

# Tarawih & Tahajjud Prayers

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## 1. Tarawih Prayer

Ælfwine Mischler, an author on Islamic issues states<sup>1</sup>:

“Tarawih Prayer is a special prayer Muslims perform only in the month of Ramadan. It is a sunnah (or Sunnah *mu'akkadah*) of the Prophet (PBUH), which means that it was his practice to perform Tarawih and Muslims are encouraged to do likewise, but it is not obligatory.

“Tarawih is performed after `Isha' (Night) Prayer. It can be performed at home, alone or in congregation, or at a mosque. In many mosques, one *juz'* (30<sup>th</sup> part) of the Qur'an is recited each night in Tarawih. Thus performing Tarawih in the mosque imparts a special flavour to Ramadan, especially if one is able to do so every night and hear the whole Qur'an recited during the month.

“Tarawih consists of an even number of *rak`ahs*, performed two by two (as Fajr Prayer is performed). It is recommended to take a short break after every four *rak`ahs*. In a mosque, there may be a short religious talk or *du`aa'* (supplication) or *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) at this time.”

The number of *rak`ahs* is not fixed. Dr. Ahmad Kutty, a senior lecturer at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada states: “As far as *Tarawih* is concerned, it is a recommended prayer and there is no fixed number for it. Traditionally, Muslims have prayed 8 *rak`ahs* or 20, or 30, or 40 *rak`ahs* in various circumstances. So, as Imam Ibn Taymiyyah said, it is up to the decision of the Imam and the worshippers; if they can perform 8 *rak`ahs* while reading the same portion of the Qur'an that one would read while praying 20 *rak`ahs*, they may do so. However, if the Imam feels that the congregation cannot endure long recitation with fewer number of *rak`ahs*, he can increase the number of *rak`ahs* and reduce the portion of recitation in each *rak`ah*.”

Tarawih applies to men and women and need not be read in congregation. “It is not required that you pray Tarawih in *jama'ah* (congregation). You may pray in congregation or alone, but you should pray it,” states Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, President of the Fiqh Council of North America.

## 2. Tahajjud Prayer

The Late Al-Azhar scholar Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq states in his book<sup>2</sup>: *Fiqh As-Sunnah*:

“Allah Almighty says: “And some part of the night awake for prayer, a largess for thee. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a praised position.” (Al-Isra': 79)

"In praising those who perform the late night prayers, Allah says: "The slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say: 'Peace' and they who spend the night prostrating before their Lord and standing." (Al-Furqan: 63-64)

"Salman al-Farsi quoted the Prophet (PBUH) as saying: "Observe the night prayer, it was the practice of the righteous before you and it brings you closer to your Lord and it is penance for evil deeds and erases the sins and repels disease from the body."

### Etiquettes of *Tahajjud* prayer

"The following acts are recommended for one who wishes to perform the *Tahajjud* prayers:

1. Upon going to sleep, one should make the intention to perform the *Tahajjud* prayers.
2. On waking up, one should wipe one's face, use a tooth brush, and look to the sky and make the supplication which has been reported from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "O Allah! There is no god but Thee, Glory be to Thee, I seek Thy forgiveness for my sins, and I ask for Your mercy. O Allah, increase my knowledge and let my heart not swerve after You have guided me, and bestow mercy upon me from Thyself. All praise be to Allah who has given us back life after our death and unto Him is the resurrection."

Then, one should recite the last ten verses of *Surat Al `Imran* starting with, "Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,- there are indeed Signs for men of understanding." Then one should say, "O Allah, to You belongs the praise. You are the Light of the heavens and the earth and what is therein. And to You belongs the praise. You are the truth and Your promise is true. Meeting with You is true; the Paradise is true, the Fire is true. The Prophets are true, and Muhammad is true and the Hour is true ! O Allah, to You have I submitted, in You have I believed, in You have I put my trust, to You have I turned, by You I argue and to You do I turn for my decisions. Forgive me of my former and latter sins, and those done in private and those done in public. You are Allah, there is no god besides Thee."

3. One should begin *Tahajjud* with two quick *rak`ahs* and then one may pray whatever one wishes after that. `A'ishah said: "When the Prophet prayed during the late-night, he would begin his prayers with two quick *rak`ahs*." Both of these reports are related by Muslim.
4. One should wake up one's family for *Tahajjud*. Abu Hurairah quoted the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), as saying: "May Allah bless the man who gets up during the night to pray and wakes up his wife and who, if she refuses to get up, sprinkles water on her face. And may Allah bless the woman who gets up during the night to pray and wakes up her husband and who, if he refuses, sprinkles water on his face." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said: "If a man wakes his wife and prays during the night or they pray two *rak`ahs* together, they will be recorded among those (men and women) who (constantly) make remembrance of Allah." This is related by Abu Dawud and others through an authentic chain of narrators.
5. If one gets sleepy while performing *Tahajjud* one should sleep. This is due to the hadith narrated by `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) as she quoted Allah's

Messenger as saying: "When one of you gets up during the night for prayer and his Qur'anic recital gets mixed up to the extent that he does not know what he says, he should lie down." This is related by Muslim.

### Recommended time for *Tahajjud*

"*Tahajjud* may be performed in the early part of the night, the middle part of the night, or the latter part of the night, but after the obligatory *salatul`Isha'* (Evening prayer).

"Commenting on this subject, Ibn Hajar says: "There was no specific time in which the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) would perform his late night prayer; but he used to do whatever was easiest for him."

### Best time for *Tahajjud*

"It is best to delay this prayer to the last third portion of the night. Abu Hurairah quoted that the Messenger of Allah, as saying: "Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven during the last third of the night, inquiring: 'Who will call on Me so that I may respond to him? Who is asking something of Me so I may give it to him? Who is asking for My forgiveness so I may forgive him?'" This is related by the group.

"Amr ibn Abasah reported that he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saying: "The closest that a slave comes to his Lord is during the middle of the latter portion of the night. If you can be among those who remember Allah, the Exalted One, at that time then do so."

### The number of *rak`ahs* to be performed during *Tahajjud*

"*Tahajjud* prayer does not entail a specific number of *rak`ahs* which must be performed nor is there any maximum limit which has to be performed.

"Samurah ibn Jundub said: "The Messenger of Allah ordered us to pray during the night, a little or a lot, and to make the last of the prayer the Witr prayer." This is related by at-Tabarani and al-Bazzar. Anas quoted Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), as saying: "Prayer in my mosque is equal to ten thousand prayers [elsewhere]. And prayer in the Sacred Mosque is equivalent to one hundred thousand prayers [elsewhere]. And prayer in the battlefield is equivalent to one million prayers [elsewhere]. And what is more than all of that is two *rak`ahs* performed by a servant [of Allah] during the middle of the night." This is reported by Abu ash-Shaikh, Ibn Hibban in his work *ath-Thawab*, and al-Munzhiri, in his book *at-Tarhib watTarhib*, is silent about it."

<sup>1</sup> Tarawih Prayer – Islamonline – 25/10/03

<sup>2</sup> Tahajjud: Virtues and ways of performance – Islamonline – 11/11/03