



The Rulings of Tarawih Prayer

وليتفقوا (٤)



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 Tarawih prayer. 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.

The month of Ramadan is a grand season for amassing righteous deeds, wherein rewards are multiplied. In addition, among the most significant acts of worship unique to this sacred month is the Tarawih prayer.

The term «Tarawih» is the plural of «Tarwīḥah,» which denotes a single period of rest, analogous to «Taslīmah» for a salutation of peace. It was so named because the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would rest between every two sets of prayers (every four rak'ahs) when they initially gathered to perform it. [Fatḥ al-Bārī by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Vol. 4/P.250].

The ruling for the Tarawih prayer is that it is a confirmed Sunnah (Sunnah Mu'akkadah). Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: «Whoever stands in prayer during Ramadan out of faith and in hope of divine reward, his previous sins will be forgiven». [Narrated by al-Bukhārī (2009)]. The meaning of «standing in prayer during Ramadan» refers to the Tarawih prayer, as clarified by Imam al-Nawawī, may Allah have mercy on him, in his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Vol.6/P.39).

Number of Rak'ahs:

The majority of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah (the mainstream Sunni scholars) are agreed that it is twenty rak'ahs. The Mālikī school holds that it is thirty-six rak'ahs. Based on this, whoever prays eight rak'ahs has fulfilled a portion of this Sunnah and will receive the reward for what he has prayed. The evidence for this is the narration reported



by al-Bayhaqī in al-Sunan (4288) from al-Sā'ib ibn Yazīd, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: «They used to stand in prayer during the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, in the month of Ramadan for twenty rak`ahs». He added:«And they would recite [chapters] containing approximately one hundred verses».

This is the practice established in the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Makkah and Madinah) and in historic Islamic cities. Whoever is able to perform it in its complete form has fulfilled the Sunnah completely. Whoever is unable to do so has fulfilled a portion of it and will receive the reward for what he prayed. However, he may not prevent or forbid others from completing it, as prohibition is only for reprehensible acts, while prayer is among the best deeds of the believers. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: «Prayer is the best matter to be engaged in, so whoever can do more of it, let him do so». [Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī (243)]. Allah the Exalted says {what means}:«Have you seen the one who forbids? A servant when he prays?» [Surah al-'Alaq/10-9].

Method of Performance:

For the validity of the Tarawih prayer, it is a condition to specify the intention (Niyyah); the worshipper must consciously intend to perform the Tarawih prayer or the night prayer of Ramadan. It is not sufficient to merely intend a non-obligatory prayer in general.

It must be performed in sets of two rak`ahs with a single salutation of peace (Salām). It is not valid to pray four rak`ahs with one Salām because this contradicts the prescribed manner. Since Tarawih was legislated to be performed in congregation, it resembles the obligatory prayers and should not be altered from its reported form. If a worshipper intentionally rises for a third rak`ah, knowing it is impermissible, his prayer becomes invalid. If he rises for a third rak`ah out of forgetfulness, he must return to sitting upon remembering.

Time:

The time for Tarawih prayer is between the 'Ishā' prayer and the Fajr prayer. If a person prays 'Ishā' early (Jam' Taqdīm) due to an excuse like rain or travel, it is permissible for him to pray Tarawih immediately thereafter.

Ruling on the Call to Tarawih:



It is permissible to call for Tarawih prayer with phrases such as «Al-Ṣalātu Jāmi'ah» (Prayer in congregation), «Al-Ṣalāh, Al-Ṣalāh» (Prayer, Prayer), «Ḥayya 'alā al-Ṣalāh» (Come to prayer), «Al-Ṣalāhu Raḥimakumullāh» (Prayer, may Allah have mercy on you), or «Al-Tarāwīḥ Athābakumullāh» (Tarawih, may Allah reward you). It is recommended to respond to this call by saying «Lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh» (There is no power nor strength except with Allah). [Mughnī al-Muḥtāj, Vol.1/P.318].

Congregational Prayer:

It is recommended (Sunnah) to perform the Tarawih prayer and the Witr prayer thereafter in congregation, and this entails a higher reward than performing them individually. The evidence for this is the initial action of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him». Narrated `Urwa: That he was informed by `Aisha, «Allah`s Messenger (PBUH) went out in the middle of the night and prayed in the mosque and some men prayed behind him. In the morning, the people spoke about it and then a large number of them gathered and prayed behind him (on the second night). In the next morning the people again talked about it and on the third night the mosque was full with a large number of people. Allah`s Messenger (PBUH) came out and the people prayed behind him. On the fourth night the Mosque was overwhelmed with people and could not accommodate them, but the Prophet (PBUH) came out (only) for the morning prayer. When the morning prayer was finished he recited Tashah-hud and (addressing the people) said, «Amma ba`du, your presence was not hidden from me but I was afraid lest the night prayer (Qiyam) should be enjoined on you and you might not be able to carry it on». So, Allah`s Apostle died and the situation remained like that (i.e. people prayed individually). «[Narrated by al-Bukhārī (2012)].

This is also supported by the action of `Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, when he gathered the men behind Ubayy ibn Ka'b and the women behind Sulaymān ibn Abī Ḥathmah for Tarawih prayer. `Abd ar-Rahman bin. `Abd al-Qari said: «I went out one night



to the mosque with ‘Umar b. al-Khattab and we saw the people in sections separate from one another, one man praying by himself, and another followed by a group; so ‘Umar said, “If I collected these people behind one reciter it would be better». He then made up his mind and collected them with Ubayy bin. Ka’b as imam. Afterwards, I went out with him another night when the people were following the prayer of their reciter, and ‘Umar said, “This is a good innovation, but what you miss through sleeping is more excellent than what you are getting up for, meaning at the end of the night, for the people were getting up during the early part of the night». [Narrated by al-Bukhārī (2010)].

Permissibility of Praying While Seated:

Standing in a non-obligatory prayer like Tarawih is a Sunnah. Therefore, it is permissible for a worshipper to pray while seated on the ground or on a chair, even if he is capable of standing. However, whoever prays seated without a valid excuse receives half the reward of one who prays standing. It was narrated from ‘Imran bin Husain that he asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) about a man who prays sitting down. He said, “Whoever performs prayer standing up, that is better. Whoever performs prayer sitting down will have half the reward of one who prays standing. And whoever performs prayer lying down will have half the reward of one who prays sitting.” [Narrated by al-Bukhārī (1115)].

However, whoever prays seated, if he is able to perform the bowing (Rukū’) and prostration (Sujūd) completely, he must do so—meaning he bows while seated and prostrates completely, touching the ground. If he is unable to do that, then he should make gestures for them (i.e., incline his head) and make the prostration gesture lower than the bowing gesture.

Ruling on the Qunūt Supplication in the Witr Prayer of Ramadan:

It is recommended (Sunnah) to recite the Qunūt supplication in the Witr prayer during the second half of Ramadan. If one omits it or forgets it, he is not sinful, but it is recommended for him to perform the prostration of forgetfulness (Sujūd al-Sahw) before the final Salām. As for outside the second half of Ramadan, the Qunūt is not Sunnah, though it is permissible to recite Qunūt for a calamity (Nāzilah) in any



prayer.

Raising the Hands in the Qunūt Supplication:

It is recommended to raise the hands during the Qunūt supplication, just as one raises them in other supplications.

One should not wipe his face with his palms after concluding the supplication within the prayer. However, outside of prayer, this is recommended.

Length of the Qunūt Supplication:

It is recommended not to prolong the Qunūt supplication. Rather, it is preferable to restrict it to the transmitted supplications and to be brief for the sake of the congregation. However, if one prolongs the supplication, his prayer does not become invalid because it is a supplication, and the scholars differ on this matter. Nevertheless, within the Shāfiʿī school, there is an opinion that the prayer becomes invalid by an excessively long Qunūt (by customary standards). Therefore, exercising caution dictates avoiding prolongation to safeguard the prayer's validity.

Reading from the Muṣ-ḥaf and Amount of Recitation:

It is permissible for a worshipper in Tarawih prayer to assist his recitation by reading from a Muṣ-ḥaf, due to a need, stipulated by Islamic Sharia, that removes the normally disliked status of reciting from a Muṣ-ḥaf, as is the case in obligatory prayers.

Tarawih prayer is part of the night prayer (Qiyām al-Layl). The Sharia Law has not specified a mandatory amount of recitation for each rakʿah. The Imam should be considerate of the state of those praying behind him. The congregation, in turn, should avoid instigating problems and disputes regarding the amount of recitation. Whoever is unable to pray standing may sit during the recitation. It is reported that the Companions used to recite approximately one hundred verses (al-Miʿīn) in each rakʿah of the Ramadan night prayer, to the extent that they would lean on their staffs during the caliphate of ʿUthmān, may Allah be pleased with him, due to the lengthy standing. [Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ, 971/2].

Dhikr, Sermons, and Hospitality During the Intervals:

The brief intervals between every four rakʿahs in Tarawih prayer



have been customary among Muslims for a short rest, to help renew energy and vigor for returning to prayer with earnestness and activity. There is no prohibition according to Sharia against occupying this rest period with remembrance (Dhikr), supplication (Du'ā'), admonition, or listening to the Imam's Qur'anic recitation.

There is no objection to providing some food or drink during the rest periods between the rak'ahs, while observing the sanctity of the mosques and maintaining their cleanliness.

Ruling on One Praying 'Ishā' Joining the Imam for Tarawih:

If a person enters the mosque after the Imam has concluded the 'Ishā' prayer, knowing that the Imam will commence Tarawih before he himself has finished his 'Ishā' prayer, it is preferable for him to wait for the Imam until he begins Tarawih. He then prays with him, intending to fulfill his 'Ishā' prayer. By doing this, he attains the reward of congregational prayer, as the prayer of one fulfilling an obligation behind one performing a non-obligatory prayer is valid.

Bringing a Child who has not yet reached tamyiz (the age of discernment) to the Mosque:

Mosques have their sanctity, which everyone must respect. Worshippers have the right not to be disturbed or distracted, whether during prayer or while listening to the Friday sermon. Therefore, if children are of the age of discernment, they are taught the etiquettes of the mosque, commanded to adhere to them, and encouraged in doing so.

As for those below the age of discernment, who cannot distinguish between a command and a prohibition and may cause disturbance—if it is possible for them to be with their father or brother in a manner that prevents them from causing disturbance and ensures they will not soil the mosque, there is no objection to their attendance. If their disturbance and harm to the worshippers cannot be prevented, then they should be prevented from entering the mosque during prayer and sermon times, because the harm resulting from their entry is greater than the benefit. The fundamental principle is that repelling harm takes precedence over acquiring benefit.

However, if a child causes a disturbance, the primary responsibility for addressing this matter lies with the Imam, with wisdom and good



counsel. Raising one`s voice and causing a commotion in the mosque is not appropriate, as it may lead to conflicts among worshippers and create more disturbance than that caused by the children. Gentleness and leniency are required in such situations. ‘Ā’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: «Whenever there is compassion in something, it adorns it, and whenever it is removed from something it disgraces it». [Narrated by Muslim].

We pray that Allah, the Almighty, blesses us with the benefit of the knowledge we have gained and grants us more knowledge that will bring us goodness and guidance — for He has power over all things.

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