

Title: Tarāwīḥ

Original Title: فصول في الصيام والتراويح والزكاة

Original Author: Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn

THE Tarāwīḥ Prayer

BY:

Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn¹

What is Tarāwīḥ Prayer?

Tarāwīḥ refers to the optional congregational night prayer in Ramadan. The time for this prayer is any time after Ishā Prayer until dawn when the Fajr Prayer time comes in.

The Encouragement to Pray Tarāwīḥ

The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) encouraged us to pray extra in Ramadan when he said:

«مَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ»

Whoever prays (extra) in Ramadan out of true faith and hoping for reward, whatever previous sins he committed will be forgiven.²

Is Tarāwīḥ Prayer Compulsory ?

¹ At the time of translating, the original Arabic text could be found at: http://www.ibnothaimen.com/all/books/article_16607.shtml.

² Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2009)

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In a ḥadīth recorded by al-Bukhārī, ‘Āishah (رضي الله عنها) reported that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) prayed (Tarāwīḥ) in the mosque one night in Ramadan and others prayed with him. He prayed again the following night, and more people prayed with him. On the third or fourth night, people gathered but the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did not come out to pray with them. The next morning, he told them:

«قَدْ رَأَيْتُ الَّذِي صَنَعْتُمْ ، وَلَمْ يَمْنَعْنِي مِنَ الْخُرُوجِ إِلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا أَنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تُفْرَضَ عَلَيْكُمْ»

I saw what you did (last night), and nothing prevented me from coming out to (pray with) you except that I was afraid it (i.e. the Tarāwīḥ prayer) would become compulsory upon you.³

How Many Units (*rak’ah*) of Prayer is Tarāwīḥ?

The Sunnah is to not exceed more than eleven units of prayer, finishing each two units by saying the *taslīm*⁴ (then adding a single unit to finish Tarāwīḥ). This number is evident in the ḥadīth in which ‘Āishah (رضي الله عنها) was once asked, “How did the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) pray in Ramadan?” She answered:

«مَا كَانَ يَزِيدُ فِي رَمَضَانَ ، وَلَا فِي غَيْرِهِ ، عَلَى إِحْدَى عَشْرَةَ رَكْعَةً»

He used to not exceed eleven units in Ramadan or any other time.⁵

³ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2012) and Muslim (no. 761)

⁴ *Taslīm* is the saying of, “*al-Salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāh*” after each two units of prayer.

⁵ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1138) and Muslim (no. 764)

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Also, there is a narration in Imām Mālik's *al-Muwaṭṭa* reported by Muhammad Ibn Yūsuf—and he is considered a reliable narrator—from al-Sāib Ibn Yazīd, a companion, who said that 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) told 'Ubayy Ibn Ka'b and Tamīm al-Dārī (two other companions) to lead people in prayer, praying eleven units.⁶

However, if someone prays more than eleven units, there is no problem with this because the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was once asked about the night prayer and he said:

«مَثْنَى مَثْنَى ، فَإِذَا خَشِيَ أَحَدُكُمْ الصُّبْحَ صَلَّى رَكْعَةً وَاحِدَةً ، تُوتِرُ لَهُ مَا قَدْ صَلَّى»

(Continue to pray) two units after two units. But if one of you fears that the morning (will come upon him), he should pray one unit, thus making all of what he prayed an odd number.⁷

Still, keeping to the number that is reported in the Sunnah (i.e. 11 units) while praying with care and lengthening the units, as long as it does not put people in hardship, is better and more complete.

As for what some *Imāms* (prayer leaders) do of praying excessively quickly, this is not correct in the religion. If he prays so quickly that he neglects one of the compulsory parts of the prayer, this may even invalidate his prayer.

⁶ *al-Muwaṭṭa* (1/110, no. 280)

⁷ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 990) and Muslim (no. 749)

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Many people who lead Tarāwīḥ Prayer do not pray with calmness and care; this is wrong. The Imām must consider that he does not only pray his own prayer; he prays for himself and for others. Therefore, he is like other authorities in that he must do what is most suitable (for those in his care). Scholars say it is disliked for any Imām to pray so quickly that those praying with him do not have enough time to perform the different compulsory actions of prayer.

People should strive to perform this Tarāwīḥ Prayer and not spoil it by going from mosque to mosque (praying portions of the prayer in different mosques), because whoever prays it with the Imām until he completely finishes the prayer, it will be written as a reward for him as if he had prayed the entire night even if he actually spent much of the night asleep in his bed (after Tarāwīḥ).⁸

One final point, there is no problem with women attending Tarāwīḥ Prayer as long as there is no chance of temptations between men and women. This is also with the condition they are decently dressed, not revealing their adornment and not perfumed.

⁸ The evidence for this is the ḥadīth recorded by al-Nasāī, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, and Abū Dāwūd in which the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

«مَنْ قَامَ مَعَ الْإِمَامِ حَتَّى يَنْصَرِفَ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ قِيَامَ لَيْلَةٍ»

Whoever stands (to pray) with the Imām until he completes the pray and leaves, Allah will record for the person as if he had prayed the entire night.