do we pray and prostrate, for Your sake we strive and toil. We place our hope in Your Mercy, O our Lord, and we fear Your mighty punishment, for Your punishment will certainly overtake the one whom You have taken as an enemy." Then he would say ‘Allahu akbar’ and go down in sujood.

## What to say at the end of witr

It is Sunnah to say at the end of witr (before or after the salaam): ‘*Allahumma innee a`oodhu bi ridaaka min sakhatika wa bi mu`aafaatika min `aqoobatika, wa a`oodhu bika minka. La uhsee thanaa`an `alayka, anta kamaa athnayta `ala nafsik* (O Allah, I seek refuge in Your good pleasure from Your wrath, and in Your protection from Your punishment. I seek refuge with You from You. I cannot praise You enough, and You are as You have praised Yourself.’ When he gave salam at the end of witr, he said: ‘*Subhaan il-Malik il-Quddoos, subhaan il-Malik il-Quddoos, subhaan il-Malik il-Quddoos* (Glory be to the Sovereign, the Most Holy), elongating the syllables, and raising his voice the third time.

## Offering Two rak`ahs after witr

A person may pray two rak`ahs after witr if he wishes, because it is proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did this. Indeed, he said, “This travelling is exhausting and difficult, so after any one of you prays witr, let him pray two rak`ahs. If he wakes up, this is fine, otherwise these two rak`ahs will be counted for him.” It is Sunnah to recite *Idha zulzilat al-ard* and *Qul yaa ayyuhal-kaafiroon* in these two rak`ahs. (From *Qiyam Ramadan* by al-Albaani)

## Following the imam until he finishes Tarawih

The most correct opinion is that the number of rak`ahs for Tarawih is eleven, but I pray in a mosque where they do twenty one rak`ahs. Can I leave the mosque after the tenth rak`ah, or is it better to complete the twenty one rak`ahs with them? It is better to stay with the imaam until he finishes, even if he is doing more than eleven rak`ahs, because it is permissible to do the extra rak`ahs, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever prays qiyam with the imam until he finishes, Allah will record it as if he prayed the whole night.” (Reported by An-Nasa'i and others. *Sunan An-Nasa'i, Baab Qiyam Shahr Ramadan* The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Prayer at night should be two by two (rak`ahs), and when dawn approaches, pray one for witr.” (Reported by the seven; this version reported by An-Nasa'i) There is no doubt that adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is better and brings more reward, so long as it is done properly and without haste, but if it is the matter of a choice between leaving the imam because of the number of rak`ahs or going along with the extra that he does, it is better to go along with him, because of the ahaadeeth referred to above. At the same time, you should advise the imam to follow the Sunnah.

## Which is better during the day in Ramadan ‘reading Quran or praying voluntary prayers’?

The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was to do a lot of different

kinds of worship during Ramadan. Jibreel used to review the Quran with him at night, and when Jibreel met with him, he was more generous in charity than the blowing wind. He was the most generous of people, and he was at his most generous in Ramadan. At this time, he used to give more in charity and treat people even more kindly; he would read more Quran, pray more, recite more dhikr, and spend time in I`tikaf (retreat). This is the guidance of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Ramadan. As to whether it is better to read Quran or to pray voluntary prayers, this depends on people's circumstances, and the true evaluation of this is up to Allah, because He knows all things. (*Al-Jawaab al-Saheeh min Ahkaam Salaat al-Layl wa l-Tarawih*, by Shaykh `Abd al-`Azeez ibn Baaz, p. 45) A specific action may be better in the case of any given individual, and another may be better for another individual, according to the degree to which a particular action brings a person closer to Allah. Some people may be influenced more by nafl prayers and may focus on them and do them properly, which will bring them closer to Allah than other deeds might, so in their case those deeds are better. And Allah knows best.

## Adding another rak`ah to the imam's witr because one wants to pray some more

Some people, when they pray witr with the imam and he says salam, they get up and do another rak`ah, because they want to do more prayers before praying witr later in the night. What is the ruling on this action? Is it considered to be forsaking the prayer with the imam?

We do not see anything wrong with this, and the scholars stated that there is nothing wrong with doing this, so that his witr will be at the end of the night. He will be considered to have prayed with the imam until he finished, because he stayed with him until he finished, and added another rak`ah for a shar'i reason, which was so that he could pray witr later in the night. There is nothing wrong with this, and it does not mean that he did not stay with the imaam until he finished, but he did not finish with him; he delayed it a little longer. (A*l-Jawaab al-Saheeh min Ahkaam Salaat al-Layl wa l-Tarawih* by Shaykh `Abd al-`Azeez ibn Baaz, p. 41)