

Number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih Prayer

(An Attempt to Reconcile Quranic Verses and Prophetic Hadith
Regarding Tarawih Prayer)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "I pray as I have seen my companions praying. Whoever wishes to pray voluntary prayers during the day and night may do so, and I do not stop anyone from this. However, if someone does so without regard for the times of sunrise and sunset, then I do stop them."

(Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 589)

Introduction to the Second Edition

All praise is for Allah, we praise Him and seek His help and guidance. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our souls and the wickedness of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can mislead, and whomsoever He misleads, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah, alone without partners, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

Many Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions encourage the performance of numerous voluntary prayers at night. Anyone discussing the number of Rak'ahs in night prayers should consider both the Quranic verses and the relevant Prophetic traditions. Relying solely on the traditions while ignoring the Quranic injunctions demonstrates a lack of comprehensive understanding. In many writings regarding the number of Rak'ahs in the Tarawih prayer, I have observed a reliance on the

narration of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) where she mentions that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never prayed more than eleven Rak'ahs in Ramadan or outside of it. This Hadith is authentic.

There is no ambiguity in understanding this narration. The issue arises when this narration is taken as conclusive proof to determine the number of Rak'ahs in both Tarawih and Tahajjud prayers without considering that Allah has instructed in the Quran to extend the time of night prayers and encouraged His servants to do so.

In this anthology, I have attempted to gather both Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions related to this topic and harmonize all these texts to reach the most reliable opinion. I hope that this methodology will distinguish it from other writings on the same subject.¹

It is acknowledged that scholars engaged in understanding Islamic jurisprudence often differ in their viewpoints. This is because individuals vary in their intellectual capacities and the academic skills required to ponder over texts. Despite these facts, some people involved in religious knowledge forget the respect and rights of their fellow brothers due to differences in understanding and speak or write things about each other that are sinful, leading to animosity and division among the Muslim community. Scholars should remain loving towards each other for Allah's sake because every Mujtahid (independent jurist) who exerts effort in understanding Shariah texts is rewarded by Allah. If his judgment is correct, he gets a double reward, and if he errs, he still

¹ In the first edition, the title of the essay was "Adad Salat al-Tarawih" (The Number of Tarawih Prayers). Since the objective of this essay is to discuss the number of Rak'ahs in the Tarawih prayer, I have changed the title of this booklet. The new title is "Adad Rak'at al-Tarawih" (The Number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih Prayer).

receives one reward. Therefore, a Mujtahid with two rewards should not violate the rights of a Mujtahid with one reward, nor should the latter repeat the mistake of the former, as both strive for Allah's pleasure.

Nowadays, some enthusiasts of the Sunnah believe that limiting the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih and Tahajjud prayers to a specific count is obligatory and label those who exceed this count as innovators. They consider this approach as supporting the Sunnah and eradicating innovation. For example, during a Da'wah trip to America in 1407 AH, I arrived at an Islamic center at the time of Isha prayer. The Imam there was leading twenty-three Rak'ahs of Tarawih prayer. I followed him, but a group of Arab Muslims left the Tarawih congregation after completing ten Rak'ahs, performed their Witr prayer individually, and many of them returned home.

After performing the 23 Rak'ahs of prayer with the Imam, I met some people who did not follow the Imam. They asked me why I participated in what they considered an innovative prayer. I told them that we would discuss this matter after Fajr prayer because I was tired from traveling, and most of those who didn't follow the Imam had gone home and wouldn't hear our discussion. They agreed with my suggestion. After Fajr prayer, I met with all the Arab brothers. There were twenty-three of them in total. I explained why I had followed the Imam, who performed 23 Rak'ahs of Tarawih prayer. I provided them with evidence from the Quran and Sunnah and the opinions of the majority of scholars, clarifying that there is no specific number of Rak'ahs required for night prayers. I also highlighted the negative consequences of differing from the Imams. Alhamdulillah, they accepted my position.

The next night, all of them performed the 23 Rak'ahs of Tarawih with the Imam, and none of them left the congregation after ten Rak'ahs. I thanked Allah for uniting their hearts in obedience. It should be noted that the Imam of this center was of Indian origin.

After the prayer, I delivered a brief speech encouraging people to cooperate in righteousness and piety and to avoid discord and division. After my speech, a brother of Indian origin expressed his appreciation for the resolution of the disagreement regarding Tarawih prayer and shared his happiness. He said that throughout the year, we all support each other in righteousness and piety and express love and affection for one another, but when Ramadan comes, the atmosphere of disagreement and division arises over Tarawih prayer. This was the first time since the establishment of this center that everyone performed Tarawih together in unity. We praised and thanked Allah for this.

Similarly, we observe that some young people do not follow the Imams of the Haramain in Tarawih prayer and strictly limit themselves to eleven Rak'ahs. They also label those who perform the full Tarawih with the Imams of the Haramain as biased Hanbalis. They do not realize that by doing so, they are depriving themselves of the goodness that Allah loves and prefers.

Honorable Sheikh Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Khudairi, a judge at the High Court in Riyadh, may Allah grant him more success, sent me a letter. He mentioned that after assuming the position of a judge in Madinah in Ramadan 1413 AH, his classmate Sheikh Shoaib bin Zaid

Lusuma, who is involved in Dawah work in Uganda, came to visit him. He shared that every year in Ramadan, they face an issue regarding the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih prayer. The people in their region have been performing 23 Rak'ahs of Tarawih for a long time. However, when some individuals who studied abroad returned, they challenged this longstanding tradition and tried to impose the practice of praying only eleven Rak'ahs. This led to disagreement and debate among the worshippers. Is there any solution to this problem?

Sheikh Hamad wrote that he gave them this booklet "The Number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih Prayer" (First Edition) and expressed his hope that this writing would resolve the disagreements and divisions among the worshippers regarding the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih. A year later, when Sheikh Shoaib returned for another visit, Sheikh Hamad inquired about the situation in their country. He reported that everyone was doing well, Alhamdulillah. He explained that after reaching Uganda, he read the booklet to the students who believed in the correctness of the 23 Rak'ahs. By the end of the reading, everyone agreed that performing 23 Rak'ahs of Tarawih was in accordance with the practice of the early generations of the Ummah and that it did not contradict the Quran and Sunnah. Consequently, everyone agreed to continue performing 23 Rak'ahs of Tarawih. Sheikh Shoaib then prayed for me and the author of the booklet. I praised and thanked Allah for this divine success and for uniting people in obedience to Him. May Allah's blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions.

Written by: Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Khudairi, High Court Judge, Riyadh

The main reference and source for those who oppose praying more than eleven Rak'ahs of Tarawih is the booklet "Salat al-Tarawih" by the scholar Sheikh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, may Allah have mercy on him. In this booklet, he states that it is obligatory to adhere to eleven Rak'ahs and prohibits adding more Rak'ahs. He equates those who pray more than thirteen Rak'ahs to someone adding a fifth Rak'ah to the obligatory four Rak'ahs of prayer. Sheikh Albani explicitly wrote this in his booklet.²

Sheikh Albani, may Allah have mercy on him, did not limit his position to specifying the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih but also prohibited increasing the number of Rak'ahs in all voluntary prayers. According to him, it is obligatory to adhere to the manner in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed voluntary prayers. He uses the well-known Hadith "Pray as you have seen me praying" as evidence. He did not consider the Quranic verses regarding the length of the night prayer. He focused solely on the traditions related to Tarawih and disregarded the Quranic verses that encourage lengthy night prayers. These verses indicate that night prayers are not confined to a specific number of Rak'ahs.

This prompted me to write an essay explaining the correct methodology of reconciling the texts and highlighting the weaknesses in Sheikh Albani's position on limiting the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih and other voluntary prayers. Before me, a group of scholars had also refuted Albani's booklet. I reviewed their writings and found that they addressed

² Salatut Tarawih, p: (32)

several important aspects of Albani's booklet but did not discuss the methodological principles of reconciling texts that Albani had adopted. Moreover, they did not use the Quranic verses that emphasize the length of night prayers. Therefore, I felt the need to write on this topic anew, especially given that those influenced by Albani's booklet were not satisfied with the refutations written against it, as they believed Albani's reasoning and methodology in limiting the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih were correct. Therefore, I felt it necessary to shed light on this aspect of the issue that had not been addressed and relied on the existing content for other aspects to avoid redundancy.

My Methodology in This Essay:

My essay consists of an introduction and three chapters.

Introduction: I discussed the prohibition of seeking out concessions and isolated opinions.

First Chapter: Explanation of the rulings of Tarawih prayer. Under this heading, I discussed the nature of the virtue of night prayers (Tahajjud). I explained the virtue of lengthening the time of Tahajjud and the prayer itself. Then I explored whether a specific number of Rak'ahs is intended in night prayers. After that, I addressed the preference for lightening Tarawih and the virtue of increasing the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih. Finally, I concluded with a discussion on performing even Rak'ahs before Witr after the Imam finishes. This first chapter serves as a prelude to refuting Sheikh Albani's position discussed in the second chapter.

Second Chapter: A critical review of Sheikh Albani's booklet "Salat al-Tarawih." I dedicated this chapter to critically examining Albani's reasoning for limiting the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih. I also shed light on the issues where Albani violated the methodology of reconciling oral and practical traditions and the principles of deriving rulings adopted by Hadith scholars and jurists.

Third Chapter: A critical review of two essays by Sheikh Muhammad Uthaymeen, may Allah have mercy on him.

In presenting the information in the second chapter, I followed this sequence: I first introduced a heading for the chapter. Then I quoted the relevant passage from Sheikh Albani's booklet "Salat al-Tarawih," citing the page number. After that, under the heading "Response," I provided a scholarly refutation to clarify the truth and dispel doubts, supporting my position with evidence from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). I relied on the statements of esteemed scholars, Hadith experts, and jurists who addressed these issues, ensuring brevity where possible.

Since this essay aims to highlight the importance of reconciling Shariah texts, it was not the place to delve into the authenticity and weakness of the Hadiths cited by scholars. Therefore, I preferred to attribute the Hadiths to either Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, or one of them. If a Hadith's validity was well known among scholars, I mentioned it without citing its source to avoid making the essay overly lengthy.

Along with this, I pray to Allah, the Exalted, to guide us to the correct understanding of the Quran and Sunnah, leading to His pleasure and approval. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions.

Written by: Professor Dr. Ibrahim bin Muhammad Al-Sabihi
Riyadh (1/1/1436 AH)

Introduction

Prohibition of Seeking Concessions and Rare Opinions

The righteous predecessors used to avoid hastening to give fatwas. It was common for a person to go to a gathering of scholars and find no one willing to issue a fatwa because they generally preferred to refrain from giving legal rulings. Today, however, many muftis are eager to outpace one another in issuing fatwas, facilitated by modern media that allow them to easily disseminate their rulings.

Beyond this, we see many preachers and ordinary people deliberately collecting and spreading fatwas that offer concessions in Islamic rulings. For example, some Da'wah centers and offices display boards listing rulings where scholars have provided concessions, which are then hung in mosques according to the season or occasion. In winter, they write about the concession of wiping over leather socks (khuff). When the Hajj season approaches, they spread rulings related to concessions in Hajj. During the fasting month, they present fatwas regarding what invalidates the fast.

The last time I saw such a board was in the mosque where I perform the five daily prayers. This board was hung under the auspices of a Da'wah center in Riyadh. The board initially listed eleven matters that invalidate the fast, followed by twenty-five matters that do not break the fast even if performed by the fasting person. They had gathered these issues from various sources: thirteen of these matters were deemed non-invalidating by the Fiqh Academy, eleven by Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen, two by the Permanent Committee for Ifta, six by Sheikh Ibn Baz, and one by Ibn Taymiyyah. All these scholars agree that some of these matters are invalidating, while others are not. The Da'wah center suggested people follow these fatwas.

The Imams of Islam have prohibited seeking out scholars' concessions. It is also not permissible to seek the opinions of scholars known for giving concessions, as this leads to chasing after easy rulings. One must adopt the opinion that is strongest in terms of evidence. To achieve this Islamic objective, I have compiled a booklet titled "Masail al-Mash ala al-Khuffayn" (Issues of Wiping Over Leather Socks), in which I discuss the rulings of wiping over leather socks where some scholars have provided concessions. I clarified that the opinions of these scholars are based on a lack of awareness of the evidence and then presented the evidence upon which the majority of the Ummah relies.

I have also compiled three booklets on Hajj issues where some scholars have provided concessions contrary to evidence. In the third booklet, titled "Hatta La Yaqa' al-Haraj" (So That There Is No Hardship), I included a specific discussion on the prohibition of seeking concessions.

I authored a booklet titled "As-Siyam wa Muftaratuhu at-Tibbiyyah" (Fasting and Its Medical Invalidators), where I discussed the scholars' differences regarding medical invalidators. I clarified that the disagreement among scholars in these matters is due to their differing definitions of fasting. Scholars who define fasting as abstaining from anything entering the body consider most of the matters listed on the Da'wah center's board as invalidators of the fast. A group of the Companions holds this definition, and no one disagrees with them. This definition aligns with the majority's view and the meaning of the fasting command in the Quran, and it is also the stance of the four Imams.

The second definition of fasting is abstaining from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. This is the view adopted by Ibn Hazm, and most contemporary scholars have followed this. They have also made an analogy with anything that serves the same purpose as food and drink. The fatwas stating that certain matters do not invalidate the fast are based on this definition.

We are obligated to seek the opinion that is strongest in terms of evidence, not the one based on concessions. The most correct opinion in terms of evidence is the one held by the majority of scholars. According to my research, very few issues held by the majority are contrary to evidence. Therefore, those unaware of the evidence should follow the majority's opinion, as it better absolves them of their responsibility. This also applies to those seeking guidance on an issue. It is not proper for someone to say that they do not know the evidence of the majority and thus follow the opinion of a specific scholar.

Preferring an opinion based on the majority is a method also adopted by Hadith scholars. This is why they consider a Hadith with a single narrator against many as odd (shadh). Similarly, Hadith scholars categorize Hadiths based on the number of narrators: the most authentic being mutawatir, then mashhur, then aziz, then gharib. This hierarchy is based on the number of narrators. Contemporary jurists also follow this approach, which is why decisions by Fiqh academies, joint judicial rulings, High Court and Supreme Court decisions, and the opinions of the Senior Scholars' Board and Permanent Committee for Ifta consider the majority opinion in case of disagreement.

The Companions used to avoid opinions that contradicted the majority, recognizing the weight of numerical superiority. Some scholars hold that the opposition of one person does not affect consensus (ijma), considering such opinions as rare fatwas.

Islamic law encourages unity among Muslims. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The day of fasting is when you all fast, and the day of breaking the fast is when you all break the fast." Recognizing the opinion of the majority is a sign of the correct path, as indicated by the verse:

{أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ، صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ}

[Guide us to the straight path, the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor.] 1:6-7

This verse suggests that the straight path is the one followed by the majority of knowledgeable and believing individuals.

If there is no majority opinion on an issue and no fatwa from predecessors, the one reflecting on the matter should withhold judgment until Allah opens the door of understanding for them.

One example is the issue of supplication after completing the Quran in prayer. Imam Ahmad advocated for it because it was practiced in Makkah and Basra. Besides the Malikis, no one opposed it, and most scholars had no opinion on the matter. Therefore, following Imam Ahmad's view is not considered opposing the majority.

Imam Shafi'i stated, "When most scholars of an era in many regions practice something, and it has been practiced by common Muslims before them, it will be said that such and such practiced it. No one opposed it, and we follow their footsteps. We do not claim that all Muslims agree on it, for we only know of those from whom we have heard or received this practice. Those who taught us explicitly stated this and presented it as evidence."³

Imam Shafi'i's words acquaint us with a methodology of the righteous predecessors. This is why Imam Ahmad, in accordance with the methodology of the majority of the early Imams, advocated for the supplication after completing the Quran.

³ Kitabu Ikhtilafil Hadith, Baabul Khilaf Fis Sa'aat Allati Takrahu Fihis Salat, See the footnote of Kitbul Umm, 7/147

Neglecting the opinion of the majority often subjects one's preferences to criticism, usually due to a lack of awareness of the majority's evidence. Those weighing different opinions must strive to reach the evidence, even if nothing specific is reported from predecessors. Abandoning the pursuit of evidence is not correct. The Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded sincere advice for Allah's religion, which necessitates seeking the strongest evidence, not chasing after rare opinions or concessions from certain scholars.

Had Sheikh Albani, may Allah have mercy on him, followed the majority's methodology in understanding the evidence for the number of Rak'ahs in Tarawih and night prayers, he would not have deviated from the intent of the Quran and Sunnah and the practice of the early generations of the Ummah.

Chapter One

Rulings of Tarawih Prayer

In this chapter, I have specifically discussed ten rulings related to the Tarawih prayer, as these are the rulings over which contemporary scholars have differing opinions. Through this discussion, I hope to foster unity among the righteous servants of Allah concerning this matter. Just as the predecessors performed this Tarawih prayer without disagreement, following the Sunnah of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), I hope that Muslims of this era will also perform the Tarawih prayer in the same manner. The subsequent Caliphs of the Muslims maintained Umar's tradition and performed the Tarawih prayer in the mosques. There was no disagreement among the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) regarding the rulings of this Tarawih prayer. All the Companions performed this prayer throughout their lives in the manner prescribed by their inspired leader (may Allah be pleased with him). There was no dispute among them over these rulings, to the extent that Imam Ibn Qudamah reported the consensus of the Muslims on performing the Tarawih prayer in this manner. Allah is the One who grants success and guides to the path of righteousness and guidance.

First Ruling: The Virtue of Lengthening the Time of Tahajjud According to the Quran

Many verses in the Holy Quran highlight the virtue of those who perform long prayers at night, spending a significant part of their night in prostration, bowing, standing, and reciting the Quran out of hope for Allah's reward and fear of His punishment. These Quranic verses encourage this magnificent act and motivate the believer to spend extended periods in Tahajjud. Regarding this, Allah says:

{وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا}

[and prostrate before Him during part of the night, and glorify Him long at night.] 76:26

In another place, Allah says:

{أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ}

[Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord] 39:9

Another verse states:

{وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا}

[And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer].] 25:64

Allah also commands:

{يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَرْمُلُ فَمِ اللَّيْلِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا}

[O you who wraps himself [in clothing], Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little - Half of it - or subtract from it a little Or add to it, and recite the Quran with measured recitation.] 73-1-4

Another verse states:

{وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسُجِّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا}

[And from [part of] the night, pray with it as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.] [Quran 17:79]

Allah also says:

{لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ}

[They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer]]. [Quran 3:113]

Another verse highlights:

{إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ}

[Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you.] [Quran 73:20]

And finally, Allah says:

{مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ۖ سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ۗ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ ۗ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا}

[Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as

a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers - so that He [Allah] may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.] [Quran 48:29]

These eight verses all point to the desirability of prolonging the time spent in Tahajjud. They highlight the virtue of spending most of the night in standing, bowing, prostrating, and reciting the Quran, out of reverence for Allah, fear of His punishment, and hope for His reward. The command in these verses explicitly suggests the virtue of extending the time of night prayers. Furthermore, these verses do not specify a particular number of Rak'ahs, allowing the worshiper to perform as many Rak'ahs as they can manage, depending on their vigor. The ultimate virtue is for the worshiper to spend most of the night in prostration, standing, and bowing due to their fear of Allah.

There are two ways to achieve the virtue of lengthening the time of Tahajjud mentioned in the above verses. One is to extend the recitation, bowing, and prostration while performing fewer Rak'ahs. The Prophet (peace be upon him) frequently did this, as evidenced by the fact that he once recited five parts of the Quran in one Rak'ah. He recited Surah al-Baqarah, Surah an-Nisa, and Surah Aal-e-Imran in one Rak'ah. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) participated in this prayer and said that the Rak'ah was so long that he considered sitting down due to fatigue.

Another way to lengthen the time of Tahajjud is to perform many short Rak'ahs. The Quran does not prefer one of these methods over the other, but from the Sunnah, it is clear that prolonging the standing, bowing, and prostration is more virtuous than performing many short Rak'ahs. The evidence for this is the narration of Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) as reported in Sahih Muslim, where the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "The best prayer is the one with the longest Qunoot (standing)." Another narration states that when asked which prayer is best, the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "The prayer with the longest Qunoot (standing)."⁴

Imam Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "By 'Qunoot,' the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant the standing (Qiyam). To my knowledge, scholars agree on this meaning of Qunoot." This supports the view of Imam Shafi'i and those who agree with him that prolonging the standing is better than increasing the number of bowings and prostrations.⁵

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) explained this Hadith, saying: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) indicated that the best prayer is the one with the longest Qunoot. Qunoot refers to both bowing and standing. Thus, prolonging the standing, bowing, and prostration in prayer is better than performing many short Rak'ahs. The virtue of long Qunoot is achieved by lengthening the standing, bowing, and prostration, not by increasing the number of them."⁶

⁴ Sahih Muslim Bi Sharhin Nawawi 6/35

⁵ Sharh Sahih Muslim 6/35

⁶ Al-Fatawa 23/71

Ibn Rushd (may Allah have mercy on him) stated: "There is no disagreement that the prayer which takes longer to perform is better than the one which takes less time."⁷

Second Ruling: The Virtue of Following the Imam Until the End of Prayer

There is a booklet attributed to Sheikh Muhammad Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) circulating on the internet. In it, there is a question: If a person prays in one mosque during the first part of the night and in another mosque during the last part of the night, will he receive the reward mentioned in the Hadith?

Sheikh Muhammad Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) answered: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever prays with the Imam until he finishes, it is as if he prayed the entire night.' If someone prays with the first Imam during the first part of the night and then with a second Imam during the last part of the night, he does not meet the condition of praying with the Imam until the end. Thus, he will not receive the reward of praying the entire night. He must pray with one Imam from the beginning to the end of the night, or he will miss the reward of praying the entire night."

⁷ Al-Zakhira 2/407

My response: The Hadith Sheikh Muhammad Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) referred to is narrated by Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him). He said: "We fasted with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in Ramadan, but he did not lead us in Qiyam (night prayer) until there were seven nights left. He then led us in prayer for one-third of the night. When six nights remained, he did not lead us in prayer. When five nights remained, he led us in prayer for half the night. I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Would you lead us in the remaining part of this night in prayer?' He said: 'Whoever prays with the Imam until he finishes, it is as if he prayed the entire night.' When four nights remained, he did not lead us in prayer. When three nights remained, he gathered his family, his wives, and the people and led us in prayer until we feared we would miss the pre-dawn meal. I asked: 'What is the pre-dawn meal?' He replied: 'The pre-dawn meal is Suhoor.' After that, he did not lead us in prayer for the rest of the nights of that month." This narration is recorded in Sunan Abi Dawood (1373) and Sunan Tirmidhi (803). Imam Tirmidhi stated that this Hadith is Hasan (good) and Sahih (authentic).

This Hadith indicates that whoever prays the entire night with the Imam, without separating from him during the first part of the night, will receive the reward of praying the entire night. The Prophet (peace be upon him) specified that this reward is granted only if the person remains with the Imam until the Imam finishes the prayer and the people disperse.

Sheikh Muhammad Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) did not consider that praying the entire night with the Imam in the first part of

the night suffices for the reward of praying the whole night. Instead, he stipulated that the worshiper must return and pray with the same Imam in the last part of the night until the Imam finishes. If the worshiper does not return to follow the Imam in the second part, he will not receive the reward for the whole night.

The above Hadith does not include this stipulation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "When a person prays with the Imam until he finishes, it is as if he prayed the entire night." This means that once the Imam finishes and leaves, the worshiper will receive the reward for the whole night. This Hadith shows that it is better to pray with the Imam than to pray alone.

Shaykh Ali al-Qari (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "In my view, the correct interpretation of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying, 'When a person prays with the Imam until he finishes,' refers to the Tarawih prayer. If someone prays Isha and Fajr with the Imam, he will get the reward for praying the whole night. Similarly, when someone prays Tarawih with the Imam until he finishes, he will receive the reward for praying the whole night. This is supported by the apparent meaning of the narration. Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to allow them to pray the remaining part of the night, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) said they did not need to as they would get the reward for the whole night by praying the earlier part with the Imam." Shaykh Ali al-Qari further explains: "It is possible that a worshiper leaves before the Imam finishes,

as Tarawih is performed in multiple rounds. Therefore, someone might leave before the Imam completes the prayer."⁸

This indicates that even if the worshiper does not pray the second part of the night with the Imam, he will still get the reward for praying the entire night. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not pray twice in one night, so the reward mentioned in the Hadith applies to praying with the Imam in the first part of the night as well. And Allah knows best.

Third Ruling: The Number of Rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Layl

Upon reviewing the Quran and the Sunnah, it becomes evident that neither source specifies a particular number of Rak'ahs for Qiyam al-Layl. The virtue of night prayer is left to the individual, allowing them to perform as many Rak'ahs as they can manage. It is recommended to perform a number of Rak'ahs that allows for a longer period of prayer. There is no prescribed number of Rak'ahs that one must not exceed, as the authentic books of Hadith, including Sahih, Sunan, and Musnad, mention various numbers of Rak'ahs performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him). He is reported to have prayed seven, nine, eleven, and thirteen Rak'ahs. This variation indicates that no specific number of Rak'ahs is superior to another, except when a larger number results in longer worship.

⁸ Bazlul Maj'hud Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud 7/156

The Hadith narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) highlights this aspect. She mentioned the highest number of Rak'ahs performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) during Qiyam al-Layl. This narration also shows that these Rak'ahs were long and performed with excellence.

The variation in the number of Rak'ahs in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) night prayer was due to his adherence to Allah's command:

{فَأَقْرَأُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ}

[So recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran.] [Quran 73:20]

This command means to pray as much as one can easily manage. Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed according to his condition.

The Prophet's (peace be upon him) night prayers varied based on his strength and circumstances, such as being engaged in jihad, traveling, residing, dealing with work pressure, or experiencing illness. Consequently, the number and quality of his Rak'ahs differed. When he felt strong and active, the number of Rak'ahs increased, and when his strength waned, the time spent in night prayer decreased. If he was overwhelmed by sleep or illness, he would make up for it by praying twelve Rak'ahs during the day. He adhered to what he could perform with ease, and thus all his prayers were equally virtuous as he diligently observed and endured the effort of night prayer, to the extent that Allah addressed him:⁹

⁹ Refer to the Interpretation of the Mentioned Verse Regarding the Reduction of Tarawih Prayer, Page 49

[We have not sent down to you the Quran that you be distressed.] [Quran 20:2]

The practice of the Prophet (PBUH) in adhering to this verse was to recite for long periods. He would not bow until he had completed his recitation as per his convenience, then he would increase the number of Rak'ahs, continuing until he was finished with both the prayer and the recitation. The Prophet (PBUH) consistently spent long periods in prayer and performed lengthy prayers. Both these practices are mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah as being virtuous. He did not limit himself to performing a fixed number of Rak'ahs with short recitations, as this would contradict the objective of the Quran.

Support for this comes from the fact that after performing Witr, if the Prophet (PBUH) felt active and strong, he would pray two additional Rak'ahs while sitting. As narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) in Sahih Muslim 6/27: "We used to prepare the Miswak and water for ablution for the Prophet (PBUH). Allah would make him wake up whenever He willed during the night. The Prophet (PBUH) would then use the Miswak, perform ablution, and pray nine Rak'ahs, sitting for the eighth one, praising and thanking Allah, supplicating to Him, and then he would conclude the prayer with a single Rak'ah, making us hear the Tasleem. Afterward, he would pray two Rak'ahs while sitting. O my son, these make a total of eleven Rak'ahs. When the Prophet (PBUH) grew older and gained weight, he would perform seven Rak'ahs including Witr, and after Witr, he would pray two Rak'ahs while sitting."

The variation in the number of Rak'ahs in the night prayer performed by the Prophet (PBUH) is primarily due to the reason mentioned in the above narration. It is further confirmed by the fact that the Prophet's eleven Rak'ahs were performed with lengthy standing, as narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). If there had been any specific virtue in the number eleven, the Prophet (PBUH) would have consistently adhered to it, but he did not.

Evidence that a fixed number of Rak'ahs without long standing has no special virtue is found in the narration of Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) reported by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "The night prayer is in sets of two Rak'ahs. When you fear that dawn is approaching, pray one Rak'ah to make your prayer odd." Here, the Prophet (PBUH) did not specify a number of Rak'ahs, leaving it open-ended. If a specific number were virtuous, the Prophet (PBUH) would have mentioned it. Considering this Hadith along with the Quranic encouragement to lengthen the time of Tahajjud and the Sunnah's emphasis on lengthy prayers, it becomes clear that there is no inherent virtue in a specific number of Rak'ahs without long standing.

This is further supported by Allah's statement:

{فَاقْرَأُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ}

[So recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran.] [Quran 73:20]

Meaning, perform as many Rak'ahs as you can easily manage. This interpretation aligns with the understanding that if a specific number had any inherent virtue, it would apply to nine Rak'ahs rather than eleven, as evidenced by the narration of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) recorded in Sahih Muslim 6/27: "We used to prepare the Miswak and water for ablution for the Prophet (PBUH). Allah would make him wake up whenever He willed during the night. The Prophet (PBUH) would then use the Miswak, perform ablution, and pray nine Rak'ahs, sitting for the eighth one, praising and thanking Allah, supplicating to Him, and then he would conclude the prayer with a single Rak'ah, making us hear the Tasleem. Afterward, he would pray two Rak'ahs while sitting. O my son, these make a total of eleven Rak'ahs. When the Prophet (PBUH) grew older and gained weight, he would perform seven Rak'ahs including Witr, and after Witr, he would pray two Rak'ahs while sitting. O my son, these make a total of nine Rak'ahs. The Prophet (PBUH) liked to maintain consistency in his prayers. If he missed the night prayer due to sleep or illness, he would pray twelve Rak'ahs during the day."

Aisha's statement that "the Prophet (PBUH) liked to maintain consistency in his prayers" indicates that his night prayer in his later years was nine Rak'ahs, and he maintained this practice instead of adhering to eleven Rak'ahs. It is preferable to follow the Prophet's (PBUH) final actions; however, other evidence shows that no specific number is preferred unless the greater number results in a longer period of prayer.

Imam Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) states: "There is a difference of opinion among scholars regarding Qiyam al-Layl during Ramadan. Some scholars believe it is forty-one Rak'ahs, and this is the opinion of the people of Madinah. Most scholars agree on twenty Rak'ahs, as narrated from Ali and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) and other Companions. Sufyan Thawri, Abdullah bin Mubarak, and Imam Shafi'i hold this view."

Imam Shafi'i said: "I saw the people of Makkah performing twenty Rak'ahs." Imam Ahmad said: "There are different reports regarding the night prayer in Ramadan, none of which are definitive." Ishaq said: "We prefer forty-one Rak'ahs as narrated from Ubay bin Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him)."¹⁰

Imam Ibn Abd al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "There is no disagreement among Muslims that the number of Rak'ahs in the night prayer is not fixed. It is a voluntary prayer and an act of goodness. One may perform fewer or more Rak'ahs as one wishes."¹¹

Ibn al-Mulaqqin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "There is no disagreement that the night prayer has no fixed limit in terms of increasing or decreasing the number of Rak'ahs. It is among the virtuous deeds for which the more one does, the more reward one earns. The disagreement is about what the Prophet (PBUH) practiced regularly."¹²

¹⁰ Sunan Tirmizi (2/150), Refer to Hadith no: (803)

¹¹ Fat'hul Barr Fit Tartib Al-Fiqhi li Tamhid ibn Abdil Barr (6/143)

¹² Al-Ilam Bi Fawaa'id Umdah Al-Ahkaam (3/545)

He further states: "Al-Bayhaqi reported with a sound chain that Muslims used to perform twenty Rak'ahs during Umar's (may Allah be pleased with him) caliphate." Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn Abi Shaybah also narrated a similar report from Ali (may Allah be pleased with him).¹³

Imam Shawkani said: "In conclusion, the Hadiths and similar narrations indicate that Qiyam al-Layl in Ramadan is prescribed and can be performed in congregation or individually. There is no fixed number of Rak'ahs for Tarawih nor any specific recitation requirement in the Sunnah."¹⁴

I say: The Quran indicates that the number of Rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Layl is not fixed. A person can perform as many Rak'ahs as they can manage easily, as Allah says:

{فَأَقْرَأُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ}

[So recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran.] [Quran 73:20]

Meaning, perform the night prayer as you can easily manage. Further explanation of this verse will be provided later.¹⁵ Therefore, those who limit the night prayer and Tarawih to eleven Rak'ahs and prohibit any increase, such as performing twenty-three Rak'ahs, are acting contrary to the Book of Allah. They have prohibited an easy performance of the night prayer and made it obligatory to adhere to a specific number of Rak'ahs. The truth is that virtue lies in prolonging the time of Tahajjud and performing lengthy prayers, not in the number of Rak'ahs unless

¹³ Al-Badr Al-Munir (4/350)

¹⁴ Nail Al-Awtaar (3/61)

¹⁵ Chapter: Reduction of Tarawih Prayer, Page 49

they involve lengthy standing. If the number of Rak'ahs results in a longer prayer time, then it is virtuous due to the extended period of Tahajjud, which the Quran encourages.

This further clarifies that if eleven Rak'ahs are performed over one-third of the night, they are better than nine Rak'ahs performed over one-sixth of the night because the eleven Rak'ahs take more time. Similarly, if twenty-three Rak'ahs are performed over half the night, they are better than eleven Rak'ahs performed over one-third of the night because the longer time spent in prayer makes them virtuous. However, if the number of Rak'ahs does not result in a longer time of Tahajjud, they do not have additional virtue because the merit lies in the long prayer, not in the number of Rak'ahs.

Imam Shafi'i said: "I saw the people of Madinah performing thirty-nine Rak'ahs and the people of Makkah performing twenty-three Rak'ahs. There is no harm in either." He also said: "It is good if people make the standing long and have fewer prostrations, and it is also good if people make many prostrations and keep the recitation short. I prefer the first option."¹⁶

I say that the first method is superior, as Imam Shafi'i mentioned, unless the worshiper feels fatigue and laziness, and the time for Tahajjud is short. In this case, it is permissible to keep the Rak'ahs light enough to maintain enthusiasm for extending the time of Tahajjud. This is because extending the time of Tahajjud is desirable according to the Quran, and lengthening the Rak'ahs is desirable according to the Sunnah.

¹⁶ Fat'hul Bari (4/253)

When these two options conflict for the worshiper, it is better to prioritize extending the time of Tahajjud over increasing the length of the Rak'ahs. This is because this command is found in the Quran, and when there is a conflict, the Quranic command takes precedence over the Sunnah, as the Sunnah explains and clarifies the Quran rather than contradicting it. Allah knows best.

Fourth Ruling: Making Tarawih Light

The Quran guides towards extending the night prayer, whether performed in congregation or individually. Allah says:

{إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِن ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۗ عَلِمَ أَن لَّنْ نَّحْصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۗ عَلِمَ أَن سَيَكُونُ مِنكُم مَّرْضَىٰ وَآخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُونَ مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَآخَرُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ}

[Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of

the Quran. He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite what is easy from it and establish prayer and give zakah.] [Quran 73:20]

Reciting easily means performing the prayer easily. Imam Ibn Kathir, in his Tafsir of this verse, states that Allah used "recitation" to mean "prayer," as He mentioned in Surah Al-Isra:

{وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ}

[And do not recite too loudly in your prayer.] [Quran 17:110]

Here, Allah used the term "Salat" to refer to "recitation."¹⁷

Imam Shawkani, in his Tafsir of this verse, says that "recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran" means to perform the night prayer as easily as you can. In this context, "recitation" is used to mean "prayer," similar to how "Quran" in the verse "and [in] the recitation of dawn" [Quran 17:78] refers to the Fajr prayer.¹⁸

The wisdom in using "recitation" to mean "prayer" is to encourage long recitation. The Sunnah also encourages long recitation in prayer, as the Prophet (PBUH) would recite for extended periods, and he encouraged worshipers to do the same. Thus, both the Quran and Sunnah agree on the desirability of lengthening the prayer and spending a long time in it.

¹⁷ Tafsir Ibn Kathir (4/438)

¹⁸ Fathul Qadir (5/322)

However, this does not apply to obligatory prayers, as the Sunnah instructs imams leading the obligatory prayers to keep them light. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "When any of you leads the people in prayer, he should keep it light, for among them are the weak, the sick, and the elderly. But when he prays alone, he may pray as long as he likes." (Agreed upon) The Prophet (PBUH) would sometimes lengthen the prayer when leading the congregation, as reported by Abu Qatada (may Allah be pleased with him) in Sahih Bukhari: "I stand for prayer intending to make it long, but when I hear a child crying, I shorten it because I dislike causing hardship to the child's mother."¹⁹

In congregational obligatory prayers, the principle is to consider the condition of the congregation. In contrast, the nature of voluntary prayers is different, as they are primarily performed individually at home. Imam Muslim narrated that Hudhaifah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "One night, I prayed with the Prophet (PBUH), and he started reciting Surah Al-Baqarah. I thought he would bow after one hundred verses, but he continued. I thought he would finish the Surah and then bow, but he continued and started Surah An-Nisa, which he finished and then began Surah Aal-Imran. He recited calmly. When he came to a verse of glorification, he glorified Allah; when he came to a verse of supplication, he supplicated; and when he came to a verse seeking refuge, he sought refuge. Then he bowed, saying, 'Subhana Rabbiyal Adheem.' His bowing was nearly as long as his standing. Then he said, 'Sami' Allahu liman hamidah,' and stood for a long time, almost

¹⁹ Sahih Al-Bukhari Ma'a Fat'hul Baari (2/201)

as long as he had bowed. Then he prostrated and said, 'Subhana Rabbiyal A'la.' His prostration was almost as long as his standing."

Imam Muslim also narrated from Abdullah bin Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: "I once prayed with the Prophet (PBUH) during the night. He prayed for such a long time that I thought of something bad." He was asked, "What did you think?" He said, "I thought of sitting down and leaving him."²⁰

These four Hadiths appear to be conflicting, as the Prophet (PBUH) instructed imams to keep the prayer light for the people but sometimes intended to lengthen the prayer himself. The Prophet (PBUH) led the prayer in both ways. We can reconcile these Hadiths by specifying their context. The narrations of Abu Hurairah and Abu Qatada (may Allah be pleased with them) seem to refer to obligatory prayers, as appointing an imam is primarily for these prayers. Voluntary prayers are different, as they are generally performed individually at home. Therefore, imams of obligatory prayers should keep the prayer light unless they know the congregation prefers a longer prayer, as indicated by Abu Hurairah's narration. Moreover, it becomes more necessary to keep the prayer light if the imam knows that the congregation feels discomfort from a long prayer, as indicated by Abu Qatada's narration.

The narrations of Hudhaifah and Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with them) show that it is recommended for imams to lengthen the Tahajjud prayer. Hudhaifah's narration indicates that he joined the Prophet (PBUH) in prayer without knowing that the Prophet intended a long

²⁰ Sahih Muslim Ma'a Sharhin Nawawi (6/61, 63)

prayer. Similarly, Ibn Mas'ud's narration indicates that he felt discomfort from the long standing but did not leave the prayer, which shows he was committed to following the Prophet (PBUH).

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "An imam should lead the people in a prayer that is easy and light for them during Ramadan, ensuring it is not burdensome, especially on short nights. This depends on the people's endurance."²¹

We face two scenarios: one where a person leaves the congregation because of the long prayer and another where a person leaves due to the large number of Rak'ahs. It is necessary to differentiate between these scenarios. In the first case, imams should shorten the prayer to avoid discouraging people from participating in this great act of worship. This also complies with the Prophet's (PBUH) instruction to imams to cooperate in righteousness and piety by keeping the prayer light.

In the second case, it is not permissible for imams to reduce the number of Rak'ahs due to a person's preference. The Prophet (PBUH) instructed to keep the prayer light, not to reduce the number of Rak'ahs. Additionally, a person who has prayed some Rak'ahs with the imam and leaves afterward has fulfilled their obligation and is leaving voluntarily, so the imam has no reason to accommodate this preference. Imams should not deprive themselves and the remaining congregation of the opportunity to perform more prayers that they can easily and willingly perform.

²¹ Al-Mughni (2/169)

Regarding imams who limit themselves to eleven Rak'ahs, believing it is superior to perform only these, it is questionable. This limitation deprives them and their congregation of the reward for more worship, which Allah has commanded and praised those who engage in it abundantly.

As for those who leave after completing some Rak'ahs behind an imam who prays twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs of Tarawih, accusing the imam of innovation for not following the Sunnah, this attitude is incorrect. The virtue of making night prayer a provision for the Hereafter is emphasized in the Quran and Sunnah, with clear texts stating that extending the night prayer is recommended. Additionally, discouraging people from praying twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs with the congregation is divisive and against the principles of Sharia, which discourages schism and warns against it. How can they justify calling someone who follows the Quran and Sunnah an innovator? This attitude deprives people of following a commendable practice praised in the Quran and Sunnah. Allah says:

{كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ}

[They used to sleep but little of the night.] [Quran 51:17]

{وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا}

[And those who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing.] [Quran 25:64]

{أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ}

[Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord [like one who does not]?] [Quran 39:9]

It is incorrect for these people to criticize those who hope for their Lord's mercy because Allah says:

{أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى}

[Have you seen the one who forbids a servant when he prays?]

(Quran 96:9-10)

Abdullah ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I pray as I saw my companions praying. I do not prevent anyone from praying as much as they wish during the day and night, except if they do so during the times of sunrise and sunset, in which case I do stop them."²² I advise every Salafi, anyone associating with Ahl al-Hadith, and indeed every believer, not to go against the Book of Allah and the practice of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH). Those who follow the mistakes of some of their shaykhs and criticize those who pray more voluntary prayers in the Haramayn and other mosques are opposing the intentions of the Book of Allah and the practice of the Companions.

Imam Ibn Abi Al-Izz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The Book, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the Salaf of this Ummah indicate that the leader of the believers, the prayer leader, the ruler, the commander of

²² Sahih Bukhari, Hadith no: (589)

the army, and the collector of alms are to be obeyed in ijtihadi matters. These leaders are not obliged to follow their followers' opinions in such matters; rather, the followers must obey them. The benefit of unity and the harm of discord are more important than individual issues. For this reason, it is not permissible for leaders to disobey one another. The correct and decisive stance is that the prayers of leaders behind one another are valid. It is narrated about Abu Yusuf that when he performed Hajj with Harun Al-Rashid, the caliph had cupping done. Malik had given him a fatwa that cupping does not necessitate ablution. So Harun Al-Rashid led the people in prayer without performing ablution after cupping. Abu Yusuf was asked, 'Did you pray behind him?' He replied, 'Subhan Allah, he is the leader of the believers.' He meant to say that not praying behind the Muslim leaders is the action of the people of innovation. Moreover, the hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) and reported by Imam Bukhari, where the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'They lead you in prayer; if they perform it correctly, you and they will receive the reward, but if they err, you will get the reward and they will bear the burden of the sin,' is a clear text that when the imam makes a mistake, the imam is responsible for it, and the follower is not accountable for the imam's error. When a mujtahid leaves a duty, thinking it is not obligatory, or does something forbidden, thinking it is permissible, it is counted as his ijtihadi error. It is not permissible for someone who believes in Allah and the Last Day to go against this clear and authentic hadith when it reaches him. This hadith is proof against those Hanafis, Shafi'is, and Hanbalis who say that if the imam leaves something the follower considers obligatory, the prayer behind such an

imam is not valid. Unity and avoiding discord, which leads to corruption and mischief, are obligatory."²³

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The imam is appointed to be followed, so do not differ from him." He also said, "When the imam prays sitting, you should all pray sitting." The Prophet (PBUH) made it obligatory for the believers to follow the imam even if they are capable of standing while the imam is praying sitting. He commanded leaving the obligatory standing posture only to avoid differing from the imam. The statements of Ibn Abi Al-Izz (may Allah have mercy on him) are supported by these mentioned hadiths.

Fifth Ruling: Criticism of Preferring Eleven Rak'ahs Over Other Numbers

We observe many mosque imams adhering to praying eleven Rak'ahs during the first twenty nights of Ramadan, performing eight Rak'ahs of Tarawih and three Rak'ahs of Witr. When the last ten nights begin, they perform eight Rak'ahs in the first part of the night and nine Rak'ahs in the second part. They believe that by doing so, they have adhered to the Sunnah. Therefore, they consider praying eleven Rak'ahs in this manner better than twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs, which the majority of Muslims have adopted and is practiced in the Haramayn.

As far as I know, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was the first to establish this practice after 1380 AH. Ibn Baz

²³ Sharhul Aqidah Al-Wasitiyyah, p: (325)

adopted the hadith of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (PBUH) did not pray more than eleven Rak'ahs in Ramadan or other times. Ibn Baz preferred following this hadith in his writings and fatwas. Sometimes, he equated the virtue of thirteen Rak'ahs and eleven Rak'ahs. People followed his fatwa, and most mosque imams started adhering to eleven Rak'ahs and considered it the best practice.

Their preference for eleven Rak'ahs is questionable because it requires less time than twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs, making it inconsistent with the Book of Allah and the authentic Sunnah. The Prophet (PBUH) preferred long prayers over short ones. Imam Muslim narrated from Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The best prayer is the one with long Qunut." In another narration, he said, "The best prayer is the one with long Qunut."

Preferring eleven Rak'ahs over other numbers also goes against the consensus of Muslims. Ibn Rushd (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "There is no disagreement that the prayer that takes more time to perform is better than the prayer that takes less time."²⁴ If eleven Rak'ahs take more time than twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs, then eleven Rak'ahs would be preferable.

It is also problematic to prefer eleven Rak'ahs because the Prophet (PBUH) did not consistently adhere to this number throughout Ramadan. Therefore, considering this number preferable in Ramadan is neither in accordance with the elevated Sunnah nor the practice

²⁴ Al-Zakhira (2/407)

established by the Companions. The Companions consistently performed twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs in the Tarawih prayer.

Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) explained this hadith by saying: "The Prophet (PBUH) clarified that the best prayer is the one with long Qunut. This includes long bowing and prostration. A prayer with long standing, bowing, and prostration is superior to a prayer with more standing, bowing, and prostration because long Qunut is achieved by lengthening these postures, not by increasing their number." Imam Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said the same in his explanation of this hadith.²⁵

Another point is that it is objectionable to consider something better than the Prophet (PBUH) did not consider better. By doing so, many people dislike what Allah has favored and encouraged in His Book, which is the extension of the Tahajjud prayer. We see some people turning away from following the imams of the Haramayn when they pray twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs. They settle for eight or ten Rak'ahs and then pray Witr either alone or wait for the imam to finish Tarawih and then join for Witr. Their reasoning is that the imams of the Haramayn are not following the Sunnah. Some go further, calling the prayer with more Rak'ahs the prayer of the Hanbalis. This is a very bad thing. How can they turn people away from extending the night prayer, which Allah praised in His Book?

Their misunderstanding of the hadith of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) concerning the number of Rak'ahs is the reason for their

²⁵ Majmu'ul Fatawa (23/5071), Sharh Sahih Muslim (6/35)

disagreement. If they understood that the virtue of Qiyam al-Lail lies in its duration, not in adhering to eleven Rak'ahs, they would avoid this opposition.

It is correct that eleven Rak'ahs would be superior to twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs if their performance time is equal or longer because the specialty of this prayer lies in its long Qunut.

In Ramadan 1434 AH, I prayed in a mosque in Riyadh where the imam performed eleven Rak'ahs but recited a complete Juz' that night. Due to the long recitation, these eleven Rak'ahs took nearly as long as twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs. The imams of Islam considered adhering to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) as worthy of attention. Allah is the guide to the abode of peace.

Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The Prophet (PBUH) did not specify a number of Rak'ahs for Qiyam al-Lail in Ramadan. His routine in Ramadan and other times did not exceed thirteen Rak'ahs, but he used to lengthen the Rak'ahs. When Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) gathered the people in Ramadan under the leadership of Ubay ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him), they prayed twenty Rak'ahs, followed by three Rak'ahs of Witr. They performed shorter recitations proportional to the increased number of Rak'ahs because it was easier for the worshipers than extending one Rak'ah. Later, some of the Salaf prayed forty Rak'ahs of Tarawih and three Rak'ahs of Witr, and others prayed thirty-six Rak'ahs of Tarawih and three Rak'ahs of Witr. All of these are correct. In Ramadan, any of these practices are good to follow.

What is the best practice? It depends on the worshipers' ability. If they can endure long standing, then ten Rak'ahs of Tarawih followed by three Rak'ahs of Witr is best, as the Prophet (PBUH) performed in Ramadan and outside it. If they cannot endure long standing, then twenty Rak'ahs of Tarawih is preferable. This is the practice of most Muslims. Twenty Rak'ahs is a middle way between ten and forty. It is permissible to pray forty or less or more. None of these practices are objectionable. Several scholars have stated this explicitly. Anyone who believes that the Prophet (PBUH) specified a fixed number of Rak'ahs for Tarawih that cannot be increased or decreased is mistaken.

Since there is flexibility in the number of Rak'ahs, it is also clear that there is flexibility in adding Qunut or omitting it. Both practices are good, and neither is problematic. Sometimes a person may feel energetic and prefer a longer prayer, and sometimes they may feel less energetic and prefer a shorter prayer.

The Prophet's (PBUH) prayer was balanced. When he lengthened the standing, he also lengthened the bowing and prostration. When he shortened the standing, he also shortened the bowing and prostration. He followed this balance in obligatory prayers, Tahajjud, and other prayers like the solar eclipse prayer.

There is a difference of opinion among scholars about whether long standing or more bowing and prostration is better, or if they are equal in virtue. There are three opinions:

1. Long standing is better.

2. More bowing and prostration are better.
3. Both are equal in virtue.

The correct opinion is that they are equal in virtue. Standing is specified for recitation, and recitation is superior to other forms of remembrance and supplication. Prostration is inherently superior to standing. Therefore, the best practice is to prolong both the standing and the bowing and prostration. This is the long Qunut that the Prophet (PBUH) referred to when he said, "The best prayer is the one with long Qunut." Qunut means long devotion in worship, whether in standing, bowing, or prostration, as Allah says:

{أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ}

[Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]]? (Quran 39:9)

In this verse, Allah has counted long prostrations along with long standing as part of Qunut.²⁶

Summary:

The best form of Qiyam al-Lail, as aligned with the command and encouragement found in the Quran, is one where the duration is extended. Thus, a prayer performed for one-third of the night is superior to a prayer performed for one-sixth of the night, and a prayer performed for half of the night is superior to a prayer performed for one-third of the

²⁶ Majmu'ul Fatawa (22/272)

night. Similarly, a prayer performed for two-thirds of the night is superior to a prayer performed for half of the night. If the duration is equal, for example, if Qiyam al-Lail is performed for one-sixth of the night, then a long prayer is better than one with more rak'ahs, as established by the Sunnah. Claiming that thirteen rak'ahs are better than twenty-three rak'ahs if the latter takes longer is incorrect, as it contradicts the intent of the Book of Allah.

Therefore, in our times, generally, the twenty-three rak'ahs are better than eleven rak'ahs because it has been observed that most imams today complete eleven rak'ahs much faster than twenty-three rak'ahs. Given the longer duration and adherence by the Companions, declaring twenty-three rak'ahs (23) as superior is appropriate.

The insistence on eleven rak'ahs by today's imams has created difficulties for many, such as the inability to complete the Quran in Taraweeh and Qiyam al-Lail, which most of the Salaf deemed desirable. Consequently, some imams increase the rak'ahs during the last ten nights, performing ten rak'ahs for Taraweeh and another ten for Qiyam al-Lail, or reading the portion meant for Taraweeh during the obligatory prayers. Some even recite the portion intended for Taraweeh in the two rak'ahs after Taraweeh, which is not correct.

If these imams adopt twenty-three rak'ahs for Taraweeh, they can avoid such difficulties, and their followers will have the opportunity for longer Qiyam al-Lail. Allah is the best Guide to the Straight Path.

Sixth Ruling: Changing the Witr to an Even Rak'ah after the Imam's Salam

Some followers, wishing to perform more Qiyam al-Lail, do not end their prayer with the Imam's salam after Witr. Instead, they stand and perform an additional rak'ah, thus making their prayer even so that their last prayer of the night can be Witr. According to Imam Ahmad, this practice is valid. Ibn Qudamah states that if a person wishes to follow the Imam for Qiyam al-Lail and Witr and also wants to pray Witr later at night, he should stand and perform an additional rak'ah after the Imam ends Witr. Thus, his prayer becomes even.

Ibn Qudamah explicitly states this: "If he wishes, he can stand and make his Witr even by adding one rak'ah. Participating in Witr with the Imam and then adding one rak'ah to make the prayer even is preferable. Imam

Ahmad was asked if a person who has prayed Witr can still pray two rak'ahs afterward. He replied: 'Yes, but he should pray Witr after waking up again.'²⁷

The reason for this ruling might be that the follower's following of the Imam ends with the Imam's salam, as Shafi'i scholars have stated: when the Imam suffices with one salam, the follower must add the second salam since the following ends with the Imam's first salam.²⁸

Imam Ibn Muflih notes that the evidence for this is the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "There are no two Witr in one night." Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud narrate this from Qais bin Talq, though Qais is considered weak.²⁹

Two general hadiths contradict this practice. One is narrated by Abu Huraira: "The Imam is appointed to be followed. So, do not differ from him. When he says Takbeer, you also say Takbeer; when he bows, you also bow; when he says 'Sami Allahu liman hamidah,' you say 'Rabbana wa lakal-hamd'; when he prostrates, you also prostrate; and when he prays sitting, all of you should pray sitting." (Agreed upon)

This hadith indicates that one should follow the Imam throughout the entire prayer, and the act of saying the salam is a part of the prayer. There is no specific hadith that qualifies this general instruction. The hadith mentioned by Ibn Muflih is not sufficient to qualify the generality of this hadith because it prohibits the second Witr, not the first. Therefore, what is not prohibited cannot be excluded from the general

²⁷ Al-Mughni (164, 2/163)

²⁸ Al-Majmu (3/427)

²⁹ Al-Mubdi Sharhul Muqni (2/18)

command to follow the Imam and the general prohibition of differing from him.

This is supported by the hadith narrated by Itban (may Allah be pleased with him), recorded by Imam Bukhari: “We prayed with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and when he ended the prayer with salam, we also ended our prayer with salam.” Imam Bukhari titled this chapter: "Chapter: When the Imam says salam, the follower should also say salam."³⁰

Furthermore, delaying the Witr prayer until the last part of the night is unanimously considered recommended. Following the Imam is obligatory, so this obligation should be prioritized over a recommended act.

Another hadith, narrated by Abu Qatadah (may Allah be pleased with him) and recorded by both Bukhari and Muslim, states: “Once we were praying with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he heard the sound of men’s voices behind him. After the prayer, he asked: 'What was the noise I heard?' They replied: 'We were hurrying to join the prayer.' He said: 'Do not do that. When you come to the prayer, walk calmly. Whatever part of the prayer you catch, pray it, and whatever you miss, complete it afterward.’”³¹

From this hadith, it is clear that one should complete what they missed of the prayer after the Imam finishes. Thus, one who prays Witr with the

³⁰ Sahih Al-Bukhari Ma'a Al-Fath (2/323)

³¹ Sahih Al-Bukhari Ma'a Al-Fath (2/116)

Imam must also say salam with the Imam, if they haven't prayed Witr before.

Earlier, we mentioned Imam Ahmad's view on making Witr even by adding a rak'ah after the Imam's salam. However, Abu Dawud reports a different stance from Imam Ahmad. Abu Dawud said: "I heard Imam Ahmad say: 'I prefer that the worshiper prays Taraweeh with the Imam and also prays Witr with him. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'When a man prays Qiyam al-Lail with the Imam until he finishes, it is recorded for him as if he prayed the entire night.'"

Abu Dawud added: "Imam Ahmad used to pray Qiyam al-Lail with the people and also prayed Witr with them. Athram reported: "A person who led the Taraweeh in Ramadan told me that Imam Ahmad prayed the full Taraweeh with them and also prayed Witr with them."³²

Ibn Muflih mentioned two narrations from Imam Ahmad and stated: "One narration from Imam Ahmad is that I prefer the worshiper to pray Witr with the Imam. Al-Ajurri preferred this view as well. Then Ibn Muflih mentioned that Qadi's stance is that if the worshiper does not intend to pray Witr with the Imam, he should not join him in Witr but should leave so that the initial Takbir of the Imam does not necessitate any addition."³³

Seventh Ruling: Permissible Cases for Differing from the Imam in Travel and Residency Prayers

³² Al-Mughni (2/170, 169)

³³ Al-Mubdi (19, 2/18)

The follower must not abandon following the Imam until the Imam says salam, except in certain situations such as when part of the prayer was missed with the Imam. The hadith states: “Whatever part of the prayer you catch, pray it, and whatever you miss, complete it afterward.” Another situation is when the number of rak’ahs the Imam prays is less than the required number for the follower, like a resident praying behind a traveler. The hadith states: “Pray four rak’ahs because we are travelers.” Another case is someone praying the obligatory Isha prayer behind an Imam who is leading Taraweeh, as the obligatory prayer behind the one praying a voluntary prayer is valid, as indicated in the hadith of Mu’adh (may Allah be pleased with him). Additionally, this allows the follower to gain the reward of praying in congregation.

One permissible situation for differing from the Imam is if the follower joins the Imam after having already prayed Witr and then prays Witr again with the Imam. In this case, the follower must stand and add a rak’ah after the Imam says salam to avoid having two Witr prayers in one night.

If a traveler prays Isha behind an Imam who is praying Maghrib, the traveler must complete their prayer. The traveler will pray four rak’ahs behind the Imam who is performing the full Maghrib prayer. It is not permissible for the follower to perform a shortened Isha prayer behind an Imam praying Maghrib. Instead, the follower should follow the Imam in Maghrib and then complete their Isha prayer after the Imam finishes.

When a follower, whether resident or traveler, prays Maghrib behind an Imam performing Isha, the follower must sit for the final Tashahhud when the Imam stands for the fourth rak’ah. The follower can either say

salam before the Imam or wait for the Imam's salam. However, it is better for the follower to say salam after completing their Tashahhud because they intended to separate from the Imam during the Tashahhud and should not change their intention to rejoin the Imam. Additionally, waiting for the Imam's salam would unnecessarily prolong the Tashahhud sitting. Allah knows best.

Eighth Ruling: Separation between Qiyam al-Lail and Taraweeh

In our country, later Hanbali scholars have practiced adding Qiyam al-Lail (night prayer) after Taraweeh during the last ten nights of Ramadan and making a separation between them. This practice has also been observed in the Haramain (the Two Holy Mosques). I tried to determine the exact date when this practice began but was unable to find it. To my knowledge, Sheikh Abdullah Khulaifi (may Allah have mercy on him) was the first to implement this in Masjid al-Haram. In the early seventh decade of the last Hijri century, when he was entrusted with the responsibility of leading prayers in Masjid al-Haram along with Sheikh Abu al-Sameeh (may Allah have mercy on him), he noticed that people were praying Tahajjud in different groups after finishing Taraweeh in the last ten nights of Ramadan. Each group prayed behind its own imam. So, Sheikh Abdullah Khulaifi gathered them all and led them in thirteen

rak'ahs, making a total of thirty-six rak'ahs when combined with Taraweeh and Tahajjud. At that time, people prayed two Witr prayers, one with Taraweeh and another with Qiyam al-Lail (Tahajjud). Sheikh Khulaifi led one Witr, and his co-imam Sheikh Abu al-Sameeh led the other. This practice of two Witr prayers continued until 1414 Hijri when Sheikh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) issued a fatwa recommending only one Witr in the last part of the night to avoid having to perform two Witr prayers in one night.

Among the Salaf (pious predecessors), the prayer performed after Taraweeh was referred to as Ta'qeeb. Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) stated: Ta'qeeb is when a person prays additional voluntary prayers after Taraweeh in congregation or prays another set of Taraweeh with a different group. Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) saw no issue with this practice because Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: People return to prayer hoping to gain more good or to avoid evil (punishment), and they saw no issue in doing so.³⁴

I say: I have observed that some people in our time object to this practice, claiming there is no evidence for it.

In response, I say: When examining the hadiths related to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) prayers, we find two types:

1. Prayers consisting of seven or nine rak'ahs, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) would perform without separating them with salams.

³⁴ Al-Mughni (2/608)

2. When performing eleven rak'ahs, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would divide them into several parts throughout the night. He would pray four rak'ahs, then rest, pray another four rak'ahs, rest again, and then pray three rak'ahs. Two pieces of evidence from Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) support this: one hadith where she mentioned the Prophet (peace be upon him) praying four rak'ahs, then four more, and then three. The use of "then" (ثم) in this context indicates pauses between the sets, implying significant breaks between them.

The second evidence is Aisha's question to the Prophet (peace be upon him): "Do you sleep before praying Witr?" He replied, "My eyes sleep, but my heart does not." This indicates that he would separate the prayers with sleep to rejuvenate for the next prayer.

The practice we observe among the Hanbali scholars today, where they separate the prayers once, is in line with the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This action of the Prophet (peace be upon him) indicates the permissibility of this separation since it was a part of his practice. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would separate the prayers twice: the first separation after performing four rak'ahs and the second separation after performing the last four rak'ahs before offering Witr.

The difference between the prayers performed during the first twenty days of Ramadan and those in the last ten days is also in accordance with the Sunnah. In the first twenty days of Ramadan, the prayer consists of twenty-three rak'ahs, which are performed in one go. The evidence for this is that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would pray and also sleep during these nights.

However, during the last ten nights of Ramadan, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would tighten his waist belt and wake up his family for prayer. Tightening the waist belt is a metaphor indicating that he would not sleep during these nights but instead would spend the entire night in worship. Therefore, spending more time in prayer during the last ten nights compared to the first twenty nights is also in accordance with the Sunnah. Allah knows best.

Ninth Rule: Combining Witr with Even Rak'ahs for the Imams

There is a consensus among Muslims that performing three rak'ahs of Witr with one Tasleem (salutation) is permissible, and the Hanafi school even considers it obligatory. According to the majority, while it is allowed to perform Witr with three rak'ahs and one Tasleem, the preferred method is to separate the Witr from the even rak'ahs. This means performing one rak'ah as Witr separately because the hadith states that the night prayer is performed in pairs of two rak'ahs. When one fears the approach of dawn, they should perform one rak'ah as Witr. This method is preferred because it includes two Tashahhud and two Tasleem, providing more opportunities for remembrance and supplication.

The issue arises if the Tarawih imam usually separates Witr from the even rak'ahs, and the congregation becomes accustomed to this method. If the imam then, without informing the congregation, decides to combine Witr with the even rak'ahs and perform them with one Tasleem, the problem arises for the congregation. They started the prayer with the intention of performing even rak'ahs behind the imam. Suddenly, they find out mid-prayer that it is Witr, and they must change their intention without prior knowledge, creating confusion. If a person starts praying with the intention of performing even rak'ahs and then realizes it is Witr, they cannot change their intention mid-prayer. They must complete the even rak'ahs and then perform Witr afterward because the initial intention at Takbiratul Ihram is what counts, as stated in the hadith that actions are judged by intentions.

To avoid this confusion, the imam should either inform the congregation before starting the prayer that he will perform three rak'ahs of Witr, or not combine the Witr with the even rak'ahs.

Another issue arises if the imam, while leading the Tarawih prayer, continues the Quranic recitation sequence in the even rak'ahs to ensure the Quran is completed by the end of Ramadan, and then combines the Witr with these even rak'ahs. This is problematic because many in the congregation initiated the prayer with the intention of performing even rak'ahs and suddenly find out mid-prayer that it is Witr, forcing them to change their intention from even rak'ahs to Witr, creating further confusion.

Reciting Surah Al-A'la and Surah Al-Kafirun in two units of prayer after Taraweeh helps the congregation understand that after these two units, Witr prayer will be performed. This practice aligns the intentions of the followers with the Imam's intentions, ensuring they start the prayer correctly with Takbeer Tahreema. The general principle is to follow the Imam in every aspect of the prayer and avoid actions contrary to the Imam's. Hence, it is also the Imam's responsibility to be mindful of the congregation's prayer, ensuring they do not commit errors due to misalignment with the Imam's actions.

I have observed that some followers need the Imam to inform them beforehand if they will be performing Sajdah Tilawat (prostration of recitation) in the first or second unit. This is because during Sajdah Tilawat, many women in the congregation go into Ruku (bowing), as they are not accustomed to congregational prayers and may not be familiar with the prostration points in the Quran. This can cause errors in following the Imam, especially when the Sajdah verse is at the end of the second unit. The Imam says Takbeer for Sajdah, then again to rise from it, and then another Takbeer for Ruku, which can be confusing for women praying at a distance from the main congregation. This confusion became apparent when such women asked whether their prayer was valid after experiencing these difficulties. To avoid these mistakes, Imams may consider performing Sajdah Tilawat in the first unit where women are more accustomed to long recitations. This guidance is to help the congregation avoid errors and maintain the sanctity of their prayer. Allah is the granter of success.

For centuries, the majority of Muslims have been performing 23 units of Taraweeh prayer. Maintaining this tradition, they continue to offer 23 units of Taraweeh prayer in congregation in the early part of the night throughout Ramadan. They adhere to this number without splitting the units between the first 20 nights and the last ten nights. When Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him, was asked if the night prayer (Taraweeh) could be delayed until the last part of the night, he replied negatively, favoring the established tradition of the Muslims.

As for establishing a congregation to perform additional voluntary prayers after Taraweeh, Imam Ibn Qudamah, may Allah have mercy on him, said: Regarding "Taqeeb," which means praying voluntary prayers in congregation after Taraweeh or joining another congregational Taraweeh after already having performed one, it is narrated from Imam Ahmad that there is no harm in it. This is because Anas bin Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said: People return to prayer for the good they hope to attain or to avoid the evil (divine punishment). They did not see any harm in it.³⁵

Up until our present times, the practice of performing twenty-three (23) units of Taraweeh in the Holy Haramain has continued. However, in the previous century, before the eighties, when Sheikh Abdullah Khulaifi, may Allah have mercy on him, was entrusted with leading the prayers in Masjid al-Haram and he, along with Abu al-Samih, may Allah have mercy on him, took on the responsibility of leading the prayers in Masjid al-Haram, they observed many Muslims performing voluntary prayers in separate congregations after Taraweeh during the last ten nights of

³⁵ Al-Mughni (2/608)

Ramadan. Thus, they reassembled the people for congregational Qiyam al-Layl, leading them in ten units of prayer with long recitations. Then, towards the end of the night, they would lead them in three units of Witr. Abu al-Samih, may Allah have mercy on him, would also lead the worshippers in Witr prayers at the end of Taraweeh in the first part of the night. Following this, it became common in the general mosques of our country to perform Taraweeh and Qiyam al-Layl in this manner. That is, during the last ten nights of Ramadan, the night prayers are performed twice in congregation.

In 1414 AH, Sheikh Ibn Baz, may Allah have mercy on him, issued a fatwa that the imams of the Haramain should suffice with leading the Witr prayer once, and this should be done after the Qiyam al-Layl in the last part of the night so that people do not end up performing Witr twice in one night.

According to the majority of the Salaf, the minimum number of Rak'ahs for Taraweeh is twenty, followed by three Rak'ahs of Witr. According to the Maliki school of thought, the Taraweeh prayer consists of thirty-six Rak'ahs, and the Witr is five Rak'ahs. They base this on the practice of the people of Madinah, but the majority of scholars have derived the number twenty-three (23) Rak'ahs from the consensus of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. Imam Ibn Qudamah mentioned this consensus, stating that if it is proven that according to the Maliki school, all the people of Madinah prayed thirty-six Rak'ahs, then it is more appropriate and virtuous to follow what Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, established and the consensus of all the Companions during his time. He also said that the practice of the Companions of the

Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, is more deserving to be followed.³⁶

Imam Nawawi, may Allah have mercy on him, said: Our position is that the Taraweeh prayer, excluding Witr, is twenty Rak'ahs, prayed with ten Tasleems. This prayer consists of five Trawihahs, each Trawihah comprising four Rak'ahs prayed with two Tasleems. This is our position, and it is also the view of Abu Hanifah and his companions, Ahmad, Dawud, and others. Qadi Iyad reported this from the majority of scholars. He also narrated that Aswad bin Yazid would pray forty Rak'ahs of Taraweeh and seven Rak'ahs of Witr.

Malik said: Taraweeh consists of thirty-six Rak'ahs, excluding Witr. He reasoned that the people of Madinah prayed this way. He narrated from Nafi that he saw the people performing thirty-nine Rak'ahs of night prayer in Ramadan, including three Rak'ahs of Witr. Our companions have used the authentic chain of transmission from Baihaqi and others of the narration of Sa'ib bin Yazid, may Allah be pleased with him: "During the caliphate of Umar bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, Muslims would perform twenty Rak'ahs of night prayer in Ramadan. They would recite chapters of one hundred or more verses. During the time of Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, they would lean on staffs due to the length of standing." The narration of Yazid bin Ruman states: During the time of Umar bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, people performed twenty-three Rak'ahs. Malik narrated this from Yazid bin Ruman in "Al-Muwatta," and Baihaqi also reported it, but this narration is Mursal because Yazid bin Ruman did not

³⁶ Al-Mughni (2/604)

meet Umar, may Allah be pleased with him. Baihaqi said: The reconciliation between the two narrations is that people performed twenty Rak'ahs of Taraweeh and three Rak'ahs of Witr. Baihaqi also narrated from Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, that the night prayer in Ramadan is twenty Rak'ahs. As for the practice of the people of Madinah referenced by the Malikis, our companions said that the reason for this was that the people of Makkah would perform a Tawaf and two Rak'ahs of prayer between every two Trawihahs. They did not perform Tawaf after the fifth Trawihah, so the people of Madinah, in trying to equal their reward, added four Rak'ahs for each Tawaf, totaling sixteen additional Rak'ahs. Then they prayed three Rak'ahs of Witr, making the total number of Rak'ahs thirty-nine. Allah knows best.

This clarifies that the increased number of Rak'ahs for Taraweeh is a practice established by the three Rightly Guided Caliphs, whose traditions we have been instructed to follow. None of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, opposed this practice; rather, they consistently performed Taraweeh in accordance with it. Therefore, the consensus reported by Ibn Qudamah, may Allah have mercy on him, is accurate.

The matter of Taraweeh is akin to the first call to prayer (Adhan) for Jumu'ah, which started during the time of Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, and was subsequently upheld by Muslims in all eras.

It is worth mentioning that many contemporaries have violated the consensus of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them,

regarding the number of Rak'ahs for Taraweeh in several ways, as detailed below:

The first violation: Many Islamic centers outside Arab countries consistently perform eight Rak'ahs of Taraweeh and three Rak'ahs of Witr on all nights of Ramadan, immediately after the Isha prayer. They base their practice on the authentic narration from Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, never performed more than eleven Rak'ahs in Ramadan or at other times. Worshippers at these Islamic centers believe that by adhering to this number of Rak'ahs, they are following the Sunnah. However, in reality, they are acting contrary to the Sunnah of the Prophet. Moreover, by doing so, they are violating the tradition of the three Rightly Guided Caliphs and the consensus of the other Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the majority stance of the Ummah throughout history. Their practice opposes the Sunnah because it is not narrated that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, performed thirteen Rak'ahs with the Companions on the nights of Ramadan. Imam Turtushi, may Allah have mercy on him, said that no specific number of Rak'ahs was established during the time of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. This is because he led the Companions in prayer for two nights but did not come out for the remaining nights. It is not recorded how many Rak'ahs he prayed on those nights. The most authentic and established narration in this regard is the one from Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, stating that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, never performed more than eleven Rak'ahs in Ramadan or at other times. Umar, may Allah be

pleased with him, initially commanded the same, but as people could not endure long standing, he increased it to twenty Rak'ahs.³⁷

This opinion is held by those who consider the narration authentic, which states that Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, initially commanded the performance of eleven Rak'ahs for this prayer. Those who deem this narration weak argue that from the very first night following Umar's command, twenty-three Rak'ahs of Taraweeh were performed. Thus, the validity of deriving evidence from Aisha's narration, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Companions consistently performed eleven Rak'ahs throughout the nights of Ramadan, is undermined. Moreover, even the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not adhere strictly to this number.

Those who insist on the practice of eleven Rak'ahs overlook the well-established narration that Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, commanded the Muslims to perform twenty-three Rak'ahs, which was agreed upon by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. This practice was also followed by the subsequent Rightly Guided Caliphs and continued by Muslims up to our present time. This clarifies that there is neither an authentic Prophetic narration nor a confirmed report from the Companions to support the argument for thirteen Rak'ahs. Allah knows best.

The second violation: These individuals consistently perform eleven Rak'ahs during the first twenty nights of Ramadan. Then, some of them perform four Rak'ahs with prolonged recitation in the first part of the

³⁷ Kitabul Hawadith wal Bida, P: (56)

night during the last ten nights, followed by seven Rak'ahs in the latter part of the night. Their reasoning is that they are adhering to the eleven Rak'ahs throughout Ramadan, aiming to maintain both Taraweeh and Tahajjud prayers. However, this practice was not observed by the pious predecessors or the best of the Ummah during the nights of Ramadan. Additionally, citing the Prophet's prayer as evidence for this method is incorrect, as his eleven Rak'ahs were not performed in the mosque as congregational Taraweeh. Moreover, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not consistently perform eleven Rak'ahs throughout Ramadan. It is also well known that Taraweeh prayers have specific rulings that differ from the general rulings for night prayers outside of Ramadan. Therefore, there is no evidence from the Sunnah or the practices of the pious predecessors to support this method of performing eleven Rak'ahs for Taraweeh. Allah knows best.

The third violation: Adhering to eleven Rak'ahs during the first twenty nights of Ramadan, then sufficing with eight Rak'ahs in the first part of the night during the last ten nights, and performing nine Rak'ahs of Qiyam al-Layl in the latter part of the night, totaling seventeen Rak'ahs. There is no evidence from the Sunnah or the practice of the pious predecessors for performing prayers in this manner. It is true that when a person prays at home, they can perform as many Rak'ahs as they wish, as the Prophet's prayer without a congregation varied in the number of Rak'ahs. However, Taraweeh has specific rulings. This is what led the pious predecessors to limit the number of Rak'ahs for Taraweeh and to use the number confirmed by Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, as evidence. The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, agreed with Umar's determination. Therefore, it is not correct to equate the

rulings of Taraweeh with those of night prayers performed at home throughout the year. Thus, it is preferable to follow the method of Taraweeh practiced by Muslims, as Imam Ahmad said.

In our country, people used to perform twenty-three Rak'ahs throughout Ramadan, completing the Qur'an twice in the month. I personally witnessed this practice in my childhood when I lived in a village in the Buraidah region (may Allah protect it). To my knowledge, Sheikh Ibn Baz was the first to adopt this method, as mentioned earlier. People then followed his approach and the number of Rak'ahs. Sheikh Abdul Mohsen Ubaikan was the last person I saw consistently performing twenty-three Rak'ahs in Riyadh.

The preference for eleven Rak'ahs became more common after Albani, may Allah have mercy on him, stated in his booklet "Salat al-Taraweeh" that it is forbidden to perform more than eleven Rak'ahs. This led some less knowledgeable people to believe that performing more than eleven Rak'ahs is a Hanbali innovation. Consequently, some people began to leave the congregation after ten Rak'ahs when the Imam was performing twenty-three Rak'ahs. Leaving the congregation during prayer is a new practice, and these individuals justify it by strictly adhering to Aisha's narration that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, never performed more than eleven Rak'ahs at night. According to Albani's view, this number is also confirmed by Umar. These individuals aimed to adhere strictly to the evidence but, in doing so, contradicted the evidence and the practice of the Ummah from past eras to our present time. Further clarification will follow, insha'Allah.

At this point, I invite my brothers, whom Allah has blessed with a passion for worship, to take advantage of the nights of Ramadan, benefit from the long hours of Taraweeh in this blessed month, and adhere to the practice of the pious predecessors. Leaving the congregation during prayer should not hinder those who wish to engage in prolonged worship from earning rewards. Since this worship falls under recommended acts, preventing some people from more worship due to others leaving the congregation is not appropriate. The scene of believers following the Imams in the Haramain until the end of Taraweeh prayers supports the view that the majority of people prefer to remain with the Imam until the end. Allah knows best.

Chapter Two

A Critical Review of Sheikh Albani's Treatise "Salat al-Tarawih"

Sheikh Al-Albani, may Allah have mercy on him, authored a treatise titled "Salat al-Tarawih" in which he argued that the number of Rak'ahs for Taraweeh is fixed and predetermined, and increasing it is not permissible. He presented his evidence over 108 medium-sized pages. The copy of the book I have is the second edition, published in 1405 AH

by Al-Maktab Al-Islami. There are several objections to his method of argumentation in this book. Additionally, he opposed the consensus on the permissibility of increasing the number of Rak'ahs beyond eleven, as mentioned explicitly by several scholars. For these reasons, I have critically reviewed Sheikh Albani's treatise under the following topics:

First Topic: His Belief that the Prophet's Prayer with the People was Eleven Rak'ahs:

In his book, on page 16, Sheikh Albani established the title: "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, did not pray more than eleven Rak'ahs." Under this title, he wrote that the Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed Taraweeh with the people, but how many Rak'ahs did he perform? To clarify this issue, he provided two narrations:

First Narration: Abu Salamah bin Abdur-Rahman asked Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, about the Prophet's prayer in Ramadan. Aisha replied that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, never prayed more than eleven Rak'ahs in Ramadan or outside of it. He would first pray four Rak'ahs; do not ask about their well-perform and length. Then he would pray another four Rak'ahs; do not ask about their well-perform and length. Finally, he would pray three Rak'ahs. This narration is recorded by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Awanah, Abu Dawood, and Tirmidhi.

Second Narration: Jabir bin Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with them, narrated that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, led them in eight Rak'ahs of prayer in Ramadan and also prayed Witr. On the

following night, they gathered in the mosque hoping that he would come out to lead the prayer, but they waited until morning... (the hadith continues). This narration is recorded by Ibn Nasr and Tabarani in Al-Mu'jam Al-Saghir. Its chain is considered Hasan due to the previous narration. Hafiz Ibn Hajar indicated its strength in Fath al-Bari and Al-Talkhis, attributing it to the Sahih collections of Ibn Khuzaymah and Ibn Hibban. Sheikh Albani's discussion concludes here.

Response: Sheikh's denial of increasing the number of Rak'ahs beyond eleven indicates his opinion that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) performed eleven Rak'ahs on the nights when he led the companions in prayer. However, the narrations he presented as evidence do not support this conclusion as implied by his statement. The purpose of Aisha's (may Allah be pleased with her) narration is to inform us about the maximum number of Rak'ahs the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) prayed in the night prayer throughout his life. This narration does not specify the number of Rak'ahs in the congregational Tarawih prayer led by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, using Aisha's narration as evidence in this context is questionable.

Regarding the narration of Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him), the Sheikh has used it as evidence, but it does not explicitly support the claim for which it has been cited. This is because the narration does not mention the performance of eleven Rak'ahs nor does it imply it. Therefore, using this narration as evidence is also questionable. In fact, this narration explicitly states that the number of Rak'ahs in the Tarawih prayer is nine, not eleven, because it mentions eight Rak'ahs. In the

context of the language, the term "Witr" refers to one Rak'ah. There is no reason to disregard this apparent meaning. Thus, when one Rak'ah of Witr is added to eight Rak'ahs, the total becomes nine Rak'ahs. Anyone claiming that this narration indicates a different number must provide evidence. Allah knows best.

Second Topic: The Claim that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) Consistently Prayed Eleven Rak'ahs

Sheikh (may Allah have mercy on him) established this topic on page 22 of his booklet, stating: "The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) adherence to praying eleven Rak'ahs indicates that it is not permissible to add to this number." He further wrote that it is evident from previous texts that the number of Rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Lail is eleven. This is proven by authentic texts. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently performed eleven Rak'ahs throughout his life, whether in Ramadan or otherwise.

On page 75, he titled a section: "The Obligation of Adhering to Eleven Rak'ahs and Its Evidence." Under this title, he wrote that it is established regarding Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that he ordered the performance of eleven Rak'ahs in the night prayer. It is also evident that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself prayed eleven Rak'ahs. These points entitle us to say that adhering to eleven Rak'ahs is obligatory and no addition should be made. Since this matter is subject to disagreement, it is obligatory for us to refer to the original source, which is the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) Sunnah. In this matter, his Sunnah is to perform eleven Rak'ahs; therefore, adhering to this and abandoning anything contrary is obligatory, especially when the

Sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs aligns with it. (Risalatul: Salat al-Tarawih, page 76)

Response: Claiming definitively that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) adhered to eleven Rak'ahs throughout his life without any variation and that adhering to this number is obligatory with no room for deviation contradicts what is proven by authentic narrations in the collections of Sahih and Musnad. These narrations indicate different numbers of Rak'ahs performed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his night prayers. These narrations sufficiently negate the claim that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently prayed eleven Rak'ahs and that no other number is established in his night prayers. The disagreement regarding this claim has two scenarios:

First Scenario: Performing Less Than Eleven Rak'ahs:

It is established that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sometimes performed fewer than eleven Rak'ahs. He prayed seven and nine Rak'ahs as well. In fact, during the later part of his life, he regularly performed nine Rak'ahs instead of eleven. This is evidenced by a lengthy Hadith narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) recorded in Sahih Muslim. In this narration, Umm al-Mu'minin Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) responded to a question posed by Saad bin Hisham bin Amir. Towards the end of this narration, she mentioned:

"We used to prepare the Miswak and water for ablution for him. Allah would awaken him at any time during the night He willed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would then wake up, use the Miswak, perform ablution, and pray nine Rak'ahs. In the eighth Rak'ah, he would sit, remember Allah, praise Him, and supplicate to Him. Without concluding the prayer with Tasleem (salutation), he would stand up and perform the ninth Rak'ah. Then he would sit, remember Allah, praise Him, supplicate to Him, and conclude the prayer with Tasleem, making it audible to us. After that, he would sit and perform an additional two Rak'ahs. O son, these were eleven Rak'ahs in total. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) grew older and his body became heavier, he performed seven Rak'ahs, including Witr, and then two Rak'ahs as he used to perform before. O son, these were nine Rak'ahs in total. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had the habit that once he started praying a particular prayer, he wished to maintain it consistently."³⁸

In this narration, Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) mentions, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) preferred to perform any prayer consistently," which specifically refers to the nine Rak'ahs, not any other number. Therefore, Sheikh Albani's claim that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently performed only eleven Rak'ahs and that no other number is proven regarding him is explicitly contradicted by this authentic Hadith.

Second Scenario: Performing More Than Eleven Rak'ahs

³⁸ Sahih Muslim (6/27)

In Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, there is a narration by Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) performed thirteen Rak'ahs of prayer after waking up from sleep. He performed this prayer in sets of two Rak'ahs. This Hadith also refutes the claim that the Prophet (peace be upon him) restricted himself to eleven Rak'ahs.

Furthermore, this narration should take precedence over Aisha's narration that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not perform more than eleven Rak'ahs in Ramadan and outside of it. This is because the principle states that the statement of someone who affirms something takes precedence over the statement of someone who negates it.³⁹ This is because the one who affirms has more knowledge and is narrating based on what he knows, while the one who negates is only denying what he is not aware of. Both are truthful in their statements. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) denied what she did not know about the Prophet (peace be upon him), while Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated what he had preserved regarding the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hence, his statement should be given precedence. Rejecting his narration would imply rejecting a part of the Sunnah. This is because the principle among the scholars of Hadith and Usul (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) is that the additional information provided by a reliable narrator is acceptable. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) observed the Prophet (peace be upon him) perform this prayer on a night when he was not staying in Aisha's house.

³⁹ Sheikh Albani is not opposed to this principle; in fact, he has utilized it, as can be seen in the footnote on page 82 of his book "Ahkam al-Jana'iz wa Bida'uha". This is also the position of Imam Bukhari. Refer to "Fath al-Bari" (3/347) and also see "Umdat al-Qari" (7/8).

The difference between the narrations of Sayyidah Aisha and Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) is attributed to the variety in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) prayers. He performed these prayers with different numbers of rak'ahs on different occasions. This diversity is evidenced by more than one hadith. Therefore, it is not correct to exclude the last two rak'ahs from the Prophet's night prayer by claiming they were light, as lightness is merely a description of their duration compared to longer prayers and has no bearing on the number of rak'ahs. Additionally, making the rak'ahs long is not a requirement for the validity of the night prayer. For these reasons, the claim that the last two rak'ahs in the narration of Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) were light is not a valid argument.

Interestingly, Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) in his booklet "Salat al-Tarawih" on page 83 has cited another hadith narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) which aligns with the narration of Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both). In this narration, Abdullah ibn Abi Qays asked Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) about the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Witr prayer. She replied that sometimes he would pray four rak'ahs followed by three rak'ahs of Witr, sometimes he would pray six rak'ahs followed by three rak'ahs of Witr, and sometimes he would pray ten rak'ahs followed by three rak'ahs of Witr. Including Witr, his prayer would never be less than seven rak'ahs nor more than thirteen rak'ahs. This narration was reported by Abu Dawud, Ahmad, and Tahawi. Iraqi deemed it authentic. Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) stated about this narration that all of them have transmitted it with a reliable chain. If Shaykh al-Albani had pondered over this narration, which he himself presented in his

booklet, it would have been clear to him that his position of limiting the Prophet's (peace be upon him) night prayer to eleven rak'ahs is weak. Allah alone guides to the right path.

Our Sheikh, Allama Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz (may Allah have mercy on him), responded to such weak stances. He stated: One of the religious matters that remain obscure to some people is the belief that it is not permissible to perform the Tarawih prayer in less than twenty rak'ahs, while others think that it is not permissible to pray more than eleven or thirteen rak'ahs. These assumptions are baseless and incorrect due to their contradiction with evidence.

Authentic narrations regarding the Prophet (peace be upon him) show that there is flexibility in the number of rak'ahs in the night prayer; there is no fixed limit that cannot be exceeded. It is established that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sometimes prayed eleven rak'ahs, sometimes thirteen, and sometimes less in both Ramadan and other months. When asked about the night prayer, he said: "The night prayer is offered as two rak'ahs followed by two rak'ahs. If one fears the break of dawn, he should pray one rak'ah, which will make the total an odd number." (Agreed upon). The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not set a specific number of rak'ahs for the night prayer in Ramadan or other times.

Therefore, the companions (may Allah be pleased with them) during the caliphate of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) sometimes prayed twenty-three rak'ahs and sometimes eleven rak'ahs. These practices are

verified from Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and the companions of his era.

Some of the Salaf (Virtuous Predecessors) performed thirty-six rak'ahs of Taraweeh and three rak'ahs of Witr during Ramadan, while others performed forty-one rak'ahs. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) and other scholars have reported this regarding the Salaf. Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that there is flexibility and allowance in this matter. He also wrote that it is preferable for someone who prolongs the recitation, bowing, and prostration to reduce the number of rak'ahs, and for someone who shortens the recitation, bowing, and prostration to increase the number of rak'ahs. This is the essence of Shaykh's statement.

Anyone who contemplates the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) will realize that the best practice in both Ramadan and other times is eleven or thirteen rak'ahs.⁴⁰ This is because, in most circumstances, the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to this number. Additionally, it provides ease and comfort for the worshippers, helping them maintain focus and tranquility in their prayers. However, there is no harm or disapproval for those who wish to pray more than these rak'ahs, as previously mentioned.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Refer to this chapter: There is no specific limit to the number of rak'ahs for Qiyam al-Layl. The evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah makes it clear that eleven or thirteen rak'ahs are not superior to additional rak'ahs merely because of their number. Instead, the virtue lies in the length of the prayer and the extended time spent in Tahajjud. If the time spent is equal for both fewer and more rak'ahs, then the prayer with fewer rak'ahs will be more virtuous. However, if there is a difference in the duration, the longer prayer will be superior, provided it is performed with ease and comfort. And Allah knows best.

⁴¹ Refer to: "Rasalatan Moujazatan fi al-Zakat wal-Siyam," pp. 30-32.

Third Topic: A Critical Review of the Weakening (*Tadh'ief*) of the Narration Regarding the Twenty-Three Rak'ahs:

Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) has classified the narration stating that Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) commanded the performance of twenty-three rak'ahs as weak. He has, however, considered the narration that Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) ordered the performance of eleven rak'ahs to be authentic. The truth is that the narration mentioning eleven rak'ahs is weak, not the one mentioning twenty-three rak'ahs. The weakness of the eleven rak'ahs narration is due to the contradictory statements of its narrator, Muhammad bin Yusuf, who narrates from Sa'ib bin Yazid. Another reason for its weakness is that Ibn Khusayfah, narrating from Sa'ib bin Yazid, contradicted Muhammad bin Yusuf. This indicates that the narration of twenty-three rak'ahs is authentic, and the narration of eleven rak'ahs is weak.

To resolve this issue, I will clarify the points of difference between these narrations, identify the authentic one, and separate it from the weak narration. Therefore, I say: Regarding the number of rak'ahs Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) commanded, various narrations have been reported. One narration states that he ordered the performance of eleven rak'ahs, another states that he commanded twenty rak'ahs, another mentions twenty-one rak'ahs, and it is also reported that he commanded the performance of twenty-three rak'ahs. Most narrations mention the number twenty-three. As for the thirty-six rak'ahs, no command from him has been reported; rather, it is said that the Tabi'een (successors) of Madinah initiated this practice.

Despite this disagreement, there was a consensus among the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) on the legitimacy of performing twenty-three rak'ahs. Imam Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) has mentioned this consensus.⁴² Similarly, scholars of fatwas throughout history have affirmed its legitimacy. None of them have declared the addition beyond eleven rak'ahs to be haram. Only Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) claimed that increasing beyond eleven rak'ahs is impermissible. He considered the narration mentioning eleven rak'ahs to be authentic and preferred it over other narrations, which he deemed weak. Consequently, he gave precedence to this narration over the others. In the present era, his young followers have adopted this view. Therefore, I found it necessary to critically analyze and judge the narration mentioning eleven rak'ahs:

Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) recorded the narration of eleven rak'ahs in his Muwatta. He says: "I heard from Muhammad bin Yusuf, who heard from Sa'ib bin Yazid that Umar bin Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) instructed Ubayy bin Ka'b and Tamim al-Dari (may Allah be pleased with them) to lead the people in eleven rak'ahs of prayer." The narrator mentions that the reciters would recite surahs of over a hundred verses, so much so that due to the prolonged standing, we would lean on our sticks. We would return only near dawn after completing this prayer.⁴³

In Muhammad bin Yusuf's narration, various numbers of rak'ahs are mentioned. Imam Abdur-Razzaq (may Allah have mercy on him)

⁴² Al-Mughni (2/604)

⁴³ Al-Muwatta (Narration by Abu Mus'ab Zuhari) no: (280)

transmitted from Dawood bin Qays and others, who narrated from Muhammad bin Yusuf, who narrated from Sa'ib bin Yazid, that Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) gathered the people in Ramadan to pray twenty-one rak'ahs under the leadership of Ubayy bin Ka'b and Tamim al-Dari. They would recite surahs comprising two hundred verses, and the people would return near dawn after completing this prayer.

This narration contradicts the narration recorded by Imam Malik. Imam Ibn al-Arabi states: "Malik narrated that Ubayy bin Ka'b led eleven rak'ahs, whereas other narrators transmitted that he led twenty-one rak'ahs."⁴⁴

Contrary to the narration transmitted by Muhammad bin Yusuf from Sa'ib bin Yazid, Al-Bayhaqi recorded a narration from Yazid bin Khaseefah from Sa'ib bin Yazid, which states that people used to pray twenty rak'ahs in the month of Ramadan. According to the narrator, they would recite surahs of over a hundred verses and, due to the hardship of standing, they would lean on their sticks during the caliphate of Uthman bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him). There is also a mursal narration that contradicts the eleven rak'ahs narration. Al-Bayhaqi, through the chain of Malik from Yazid bin Ruman, narrated that during the time of Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), people used to pray twenty-three rak'ahs in Ramadan.

After mentioning this difference between the two narrations, Imam Al-Bayhaqi suggested that reconciliation between them is possible. He

⁴⁴ Aaridhatul Ahwazi (4/19)

proposed that people initially prayed eleven rak'ahs and then switched to praying twenty rak'ahs, followed by three rak'ahs of Witr. Allah knows best.⁴⁵

I say that this reconciliation presents a problem because both narrations have the same origin, which is the chain of Yusuf from Sa'ib bin Yazid. In such a situation, preference should be given to the narration that is not disputed. However, Sheikh Al-Albani acted contrary to this principle. He preferred the disputed narration over the non-disputed one by declaring the narration transmitted by Abdur-Razzaq as weak and giving preference to the narration transmitted by Malik, claiming that Malik is more trustworthy than Abdur-Razzaq. This approach contradicts the methodology of the hadith scholars, as they give preference to a narration based on multiple chains when all the narrators are trustworthy.

The narration of twenty-three rak'ahs has been transmitted by a group of narrators from Muhammad bin Yusuf, as indicated by the chains transmitted by Abdur-Razzaq. According to Abdur-Razzaq, it was transmitted by Dawood bin Husayn and others. Additionally, there is corroboration from the narration of Ibn Khaseefah from Sa'ib bin Yazid. Furthermore, the mursal narration of Yazid bin Ruman also serves as a corroboration. A mursal narration strengthens a connected (Muttasil) narration, and the connected (Muttasil) narration is reinforced by it. Ibn al-Arabi gave preference to this, stating regarding Malik's narration, "People have opposed it."

⁴⁵ Sunan Baihaqi (2/496)

Regarding Sheikh Al-Albani's act of intentionally declaring Abdur-Razzaq weak solely because he transmitted a narration contrary to Malik's, this is incorrect. The opposition to Malik originally came from narrators like Dawood bin Husayn and others. Furthermore, Dawood bin Husayn's narration is corroborated by the narration of Ibn Khaseefah from Sa'ib bin Yazid. This corroboration gives preference to Abdur-Razzaq's narration over Malik's. This is because Abdur-Razzaq is not unique in transmitting the narration of twenty-three rak'ahs, whereas Malik is unique in narrating eleven rak'ahs, as noted by Ibn al-Arabi. Additionally, there is a possibility that the issue arises from the narrator Muhammad bin Yusuf.

Regarding the differences among the narrators of the twenty-three rak'ahs, it is possible to reconcile their narrations as follows: the narration about twenty rak'ahs can be understood to exclude the mention of Witr. The narrations about twenty-one and twenty-three rak'ahs can be understood to refer to different numbers of rak'ahs for Witr. This way, all these narrations align and support each other, resolving any apparent discrepancy.

Moreover, the narration about the prayer of Taraweeh is transmitted by a group of Companions, such as Ali bin Abi Talib and Abdullah bin Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with them). A group of the Tabi'een has also transmitted this from the Companions. Muhammad bin Nasr Al-Marwazi compiled these narrations.⁴⁶ Al-Bayhaqi mentioned the narration of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) and said it is a strong narration. Ibn Qudamah reported the consensus of the Companions on

⁴⁶ See: Mukhtasar Qiyam al-Layl (95).

this matter. It is also noteworthy that Imam Malik, who narrated the eleven rak'ahs narration, himself held the view that the Taraweeh prayer consists of thirty-six rak'ahs. This weakens Sheikh Al-Albani's position of preferring eleven rak'ahs over other numbers, as the narrator of this tradition did not act upon it in his later years.

From this analysis, it becomes clear that the issue lies with the narrator Muhammad bin Yusuf. His narration was contradicted by the reliable narrator Ibn Khaseefah, who also narrated from Sa'ib bin Yazid. In such cases, it is essential to prefer the undisputed narration over the disputed one. Additionally, the practice of the majority of the Ummah contradicts the eleven rak'ahs narration, confirming its weakness and affirming the authenticity of the twenty-three rak'ahs narration, as explicitly mentioned by Imam Nawawi. Allah knows best.

Fourth Topic: Al-Albani's Opposition to Consensus

Sheikh Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) addressed this issue under the heading: "Scholars Who Objected to Increasing Beyond Eleven Rak'ahs." He argued that it is prohibited to pray more than eleven rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Layl, whether it be during Taraweeh or Tahajjud. His reasoning was that praying more than eleven rak'ahs is neither established from any of the Rightly Guided Caliphs nor from any of the

prominent jurist Companions. If such an addition had been validated, they would have simply considered it permissible. Since this practice is not established from the Companions, it is incorrect to deem it permissible. This is Al-Albani's position.

He further stated: "Our predecessors, the eminent Imams, are our guides in this matter. Among them, the foremost is Imam Malik. From him, it is reported: 'What Umar bin Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) gathered the people upon is more preferable to me, and that is the eleven rak'ahs of prayer. This was also the prayer of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).' When asked if this included Witr, he replied: 'Yes, thirteen rak'ahs is also close to correctness. I do not know who innovated these additional rak'ahs.'"

Imam Ibn al-Arabi, in his commentary on Tirmidhi, noted the conflicting reports regarding Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and the non-restriction of Taraweeh rak'ahs. He stated: "The correct view is to pray eleven rak'ahs, which is the prayer and Qiyam al-Layl of the Prophet (peace be upon him). There is no basis for any other specific number of rak'ahs, and no limit is set in this matter. If one must specify a number, it should be the number the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not pray more than eleven rak'ahs in Ramadan or outside of it. Since this prayer is Qiyam al-Layl, it is obligatory to follow the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him)."

Imam Muhammad bin Isma'il al-San'ani explicitly stated in "Subul al-Salam" that twenty rak'ahs for Taraweeh is an innovation. He said: "Innovation cannot be praised, for every innovation is misguidance."⁴⁷

Response: Sheikh Al-Albani has asserted that scholars before him stated it was not permissible to increase beyond eleven rak'ahs. However, a deeper examination of their statements reveals an issue with Sheikh Al-Albani's conclusion. Imam Malik's opinion does indeed suggest that he preferred eleven rak'ahs over other numbers, but he did not declare adding more than eleven rak'ahs to be haram. Therefore, attributing the view of non-permissibility of increasing beyond eleven rak'ahs to Imam Malik by Sheikh Al-Albani is incorrect. Sheikh Al-Albani essentially put words in Imam Malik's mouth that he did not say. Tartushi mentioned that Malik narrated from Nafi: "I saw people praying thirty-nine rak'ahs, including three rak'ahs of Witr."

Malik said: "This practice remained, and it was followed during the caliphate of Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him)."⁴⁸ This is Malik's stance. It is well known that Nafi was one of the Tabi'een, and Malik relied on his and other narrations. Therefore, he preferred the practice of the people of Madinah.

From this, it becomes clear to us that it is not accurate to attribute to Malik the opinion that adding more than eleven rak'ahs is haram. Allah knows best.

⁴⁷ Salat At-Tarawih (78)

⁴⁸ Al-Hawadith Wal Bida (56)

Regarding the opinion of Imam Ibn al-Arabi, it is open to interpretation. However, Al-Albani understood his opinion as implying that adding more than eleven rak'ahs is haram, which raises an issue. To clarify Ibn al-Arabi's opinion, it is necessary to present his full statement so the reader can understand the evidence in this matter. Ibn al-Arabi said: "There is no fixed limit to the number of rak'ahs for Qiyam al-Layl. As for the prayer of the Prophet (peace be upon him), it had no specific limit. After that, the situation evolved. Malik narrated that Ubayy ibn Ka'b led eleven rak'ahs. People opposed this narration, saying he led twenty-one rak'ahs. Malik also narrated that people prayed twenty-three rak'ahs during the caliphate of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). Ibn al-Qasim reported from Malik the practice of thirty-seven rak'ahs and said this was the ancient practice."

The correct view is that a person should pray eleven rak'ahs, which is the prayer of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Qiyam al-Layl. As for the other numbers of rak'ahs, there is no basis for them, and there is no specific limit in this matter. If it becomes necessary to specify a number of rak'ahs, then one should pray as many as the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray. The Prophet (peace be upon him) never prayed more than eleven rak'ahs in Ramadan or outside of it. This is the prayer of Qiyam al-Layl, so it is obligatory to follow the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this.

Regarding the recitation of a specific amount of the Quran in the night prayer, there is no fixed limit, except that it is narrated about Ubayy ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) that he used to lead the people in Yemen in prayer and would finish Surah Al-Baqarah in eight rak'ahs.

This totals two hundred verses. He would also recite it in twelve rak'ahs. It depends on the imam who knows the condition of his followers and what they can bear without being forced to leave the congregation. In light prayer, the primary consideration is the amount and quality of the recitation. I saw an imam in Al-Aqsa Mosque who would recite Surah Al-Ikhlās (Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad) in every rak'ah to lighten the prayer. This is because completing the Quran in prayer is not a Sunnah, although it is preferable. However, the imam was lightening the prayer for his congregation and said that he was completing the Quran in three rak'ahs because Surah Al-Ikhlās is equivalent to one-third of the Quran.

I say: Considering Imam Ibn al-Arabi's statement, it appears that he prohibited praying more than eleven rak'ahs only for those who adhere to a specific fixed number of rak'ahs. For those who do not adhere to a fixed number, it is permissible to pray more than eleven rak'ahs. This is evident from Ibn al-Arabi's words. Therefore, it is clear that Sheikh Al-Albani's stance is not aligned with that of Ibn al-Arabi. In fact, Ibn al-Arabi's position is contrary to what Sheikh Al-Albani attributed to him.

After mentioning Imam Malik's narration that Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) ordered the performance of eleven rak'ahs, Sheikh Ibn al-Arabi's statement that people opposed this indicates that he considered this narration weak due to the opposition from Imam Malik's contemporaries.

Similarly, Imam Al-San'ani's stance is not aligned with Sheikh Al-Albani's. To clarify this further, I will present his statement. While

explaining Hadith number 347, Al-San'ani says: Jabir ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) led the night prayer (Qiyam al-Layl) in Ramadan with his companions. The companions awaited him the next night, but he did not come out. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "I feared it would become obligatory upon you." Imam Al-Bukhari narrated this. Al-San'ani comments: Know that those who have established the Taraweeh prayer and those who have said that Qiyam al-Layl in Ramadan is Sunnah have used this hadith as evidence. However, this narration does not provide evidence for the specifics of their Taraweeh prayer's structure and quantity. This is because these people pray twenty rak'ahs in congregation, pausing after every two rak'ahs. The congregation for Taraweeh was first organized by Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), who gathered people behind a designated imam, saying that this is a good innovation (bid'ah). Imam Muslim has narrated this in his Sahih.

Al-San'ani continues: Know that Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) called the organization of people behind a designated imam for Taraweeh prayer and making it obligatory a bid'ah. His intention was not to call the congregational Taraweeh itself a bid'ah, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) led the companions in congregational prayer, as you know. When you understand this, you realize that it was Umar who structured this prayer in congregation behind a designated imam and called it a bid'ah. His statement "N'am al-Bid'ah" (This is a good innovation) means that there is nothing praiseworthy in bid'ah, as every bid'ah is misguidance. As for the quantity of Taraweeh prayer, that is, performing twenty rak'ahs, there is no elevated (marfu') narration to support this

except what has been narrated by Abdul Hamid and Al-Tabarani, which is also considered weak.

After this, San'ani says: When you have understood this, you realize that there is no marfu' (elevated) narration regarding twenty rak'ahs. Instead, there is a well-known and agreed-upon narration from Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not pray more than eleven rak'ahs in Ramadan or outside of it. From all these points, it becomes clear that the way Taraweeh is performed according to the consensus of the majority is considered a bid'ah (innovation). However, Qiyam al-Layl (night prayer) in Ramadan is undoubtedly a Sunnah, and there is no objection to performing voluntary prayers in congregation, as Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) and others followed the Prophet (peace be upon him) in night prayers. But today, the way and the number of rak'ahs with which Taraweeh is performed, calling it Sunnah and adhering strictly to it, is what we consider a bid'ah.

He also said: Then the rightly guided Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) himself saw people gathering for this prayer during the nights of Ramadan and called it an innovation (bid'ah). He did not call it a Sunnah. Reflect on this. This concludes Sheikh San'ani's brief statement.

I say: From Sheikh San'ani's aforementioned statement, it appears that the way Muslims have traditionally and continuously practiced Taraweeh is considered a bid'ah (innovation). He is referring to the observance of Taraweeh throughout all the nights of Ramadan as a bid'ah. Additionally, he considers the adherence to twenty rak'ahs of

Taraweeh as a bid'ah. This is evident from San'ani's words. By this stance, he is supporting the view of the Zaydiya, who believe that both Taraweeh and Duha prayers are bid'ah. Imam Shawkani has refuted this view in his esteemed book "Al-Sail Al-Jarrar" (1/329).

From this, it becomes clear to us that Sheikh San'ani's opinion is different from what Sheikh Al-Albani attributed to him. In fact, Sheikh San'ani's view aligns with that of Sheikh Ibn Al-Arabi. Both scholars agree that it is not permissible to adhere to a fixed number of rak'ahs for Taraweeh throughout Ramadan. They do not consider adding to eleven rak'ahs as impermissible. This indicates that the views of these two scholars do not match Sheikh Al-Albani's stance, who believes that any addition to eleven rak'ahs is categorically impermissible.

Furthermore, this also shows that Sheikh Al-Albani is not only a pioneer in holding such an opinion but, through this stance, has opposed the consensus of Muslims on the permissibility of adding to eleven rak'ahs, as reported by Ibn Qudamah, who mentioned the consensus of the Sahabah (Companions) on twenty rak'ahs.⁴⁹

Similarly, Sheikh Al-Albani's stance is also contrary to what Ibn Rushd (may Allah have mercy on him) has reported, which is that there is no disagreement that a prayer covering a longer duration is superior to one covering a shorter duration.⁵⁰ Additionally, Sheikh Al-Albani's opinion contradicts the narration reported by Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) from Nafi', who said that he saw people performing thirty-nine rak'ahs. His opinion also contradicts what the texts of the

⁴⁹ Al-Mughni (2/604)

⁵⁰ Al-Zakhira (2/407)

Quran indicate, which is that prolonging the time of Qiyam al-Layl (the night prayer) is beloved to Allah, and the Quran has not specified a fixed number of rak'ahs. Allah knows best.

Fifth Topic: Comparing Taraweeh Prayer to the Prayers for Rain and Solar Eclipse

On page 22 of his booklet "Salat al-Tarawih," Sheikh Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) presents the argument: "The Prophet's Limitation to Eleven Rak'ahs as Evidence That Increasing This Number Is Not Permissible." Under this title, he wrote: From the previous discussions, it has become clear that Qiyam al-Layl consists of eleven rak'ahs. This is based on the authentic text that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to. When we reflect on this, it becomes evident that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed eleven rak'ahs throughout his life, without increasing this number in Ramadan or outside of it. When we think about the confirmed Sunnah prayers, the prayer for rain (Salat al-Istisqa), and the prayer during a solar eclipse (Salat al-Kusuf), we find that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specific number of rak'ahs in all these prayers. According to scholars, this adherence is solid evidence that it is not permissible to increase the number of rak'ahs in these prayers. Similarly, it is not permissible to increase the prescribed number of rak'ahs in Taraweeh prayer, because Taraweeh and the other aforementioned prayers share the characteristic that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specified number of rak'ahs in their performance and never increased them. Anyone who claims that there is a difference between Taraweeh and these other

prayers must provide evidence, and providing such evidence is next to impossible.

Response: Sheikh Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) drew a comparison between Taraweeh prayer and the prayers for rain (Salat al-Istisqa) and solar eclipse (Salat al-Kusuf), suggesting that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specific number of rak'ahs for all these prayers and did not increase them. He argued that both types of prayers share this characteristic. Furthermore, it is possible that Sheikh Al-Albani used the ruling on increasing the number of rak'ahs in Salat al-Istisqa and Salat al-Kusuf as an analogy for Taraweeh. In the following paragraphs, we will examine whether these assumptions are valid.

First Assumption: Comparing Taraweeh to Salat al-Istisqa and Salat al-Kusuf:

This comparison is questionable. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not adhere to a specific number of rak'ahs for Qiyam al-Layl. According to Sheikh Al-Albani, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did adhere to a specific number, but the truth is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed more than eleven rak'ahs on some occasions and fewer on others. This variability in the number of rak'ahs is only established for Qiyam al-Layl. In contrast, different numbers of rak'ahs are not established for Salat al-Istisqa and Salat al-Kusuf. Due to this difference, Sheikh Al-Albani's claim of similarity between Taraweeh and the prayers for rain and solar eclipse is incorrect. Allah knows best.

Second Assumption: The second assumption is that Sheikh Al-Albani considered the prohibition of increasing the number of rak'ahs in Taraweeh prayer analogous to the prohibition of increasing the number of rak'ahs in the prayers for a solar eclipse (Salat al-Kusuf) and for rain (Salat al-Istisqa), applying the same ruling to both. He based this on the fact that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specific number of rak'ahs for both. However, this analogy is questionable because, according to Sheikh Al-Albani, this type of analogy should not be made in such situations.⁵¹ This is because these acts of worship are based on divine prescription (Tawqif) and prohibition.

Under this principle, the increase in the number of rak'ahs for Taraweeh, Istisqa, and Kusuf are all included. All these acts of worship fall under the same principle because they share the characteristic of being divinely prescribed, and thus, it is not correct to draw analogies between them. This principle asserts that acts of worship are divinely fixed, and it is not permissible to make analogies between some acts of worship and others because they all fall under a specific, fixed principle. Those who argue that Salat al-Istisqa and Salat al-Kusuf are the original acts and that Taraweeh is a derivative act have no evidence for this claim. Furthermore, presenting a valid reasoning criterion for analogy is not possible, nor is it permissible to consider divine prescription (Tawqif) as a reasoning criterion since being divinely fixed is a common characteristic among all acts of worship. No specific act of worship has this characteristic uniquely.

⁵¹ Sheikh Al-Albani is not opposed to this principle. Refer to his book "Ahkam al-Janaiz wa Bid'uha" (The Rules of Funerals and their Innovations) for further details.

Similarly, it is not permissible to consider the Prophet's adherence (to a specific number) as a reasoning criterion because this is not among the characteristics of the prayer itself. The prayer was not instituted because of the Prophet's adherence to a specific number of rak'ahs. Here, the reasoning criterion is the absence of an action (not doing something), and absence is not a tangible entity; it cannot be considered a reasoning criterion upon which a ruling depends.

Additionally, the legitimacy of analogy is for determining a legal ruling in a matter where there is no existing legal ruling, whether affirmative or negative. The legitimacy of analogy does not serve to negate rulings that have already been negated by the well-known legal principle, as it falls under a specific fixed principle. Therefore, analogy is of no use here because both the entity being compared (maqis) and the entity to which it is being compared (maqis alaih) are identical in ruling, as they fall under the same principle.

Moreover, Sheikh Al-Albani's analogy is questionable from another aspect. His analogy does not concern establishing or negating a ruling related to Taraweeh that is established or not established concerning Salat al-Istisqa and Salat al-Kusuf. Rather, his analogy concerns negating the increase in the number of rak'ahs in Taraweeh, while the increase in the number of rak'ahs in Taraweeh is established from the Prophet (peace be upon him). On the other hand, increasing the number of rak'ahs in Salat al-Istisqa and Salat al-Kusuf is not prescribed. It is accepted that what is not prescribed is not part of the religion, and what is not part of the religion cannot be analogized with what is part of the religion.

Analogy involves comparing a known entity with another known entity, such that a ruling is established for both or negated for both, provided that there is a relationship of affirmation or negation of a ruling or attribute between them.

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Therefore, prohibiting the addition of rak'ahs in Taraweeh prayers based on the prohibition of adding rak'ahs in Istisqa and Kusuf prayers does not fall under the definition of Qiyas (analogical reasoning). This is because it is akin to comparing one nonexistent scenario to another. Secondly, the non-permissibility of increasing rak'ahs in Istisqa and Kusuf prayers is known since the Prophet (PBUH) did not perform any additional rak'ahs in these prayers. However, the case of Taraweeh is different because, according to Sheikh Al-Albani's opinion, adding rak'ahs in Taraweeh is not nonexistent but rather existent. Thus, while these prayers share a common basis in one proof, Sheikh Al-Albani compared one to the other to derive a ruling for the first based on the second.

Another point is that referring to this whole matter as Qiyas is questionable because it involves comparing the concept of deviation in one act to the deviation in another act. If the concept of deviation in actions is considered valid proof, then it applies equally to both the compared (Maqis) and the base of comparison (Maqis Alayh). Hence, one does not hold any special distinction over the other in this matter because both are equal in terms of proof, and Qiyas is needed when

⁵² Al-Mustasfi (2/228)

proof is absent. If the concept of deviation in actions is not valid proof, then indicating the prohibition of addition in both instances would not be valid. There is a principle that in matters of worship, the default is prohibition. Both types of worship are included in this principle; thus, neither holds any special distinction over the other. Therefore, how can one be used as the compared and the other as the base of comparison? Allah knows best.

Analyzing Sheikh Al-Albani's Opinion

First Point: Sheikh Al-Albani stated: "When we reflect on this, it becomes clear that the Prophet (peace be upon him) consistently adhered to this specific number of rak'ahs throughout his life without any increase." Furthermore, Sheikh Al-Albani mentioned that these prayers share a common characteristic with the aforementioned prayers in that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specific number of rak'ahs in their performance without any increase.

Response: This claim is partially correct and partially incorrect. The correct part is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did adhere to a specific number of rak'ahs in the prayers of Kusuf and Istisqa, without any increase or decrease. However, the incorrect part of Sheikh Al-Albani's claim is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specific number of rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Layl and did not increase it. There are two scenarios of error in this assertion:

First Scenario: It is established in the authentic collections, such as Sahih and Musnad books, that the night prayer (Tahajjud) of Allah's

Messenger (peace be upon him) was sometimes fewer than eleven rak'ahs, for instance, nine and even seven rak'ahs are also documented. So, how can the claim of adhering to a fixed number of rak'ahs be correct when the Prophet's night prayer varied in this manner?

Second Scenario: In Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, it is also recorded that the night prayer of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) was thirteen rak'ahs. Certainly, this hadith was not unknown to Shaykh Albani, but he interpreted it by stating that the additional two rak'ahs mentioned here are the confirmed Sunnah of the Isha prayer. Following this, he reasoned against the permissibility of increasing the number of rak'ahs in Qiyam-ul-Lail (night prayer) by analogizing it to the impermissibility of adding rak'ahs in the prayers of solar and lunar eclipses (Salat-ul-Kusuf and Salat-ul-Istisqa), suggesting that others should obligate themselves to this opinion. This reasoning is incorrect because the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not restrict himself to a fixed number of rak'ahs in the night prayer. Conversely, he did specify the number of rak'ahs for Salat-ul-Istisqa and the Eid prayer. Furthermore, his analogy is flawed because analogy (Qiyas) requires a common cause between the original case and the new case, which is not present here.⁵³

If we were to accept his analogy, it would imply that Qiyam-ul-Lail consists of only two rak'ahs, as only then would it be valid to compare it to the two rak'ahs of the Eid prayer. But this is not his intention. Instead, he compares it to something not prescribed in the prayers of Kusuf, Istisqa, and Eid to establish a Shariah ruling regarding Tarawih prayer,

⁵³ At-Tamhid Li Abil Khattab (3/358, 1/24)

compelling others to adhere to his opinion and deeming those who do otherwise as opposing the Sunnah.

Another Scenario is that if we accept that this issue pertains to analogy, it would result in rejecting the Sunnah through analogy. It is established that analogy is not considered when it contradicts the Sunnah. However, Shaykh Albani did not take this into account. Thus, he ruled that it is not permissible to add to the eleven rak'ahs and drew an analogy between this and the prayers of Kusuf and Istisqa. In doing so, he considered the hadith "The night prayer is two by two rak'ahs" in its absolute sense and took the hadith "Seek help through abundant prostration" in a general sense. The first hadith indicates that there is no fixed number of rak'ahs in the night prayer, and the second hadith encourages frequent prostration without specifying a number. To achieve frequent prostration, both increasing the number and prolonging the prostration are necessary. These two hadiths clearly indicate that the number of rak'ahs in the night prayer is not limited. This is also evidenced by the varying number of rak'ahs in the Prophet's Qiyam-ul-Lail. If a specific number were intended, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have adhered to it just as he did with the number of rak'ahs in the prayers of Istisqa and Eid.

Hence, considering Qiyam-ul-Lail akin to Eid, Istisqa, and Kusuf prayers is questionable because these are distinct acts of worship. One cannot be equated or compared with the other. Each of these prayers has specific ways to perform them, clarifying their nature, and it is not permissible to negate their methods through analogy.

Third Scenario: Shaykh Albani did not differentiate between these prayers in the sense that one prayer's number of rak'ahs is not left indefinite by a saying, while the other's is. It is known among the hadith scholars that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed the Kusuf and Istisqa prayers with a specified number of rak'ahs, neither increasing nor decreasing them. Moreover, he did not encourage frequent prostration in these prayers, and their number of rak'ahs was not left indefinite. Therefore, we must adhere to what is transmitted regarding these acts of worship and follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this regard.

In contrast, Qiyam-ul-Lail is different because the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed it with various attributes and different numbers of rak'ahs. He did not restrict himself to a specific number of rak'ahs in this prayer and encouraged performing it as much as possible, leaving its number of rak'ahs indefinite. Shaykh Albani did not consider these differences but rather equated all these acts of worship. Hence, restricting oneself to eleven rak'ahs is adhering to only one Sunnah, while neglecting the Sunnah related to thirteen rak'ahs and encouraging frequent prostration at night, which is not permissible as it implies rejecting some Sunnah while accepting others, whereas it is obligatory to accept all Sunnah. Shaykh Albani interpreted these Sunnahs and definitively concluded that Qiyam-ul-Lail is a limited act of worship similar to Kusuf and Istisqa prayers. However, he is an adherent of the Ahl al-Hadith and one who denies opposing the Sunnah through analogy. And Allah knows best.

Fourth Scenario: Shaykh Albani's rejection of the differences between these acts of worship:

At the end of his above discussion, Shaykh Albani mentioned that there is no difference between Qiyam-ul-Lail and Kusuf and Istisqa prayers and that proving a difference between them is like bringing a river of milk. His statement is incorrect and, in fact, an inverse claim. This is because Qiyam-ul-Lail has specific rulings that Kusuf and Istisqa prayers do not have. When the specific attributes of Qiyam-ul-Lail are established, the differences between these acts of worship become evident.

One characteristic of Qiyam-ul-Lail is that it is an act of worship prescribed without any cause. Thus, performing it regularly every night is among the best deeds to attain closeness to Allah. In contrast, Kusuf and Istisqa prayers are tied to specific causes and are only performed when those causes exist.

Furthermore, multiple attributes and qualities of Qiyam-ul-Lail are prescribed, such as its varying number of rak'ahs. In contrast, Kusuf and Istisqa prayers have a single mode of performance regarding rak'ahs. Moreover, the Eid prayer is performed during the day, and Kusuf prayer can be performed both day and night, but Qiyam-ul-Lail is different as it is only performed at night, with its makeup prayer done during the day.

Additionally, the hadiths regarding night prayer (Qiyam-ul-Lail) that encourage performing it abundantly are transmitted verbally, unlike the

Kusuf and Istisqa prayers, for which there is neither a verbal nor practical Sunnah about increasing their rak'ahs.

One of these differences is sufficient to refute Shaykh Albani's claim, and here several differences have been highlighted. Allah knows best.

Sixth Topic: Failing to Distinguish Between General, Absolute, and Specific Actions

Shaykh Albani writes on page (29) of his book: The third doubt is that these people hold onto the general and absolute texts firmly. This means that some of them derive evidence from these absolute and general texts that encourage abundant prayer without specifying a number of rak'ahs. For instance, Rabi'a ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) for companionship in Paradise, and the Prophet said: "Help me in this by making many prostrations." Another example is the narration from Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged the night prayer in Ramadan... and other similar hadiths, whose absolute and general statements suggest that this prayer is prescribed such that the worshiper can perform as many rak'ahs as they wish.

After this, Shaykh Albani says: The response is that firmly holding onto such absolute and general texts is a very weak stance, and it is a doubt that should not be propagated. This is because acting upon absolute texts is correct only when the legislator has not restricted them, but when the legislator has restricted an absolute ruling with a condition, then it is obligatory to adopt that condition, and it is not correct to suffice with the

absolute. Our discussed issue, "the issue of Taraweeh," does not belong to the category of absolute supererogatory prayers because it is restricted by a text transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him), as explained at the beginning of this section.⁵⁴ Therefore, it is not permissible to suspend the restriction and hold firmly onto the absolute. Salat al-Taraweeh, page (32).

Response: Shaykh Albani's statement involves several fundamental discussions, and its reasoning is questionable. Below is a detailed examination of it:

First Point: Shaykh Albani considered the Prophet's encouragement of abundant prostrations and encouragement of Qiyam-ul-Lail in Ramadan to be absolute hadiths, which is incorrect. According to the principles of jurisprudence, the absolute does not specifically include one thing but rather its genus in its true sense, and this true nature is indefinite in the context of the ruling, such as Allah's statement: {فَتَّحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ} "Then freeing a slave"⁵⁵ and sometimes this absoluteness is in a statement, such as the Prophet's statement: "There is no marriage except with a guardian."⁵⁶

The two words mentioned in the hadith, "abundant prostrations" and "Qiyam Ramadan," are not absolute but definite because they are made definite through the genitive construction, so it is incorrect to call them absolute because they fall outside the domain of absolute but are among the terms of generality and have no relation to the absolute, as

⁵⁴ This refers to their statement: "The number of rak'ahs for Qiyam-ul-Lail is eleven. This is established by an authentic text, meaning the practice of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)." (Page 22)

⁵⁵ Surah Al-Mujadila (58:3)

⁵⁶ See: Raudha An-Nadhir, p: (136)

mentioned by the principles of jurisprudence that the words made definite through genitive construction are terms of generality.⁵⁷

Second Point: Shaykh Albani considered practical Sunnahs as restricted, which is questionable. According to the principles of jurisprudence, the definition of restricted is: it includes a specific thing or, if it is indefinite, its genus is included with an additional attribute described by something else, such as Allah's statement: {وتحرير رقبة} "and freeing a believing slave"⁵⁸ and also Allah's statement:

{فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ}

[But he who does not find [a slave] – then [he must fast for] two consecutive months.]⁵⁹

In the first verse, the slave is restricted by faith, and in the second verse, fasting is restricted by continuity.⁶⁰

Shawkani mentions the differences in defining absolute and then says: Restricted is what is contrary to absolute and opposite to the limits mentioned for absolute.⁶¹

Absolute and restricted are essentially characteristics of statements. They are not attributes of actions because restricted is stronger than absolute, and thus it nullifies the absoluteness of absolute and requires

⁵⁷ See: Rawdat al-Nazir, p. 221, edited by Saeed; Irshad al-Fuhul, p. 115.

⁵⁸ Surah An-Nisa (4:92)

⁵⁹ Surah An-Nisa (4:92)

⁶⁰ Raudha An-Nadhir, p: (136)

⁶¹ Irshaadul Fuhul, p: (146)

acting upon the additional attribute mentioned in its context. Abu Al-Khattab says: Restricted has the utmost specificity in any matter because it is explicit in that matter... and specific is preferred over general.⁶²

It is also well known that in case of conflict, statements take precedence over actions. Thus, if actions are considered restricted to statements, then in case of conflict, actions will take precedence over statements, which is contrary to the position of the majority of the Salaf of the Ummah. Another point is that there is no actual conflict between the Shariah evidence, so it is obligatory to act upon the absolute with its absoluteness and to act upon the restricted with its restriction unless there is a conflict. Shaykh Albani did not follow this principle. He restricted the absolute with something that inherently lacks the capacity to be restricted, let alone conflicting with it.

Abu Al-Khattab says: The apparent meaning of the absolute is to take it on its absoluteness and not to restrict it with restricted unless there is some connection. That connection could either be from the linguistic aspect or from the meaning aspect. The connection from the linguistic aspect is that the absolute is conjoined with restricted by a conjunction or a hidden pronoun, etc. This situation is not present in our discussed issue. The connection from the meaning aspect is that the freed slaves in both cases agree in the cause of restriction, and this is considered by analogy, which is not our case here. When there is no connection between the absolute and the restricted, one is not applied to the other.⁶³

⁶² At-Tamhid Li Abil Khattab (2/178)

⁶³ See: Al-Tamhid (2/182) and also see: Irshad al-Fuhul (2/10).

Another point is that for the restricted to have an additional characteristic compared to the absolute is necessary for it to be valid to apply the absolute to it. Here, from the eleven rak'ahs of prayer performed by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), the most that can be inferred is the permissibility of this number. His practice does not indicate the impermissibility of adding to this number because there is no additional characteristic contrary to the absolute within it.

Shaykh Albani's argument against the permissibility of more than eleven rak'ahs is based on the fact that the Prophet did not perform more than this, not on the action itself. It is well established that considering non-action as equivalent to action is incorrect. Similarly, considering this characteristic, i.e., the Prophet's action of performing eleven rak'ahs, as restricting his statement is incorrect. This is because the Prophet's action of performing eleven rak'ahs aligns with his statement regarding the permissibility of this number and is not contrary to the permissibility of performing more than eleven rak'ahs. The non-action, i.e., not performing more than eleven rak'ahs, is a non-existent entity, so how can it be considered as restricting his statement?

Third Point: Shaykh Albani considered the actions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as restricting his absolute statements. Thus, he acted upon what the Prophet's actions indicated and invalidated the absoluteness of his statements, while the truth is that the Prophet's statements are not absolute but general, and there is no contradiction between his statements and actions. This is because the Prophet (peace be upon him) acted upon some parts of what he encouraged and promoted in his statements, and there is no contradiction in this. The

Prophet's action is a part of what his statement indicates; it is not entirely separate or contrary to it. The Prophet's action would only contradict his statement if it was entirely opposite to what his statement indicated, such as the Prophet standing and drinking while he prohibited standing and drinking, or the Prophet standing and urinating while he prohibited standing and urinating.

Moreover, according to principles, the absolute is not applied to the restricted; rather, the absolute remains on its absoluteness, and the restricted remains on its restriction. The restricted is only applied to the absolute in case of a conflict, because the implications of evidence are not invalidated except by another evidence, and there is no evidence for what Shaykh Albani said because there is no conflict between statements and actions. This results in leaving the absolute statements without evidence and acting only upon what the actions indicate. This implies that legislation relies solely on the indication of actions and not on the indication of statements, even if there is no conflict between the two. To my knowledge, no one holds this view.⁶⁴

Also, to my knowledge, Salaf (the righteous predecessors) did not differ on the point that it is not permissible to apply absolute statements to actions. The difference among the predecessors is regarding applying absolute statements to the restricted. For example, one of Imam Ahmad's two opinions is that it is not permissible to apply the absolute to the restricted; rather, it is obligatory to act upon both evidences. This is the

⁶⁴ The scholars of Usul have clearly stated that when a general word is followed by a specific word that is a part of or included within that general word, the specific word does not restrict the general word; rather, the general word remains in its generality because the specific is in agreement with it. See: Sharh al-Kawkab (3/386). I say: If this rule applies between statements, then its application between statements and actions is even more appropriate.

stance of the majority of the Hanafi scholars and some Shafi'i scholars. According to the Maliki school, the absolute is applied to the restricted.⁶⁵

Some Scholars of Usul have taken a middle path. According to them, if there is evidence for restricting the absolute, it will be adopted; otherwise, the absolute remains in its absoluteness, and the restricted remains in its restriction because Allah has addressed us in the language of the Arabs.⁶⁶

Fourth Point: What Shaykh Albani did can be understood as considering actions as restricting the meaning of statements, which is questionable. This is because the command to perform abundant prostrations and the encouragement of Qiyam-ul-Lail in Ramadan is essentially an invitation to perform as many voluntary prayers as possible without specifying a number of rak'ahs. The meaning of both the hadiths mentioned above is this. As for the Prophet's practice of performing eleven rak'ahs, it would indicate the impermissibility of more than eleven rak'ahs only if performing more than eleven rak'ahs was considered permissible due to the Prophet's action. As you can see, this is contrary to the meaning of the two aforementioned hadiths. Shaykh Albani has adopted this and prioritized it over the explicit meaning of the two hadiths. Thus, he declared the addition to the eleven rak'ahs as an innovation. Shaykh Albani's argument can be interpreted as either considering what the Prophet did not do as a Sunnah of omission or as the meaning of his action. This contradicts the established principle among the scholars of principles that actions have no implicit meaning⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Raudha An-Nadhir, p: (137)

⁶⁶ See: Al-Burhan (2/15), Miftah al-Wusul, p. 78.

⁶⁷ Irshadul Fuhul (2/36)

and no generality.⁶⁸ Therefore, it is not correct to prioritize this over the meaning of statements, which do not exist.

The truth is that there is no conflict between the Prophet's practice of Qiyam-ul-Lail in Ramadan and his encouragement of abundant prostrations. This is because the Prophet practiced part of what he prescribed for his Ummah. Thus, his eleven rak'ahs prayer is included in his statement, "Help me in this by making many prostrations," because these eleven rak'ahs are part of that abundance. Moreover, prayers with more rak'ahs than these are also included. It is not correct to say that the Prophet's practice of part of what he prescribed invalidates what he did not do, which is included in his statement. If such a statement were made, it would lead to the loss of a significant part of the understanding of the Prophet's verbal Sunnahs. Instead, it would mean that only what the Prophet practiced is considered an example, and what he did not practice is prohibited. This prohibition would include the generality of the Prophet's statement indicating its permissibility, which is not correct. This would result in prioritizing the meaning of actions, which have no reality, over the indication and meaning of statements.

Furthermore, there are some Sunnahs that are similar to Taraweeh prayer. One of them is that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) encouraged performing Umrah repeatedly. In this regard, he said, "An Umrah to another Umrah is an expiation for what is between them." From this hadith, the legitimacy of performing Umrah multiple times in a year is understood, but the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) himself performed Umrah only once in a year. This does not imply the

⁶⁸ Irshadul Fuhul (1/314)

illegitimacy of performing Umrah multiple times a year, because he did not do it. It is similar to someone arguing that increasing the night prayers (Qiyam al-Layl) is prohibited because the Prophet did not do so.

Another example is that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) encouraged the Duha prayer, and it is established that he performed this prayer only once. Now, from this, it would imply that performing the Duha prayer more than once in a lifetime is an innovation because there is no narration that he performed it more than once. Therefore, it is not correct to prohibit increasing what the Prophet did, because the generality of the verbal Sunnah is also part of the Shariah from which rulings are derived, whether or not the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) performed it. This is because accepting the generality of the statement does not require that he performed every action indicated by that generality. Rather, the actions of the Prophet further explain and elucidate the verbal Sunnah due to the reinforcement of both verbal and action-based Sunnahs. In cases where the action of the Prophet is not established, his verbal command remains authoritative and does not need the confirmation of his action, for example, encouraging performing Umrah in Ramadan even though he did not perform Umrah in Ramadan himself. Here, it would not be correct to say that performing Umrah in Ramadan is not legitimate because the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not do it himself. Rather, performing Umrah in Ramadan is legitimate because his verbal Sunnah indicates it, even if his action does not confirm it.

The fact that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) acted on part of what his statement indicated does not negate the legitimacy of the rest

that he did not act on, as it is included in the generality of his statement. Instead, the part of his statement that he acted upon includes two Sunnahs, one verbal and the other action-based, while the part he did not act upon includes one verbal Sunnah. It is not permissible to reject the generality of a statement by arguing that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not act on every part of the generality, but this is what Shaykh Al-Albani has argued. He prohibited adding to the eleven rak'ahs because the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not do so, despite the fact that he ordered increasing prostrations and kept the number of rak'ahs of the night prayer unspecified. If we follow Shaykh Al-Albani's methodology, we would have to reject many acts of worship that the Salaf regarded as part of the religion. Examples of this have already been mentioned. Allah alone guides to the straight path.

Fifth point: Referring to the actions of the Messenger (peace be upon him) as 'Nass': Shaykh Al-Albani referred to the actions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as 'Nass' (text). An example is his statement: "Because the night prayer is specified by the Nass established from the action of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), as previously explained."

Response: By this, Shaykh meant to state that the night prayer of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was eleven rak'ahs. In this way, he has referred to the actions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as 'Nass'. However, this is problematic because according to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, 'Nass' is a term related to statements, not actions.

In defining 'Nass', Al-Tilimsani stated: "You should know that a word either contains two meanings or only one meaning. If a word contains only one meaning by its inherent nature, it is a 'Nass'." This is the end of his statement.

He also said: "From this, it is clear that a word is either a 'Nass', ambiguous, apparent, or interpreted."

He further said: "An objection to 'Nass' will only be from the direction that it does not indicate. An example is the hadith: 'If a dog licks the utensil of any one of you, he should wash it seven times.'"⁶⁹

Thus, referring to the actions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as 'Nass' is contrary to the position of the scholars of principles. Essentially, terminology is used for what it is designated for so that the reader's mind does not divert from understanding scholarly issues in their true sense. Allah alone grants success.

Seventh Topic: Equating the Implications of Actions and Statements

Shaykh Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) writes in his book "Salah al-Tarawih" on page (32): Since our discussed issue (Tarawih prayer) does not belong to the category of absolute supererogatory prayers, it is because this prayer is restricted by a text established from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), as explained at the

⁶⁹ See: Miftah al-Wusool, pp. 41, 42; Irshad al-Fuhool, p. 172.

beginning of this section. Therefore, it is not permissible to nullify this restriction due to absolute narrations. Whoever does this is like the one who, in his prayer, contravenes the prayer of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that has been transmitted with authentic chains. He prays contrary to the prayer of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in both quantity and quality and forgets the Prophet's statement: "Pray as you have seen me praying." He uses absolute narrations as evidence for this contravention, such as the person who performs two bows (ruku) or more than two prostrations in a single prayer. The corruption of this act is not hidden from any rational individual. Shaykh's statement ends here.

Response: There is a problem with this opinion. Comparing the addition in Tarawih prayer to the addition in a four-unit prayer is not correct because those who advocate for the addition in Tarawih prayer are the Imams of Islam, the people of faith, and the people of piety. Furthermore, there is a consensus among Muslims on this matter, making it far-fetched to include such esteemed Imams and scholars among those who add to the prescribed bows and prostrations.

The reason for this erroneous argument is that Shaykh Albani did not adopt the method of the esteemed Imams in the order of the Shariah evidence and the way of deriving rulings from them. According to these Imams, the actions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are distinguished. These Imams did not equate the actions that the Prophet consistently performed in a specified manner for obligatory prayers with those actions he performed in multiple ways, such as the night prayer (Qiyam al-Lail). Therefore, these Imams made it obligatory to follow the Prophet's example in performing the obligatory prayer exactly as he did

and considered the variations in the night prayer as indicating its permissibility. Then, they derived the ruling on its permissibility from the Prophet's statements about what he did not do in the night prayer. Thus, these Imams acted upon both verbal and action-based Sunnahs and adopted them as evidence, but Shaykh Albani did not follow this method. In his argument about contravening the Prophet's prayer, he used the meaning of the hadith: "Pray as you have seen me praying." Hence, he restricted the number of rak'ahs in the night prayer to the number performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and invalidated any addition because it would be contrary to the Prophet's prayer, and the command is to pray as he prayed, not contrary to it.

Response: The hadith "Pray as you have seen me praying" has two implications: one explicit (literal) and the other implicit (understood meaning). This hadith explicitly indicates the legitimacy of praying in a manner similar to the Prophet's prayer and implicitly indicates the prohibition of praying contrary to the Prophet's prayer. Some specific hadiths also explicitly indicate the desirability of increasing prostrations without limiting the number of rak'ahs in the night prayer. These hadiths are contrary to the understood meaning of the hadith "Pray as you have seen me praying." The scholars' stance on this is that in case of conflict, the explicit meaning is preferred over the implicit meaning⁷⁰ because its indication is stronger. Therefore, the scholars have stated that increasing the number of rak'ahs in the night prayer is permissible. However, Shaykh Albani did the opposite. He prioritized the implicit meaning over the explicit meaning. Thus, he restricted the night prayer to the number

⁷⁰ Irshadul Fuhul (2/40)

of rak'ahs performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and considered any addition an innovation. This is contrary to the correct methodology.

Moreover, the explicit meaning of the hadith "Pray as you have seen me praying" is general. This hadith indicates the obligation to follow the Prophet in manner, description, and number. However, the obligation to follow the number of rak'ahs is excluded from this generality by another hadith: "The night prayer is two by two rak'ahs." This hadith keeps the number of rak'ahs unrestricted, making it clear that while similarity to the Prophet's prayer is desired, it does not extend to the number of rak'ahs in the night prayer because there is another hadith specifying it otherwise.⁷¹

I say: Whoever has firmly grasped the meaning of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) hadith "Pray as you have seen me praying" and has therefore declared praying more than eleven Rak'ahs in Tarawih as an innovation, must also declare performing more than one Umrah in a year and performing more than four Umrahs in a lifetime as innovations

⁷¹Shaykh Dr. Saleh Al-Fawzan's position is that the hadith of the Prophet "Pray as you have seen me praying" pertains to obligatory prayers. Voluntary prayers (Nafil) are not included under this command. This is because any minor deviation in obligatory prayers is not permissible, neither in the number of rak'ahs nor in their manner. However, the matter is different with voluntary prayers. In voluntary prayers, it is not necessary for a Muslim to adhere to the exact number of rak'ahs that is established from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him); rather, it is permissible to increase or decrease the number of rak'ahs. Additionally, there is flexibility in the manner of performing voluntary prayers; a Muslim can perform them according to their convenience and capability. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) voluntary prayers were so lengthy that his feet would swell. It is not obligatory for Muslims to perform voluntary prayers in the same manner. This is the end of his statement.

My Comment:

A person performing voluntary prayers is the master of his own self. It is permissible for him to pray sitting down even if he has the ability to stand, but the case is different with obligatory prayers. Essentially, the hadith of the Prophet "Pray as you have seen me praying" should be understood in its general sense, and the rulings for voluntary prayers that have evidence will be excluded from it. Allah knows best.

based on the hadith "Take from me your rituals (of Hajj and Umrah)." This is because both practices were not performed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is established that he did not perform more than one Umrah in a year and did not perform more than four Umrahs in his lifetime. Therefore, increasing in what the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not do is considered a neglected Sunnah. According to Sheikh Albani's opinion, this hadith would restrict the meaning of the hadith which states, "One Umrah to another is an expiation for the sins committed between them," although he did not explicitly say this. Thus, Sheikh Albani himself has taken a stance contrary to the principle he established. Allah knows best.

Eighth Topic: Prohibition of Increasing the number of Rak'ahs in Sunnah Mu'akkada (Confirmed) Prayers

Shaykh Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) says: "When we consider that the Prophet (peace be upon him) adhered to a specific number of rak'ahs in the Sunnah Mu'akkada prayers and other prayers like the Kusuf (eclipse) and Istisqa (rain) prayers, it is a strong indication for the scholars that it is not permissible to add to the number of rak'ahs in these prayers."

Then, he notes in a footnote: "This is why Bukhari, when he established the chapter 'The Two Rak'ahs Before Dhuhr' in his Sahih, he narrated Abdullah bin Umar's (may Allah be pleased with them) report that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to perform two rak'ahs before Dhuhr. Immediately after, he presented Aisha's (may Allah be pleased with her) narration that 'The Prophet (peace be upon him) never abandoned four

rak'ahs before Dhuhr.' The purpose was to clarify that the two rak'ahs before Dhuhr are not the definitive number, and it is permissible to add to them, as explained by Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari."

Ibn Hajar's comment indicates that the specific number of rak'ahs the Prophet (peace be upon him) practiced cannot be exceeded, and he considers Taraweeh prayer in the same category. His statement ends here.⁷²

Response: Shaykh Albani's discussion consists of two points:

First Point: This relates to the interpretation of Hafiz Ibn Hajar's statement. Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) explains Imam Bukhari's practice in his Sahih when he established the chapter "The Two Rak'ahs Before Dhuhr" and then narrated two hadiths, one from Abdullah bin Umar and another from Aisha (may Allah be pleased with them). Hafiz Ibn Hajar explains: The purpose of narrating Abdullah bin Umar's hadith is clear because it forms the basis for Imam Bukhari's chapter. As for Aisha's hadith where she mentions, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) never abandoned four rak'ahs before Dhuhr," it does not align with the chapter heading. This can be explained by saying that Imam Bukhari intended to show that the two rak'ahs before Dhuhr are not the definitive number that it is not permissible to add to them.⁷³

This clarifies that Hafiz Ibn Hajar's intention is to explain that by titling the chapter "The Two Rak'ahs Before Dhuhr" and then narrating Aisha's hadith about the Prophet's practice of four rak'ahs before Dhuhr, Imam

⁷² Risalah Salat At-Tarawih, p: (22)

⁷³ Fath Al-Bari (3/58)

Bukhari intended to show the flexibility in the number of rak'ahs. This is Imam Bukhari's action, not Hafiz Ibn Hajar's, as Shaykh Albani attributed to him. Hafiz Ibn Hajar is merely clarifying Imam Bukhari's practice. The purpose of Hafiz Ibn Hajar's statement is to show that the Sunnah before Dhuhr is not limited to two rak'ahs, and it is permissible to increase the number without restriction. This is evident from Hafiz Ibn Hajar's statement because he kept the addition unrestricted. Therefore, it is incorrect to understand from his statement that he prohibited praying more than four rak'ahs before Dhuhr. Anyone who understood his statement as prohibiting more than four rak'ahs has misinterpreted it. It is also incorrect to deduce from his statement or Imam Bukhari's that they prohibited praying more than four rak'ahs of Nafl before Dhuhr or more than eleven rak'ahs of Taraweeh. And Allah knows best.

Second Point: Shaykh Albani's statement implies that he prohibits adding more than four rak'ahs after Dhuhr. His stance is that the number of rak'ahs performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) day and night, whether they are unrestricted Nafl or confirmed Sunnah, cannot be increased. Thus, he bases the ruling on the number of rak'ahs performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Consequently, he equated the ruling on increasing the rak'ahs of Taraweeh with the number of rak'ahs performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) outside of Taraweeh. He prohibited increasing the rak'ahs in both cases, which is incorrect. To my knowledge, none of the Salaf held this view. The reason is that the fundamental principle regarding Nafl prayers is that they are recommended to be performed according to one's desire and ability without a specified number of rak'ahs, except in exceptional cases, such

as performing them during prohibited times. This is evidenced by the narration of Amr bin Abasah (may Allah be pleased with him): “He said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, tell me about the prayers.’ He said: ‘Pray Fajr, then refrain from praying until the sun has risen and has fully risen, for it rises between the horns of the Shaytan, and that is when the disbelievers prostrate to it. Then pray, for the prayer is witnessed and attended (by the angels) until the shadow is the length of a spear. Then refrain from praying, for at that time Hell is heated up. When the shadow moves forward, pray, for the prayer is witnessed and attended (by the angels) until you pray Asr. Then refrain from praying until the sun sets, for it sets between the horns of the Shaytan, and that is when the disbelievers prostrate to it.’” (Narrated by Muslim and Ahmad). Imam Abu Dawood narrated a similar hadith beginning with: “O Messenger of Allah, which part of the night is the best to be heard? He said: ‘The last part of the night, so pray as much as you like during that time, for the prayer is recorded and witnessed by the angels until you pray Fajr.’”⁷⁴

Imam Bukhari also narrated from Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) that he said, "I pray as I saw my companions praying. I do not prevent anyone from praying as much as they wish at night or during the day, except that they should consider the rising and setting of the sun."⁷⁵

The general ruling for Nafl prayers is that they are performed without cause and without a specific number of rak'ahs. However, some are linked to specific causes, increasing their virtue and specifying their nature and number of rak'ahs, such as confirmed Sunnahs, which are

⁷⁴ Similarly quoted in Al-Muntaqa, Nayl al-Awtar (3/102).

⁷⁵ Sahih Al-Bukhari Ma'a Al-Fath (2/62)

linked to obligatory prayers, and for example, the two rak'ahs after ablution or after donning the Ihram.

The virtue given to Sunnah Al-Mu'akkada and other prayers due to the Prophet (peace be upon him) performing them does not imply that increasing their number of rak'ahs is prohibited. Thus, if someone prays ten rak'ahs after Dhuhr, all these prayers will be counted as Nafl, for which the person will be rewarded. The first four rak'ahs will be considered the confirmed Sunnah of Dhuhr, and the rest will be considered unrestricted Nafl performed at a non-prohibited time. The difference between these prayers is that the first four rak'ahs will be superior to the rest because they are linked to a cause, which is being the Sunnah Mu'akkada of Dhuhr. Another reason for their superiority is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed them. The remaining rak'ahs will be recommended due to being performed at a time when angels are present and witness them. It is incorrect to say that virtuous Nafl prayers invalidate non-virtuous Nafl prayers, as Shaykh Albani states.

Similarly, it is incorrect to compare the number of rak'ahs in night prayers with the number of rak'ahs in those Nafl prayers linked to a cause and performed during prohibited times. This is because the Sunnah indicates that the number of rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Lail is unrestricted, as evidenced by the hadith: "The night prayer is two rak'ahs by two rak'ahs." As for the Nafl prayers linked to a cause and performed during prohibited times, the evidence indicates that their number of rak'ahs is limited. Therefore, it is not permissible to pray four rak'ahs of Tahiyyat al-Masjid after Asr or four rak'ahs of the Sunnah of Fajr because they are performed during prohibited times. Thus, in this issue,

due to conflicting evidence, it is obligatory to limit oneself to the specified number of rak'ahs. The way to reconcile conflicting evidence in this matter is to suffice with performing the cause-linked Nafl prayers with the specified number of rak'ahs, and it is prohibited to increase their rak'ahs. Moreover, they must be performed in the prescribed manner. Therefore, it is not permissible to lengthen the two rak'ahs of the Sunnah of Fajr or Tahiyat al-Masjid during prohibited times.

Regarding Qiyam al-Lail, the evidence is not conflicting but rather agrees in the Qur'an and Sunnah that a person can pray as much as they want and are able to during Tahajjud. How then can Shaykh Albani deem it permissible to equate increasing the number of rak'ahs in Qiyam al-Lail with increasing the two rak'ahs of the Sunnah of Fajr, while the evidence for both prayers is different?⁷⁶

Ninth Topic: Evidence from the Sunnah of Omission

Shaykh Albani also derived evidence for the impermissibility of adding to the eleven rak'ahs of Taraweeh prayer from what Shaykh Ali Mahfouz stated. According to the majority of scholars, if the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted an action despite the presence of a motive for it, then

⁷⁶ Risalah Salat At-Tarawih, p: (32)

omitting it becomes Sunnah and performing it becomes a blameworthy innovation. Shaykh Albani then quoted Ali Mahfouz's statement.

Shaykh Albani says: "Grasping firmly onto general evidence while ignoring what the Prophet (peace be upon him) clarified through his actions and omissions is essentially following ambiguity, which Allah has forbidden. If we rely on general evidence and ignore what the Prophet (peace be upon him) clarified through his actions and omissions, it will open a significant door for innovations, which cannot be closed, and an unending series of new inventions in the religion will start." Then he gave several examples, such as the Raghaib prayer, the mid-Sha'ban prayer, and calling the Adhan for Eid and Kusuf and Taraweeh prayers.⁷⁷

Response: What he means is that the Prophet's not praying more than eleven rak'ahs should be considered a Sunnah of omission because there was a motive to pray more than eleven rak'ahs, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not do so. Therefore, omitting it is Sunnah, and performing it is an innovation. This reasoning is incorrect. The reason for the incorrectness of this position is that he did not distinguish between the Sunnah of omission and the implication of an action when there is a valid implication of the action. Similarly, Shaykh Albani misunderstood Shaykh Ali Mahfouz's intended meaning. He misused Ali Mahfouz's statement. To clarify this, we need to first explain the different states of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) actions according to the principles of jurisprudence. According to experts in Usul (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), the Prophet's actions have three states:

⁷⁷ Risalah Salat At-Tarawih, p: (32-33)

1. Performing the Action: When it is proven that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed an action, that action becomes Sunnah, for instance, the Taraweeh prayer. The scholars of Usul have laid down six conditions for this action to be considered valid. The details are found in their books.

2. Omitting the Action: This means that it is proven with a reliable chain of transmission that the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted an action, for example, his omission of performing ablution after consuming food cooked on fire, or his omission of bearing witness to injustice. Scholars of Usul have differed on whether this omission should be considered an action or not.⁷⁸

3. No Transmission Regarding Performing or Omitting the Action:

This means that there is no narration indicating that the Prophet (peace be upon him) either performed or omitted a specific action, such as uttering the intention aloud at the beginning of the prayer or bathing specifically for Taraweeh prayer. Some scholars of Usul consider this to be a Sunnah of omission. Ibn al-Qayyim said: The Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) transmitted the omission of actions by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in two ways, both of which are Sunnah. One is that the Companions explicitly stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted these actions and did not perform them.

The second is that the Companions did not transmit an action that, had the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed it, they would have had the motives and intentions to transmit it, but none of the Companions or a

⁷⁸ Al-Muwafaqaat by Al-Shatitbi (4/58)

majority of them transmitted it or mentioned it in any gathering, which indicates that the action did not take place.⁷⁹

Dr. Muhammad Arusi said: There are two types of omissions, and both are Sunnah:

1. Explicit Omission: This is when it is explicitly stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted an action.

2. Non-Transmission by the Companions: The Companions did not transmit an action which, had the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed it, would have been motivated and intended to be transmitted by the majority of the Companions or at least one of them. Since none of them transmitted it, this indicates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted it.⁸⁰ This concludes their statement.

The Position of the Majority of Usul Scholars and All Hadith Scholars:

The majority of Usul scholars and all hadith scholars believe that this is not a Sunnah of omission. For them, Sunnah is what has been transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the form of a statement, action, or tacit approval. The scholars of Usul have defined Sunnah as such. The hadith scholars added physical or moral characteristics to this definition. Some hadith scholars included the

⁷⁹ I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in (2/389, 390)

⁸⁰ Af'al al-Rasul salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam wa dalalatuha 'ala al-ahkam, p. (211)

statements of Companions and Followers (Tabi'un) in the definition of hadith. According to this definition, what is not proven with a reliable chain of transmission from the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not Sunnah. This is because if it were considered Sunnah, it would open the door to establishing a Sunnah of omission, making it easy for anyone to consider something Sunnah that is not. Therefore, the criterion is reliable chains of transmission; what is proven by a chain is Sunnah, and what is not proven by a chain is not Sunnah.

Ibn al-Najjar said in defining the Sunnah of omission: When it is transmitted about the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he omitted an action, it is also counted as a Sunnah of action. For example, it is narrated that when a lizard was presented to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he withdrew his hand and did not eat it. The Companions also withdrew their hands and did not eat it until the Prophet (peace be upon him) clarified to them that it is halal but he personally did not like it. However, this type of Sunnah has the condition that the narrator explicitly states the omission or there are indications that the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted it according to the narrator.⁸¹

The correct position is that what the Companions did not transmit from the Prophet (peace be upon him) should not be considered a Sunnah of omission. Its ruling will be the same as the original action. If the original action is forbidden and restricted, such as acts of worship, it will not be permissible to perform it, not because it is a Sunnah of omission but because the original ruling in acts of worship is restriction and prohibition. The evidence for this is the hadith: “Whoever does an action

⁸¹ Sharhul Kaukab Al-Munir (2/165)

that is not in accordance with our matter will have it rejected.” And the hadith: “Whoever introduces into this religion of ours that which is not part of it, it will be rejected.”

As for the cases where the original action is permissible, such as transactions and clothing, they will remain permissible unless there is a specific Shari'ah evidence that takes them out of their original ruling, such as men wearing silk. It is not permissible to consider this a Sunnah of omission. This implies that whoever considers something related to acts of worship a Sunnah of omission must also consider something related to transactions a Sunnah of omission. Thus, anyone who contradicts these in both matters will be judged as innovating. This position is contrary to the stance of the Salaf of the Ummah.

And if he does not consider the Sunnah of omission in both acts of worship and transactions, then he holds a contradictory position because what is not transmitted will be considered a Sunnah of omission once, and once it will not. It is not permissible to act upon Sunnah once, such as in transactions, and abandon it once, such as in acts of worship.

Regarding Aisha's statement that "the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not pray more than eleven rak'ahs in Ramadan or other than Ramadan," it is evidence of the occurrence of a Sunnah of action without addition. She narrated about the Prophet's action and confirmed that he did not pray more than eleven rak'ahs, but she did not state that he deliberately omitted the addition. There is a clear distinction between the two. This negation does not attribute a Sunnah of omission to the Prophet (peace be upon him); it only reports the non-occurrence of an action.

Narrating the omission includes proving the Prophet's intention of omitting an action. Therefore, the Sunnah of omission refers to actions attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is a type of Sunnah. Thus, attributing it to the Prophet (peace be upon him) is only valid when it is transmitted with a reliable chain. This clarifies that Aisha's statement aimed to negate certain knowledge that the Prophet (peace be upon him) increased the rak'ahs beyond eleven. It does not affirm that the Prophet (peace be upon him) deliberately omitted the addition. Aisha's negation of the addition does not contradict the narration cited by Shaykh Albani in his book "Salah al-Tarawih" on page (83) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed thirteen rak'ahs, including Witr. She negated what she did not know in the first narration and affirmed what she knew in the second, indicating that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did pray more than eleven rak'ahs.

This apparent contradiction is because Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) initially did not know about the addition, then later became aware and confirmed it. It is well-known that her confirmation takes precedence over her negation because negation is based on a lack of knowledge, while confirmation is based on knowledge. Ignorance is not stronger than knowledge, let alone preferring ignorance over knowledge.

It is incorrect to say that Aisha's negation of the addition beyond eleven rak'ahs is a Sunnah of omission, thus rejecting what is transmitted about the Prophet (peace be upon him) performing the addition or specifying all the general and absolute texts in the Book of Allah and the corpus of the Sunnah that indicate the permissibility of performing as many

rak'ahs as possible in Qiyam al-Layl and the desirability of numerous prostrations in night prayers. Shaykh Albani's position contradicts all these. He prioritized Aisha's lack of knowledge of the addition over the general command in the Book of Allah and the hadiths in the Sunnah that permit the performance of additional voluntary rak'ahs without restriction. His reasoning is that Aisha's negation of the addition is a Sunnah of omission, thus the general and absolute texts should be referred to it because this narration restricts the general texts and specifies them.

Shaykh Albani did not stop here but also claimed that this is the position of the majority and what Shaykh Ali Mahfouz meant. Thus, he cited Ali Mahfouz's statement as evidence. However, the correct understanding is that Shaykh Ali Mahfouz referred to a Sunnah of omission where there is an explicit statement of omitting an action. He did not mean that the implicit meaning of actions should be considered a Sunnah of omission. The evidence is from Shaykh Ali Mahfouz's own statement, where he condemned neglecting what the Prophet (peace be upon him) explicitly performed or omitted. When giving examples, he cited one type of Sunnah of omission, which the Companions did not transmit because the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not perform those actions, such as the Raghaib prayer, the mid-Sha'ban prayer, the Adhan for Eid, Kusuf, and Taraweeh prayers, and changing the prescribed remembrances in prayer. Then he established the rule: What the Prophet (peace be upon him) omitted despite the presence of a motive should be considered a Sunnah of omission, and performing it should be considered an innovation.

Sheikh Ali Mahfouz's understanding is correct, and there is no disagreement on that. The actions he cited as examples are certainly innovations (bid'ah). My disagreement with him is on his labeling these actions as "Sunan Tark," which are attributed to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), whereas these are matters judged under the principle of prohibition in acts of worship.

Regarding the additional rak'ahs in Taraweeh prayer, this is in no way similar to the aforementioned examples. Thus, Sheikh Albani's understanding that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) refrained from adding to the rak'ahs of Taraweeh prayer despite the presence of a demand for it, and equating it with the examples given by Sheikh Ali Mahfouz, is incorrect. This is because the principle and examples stated by Sheikh Ali Mahfouz pertain to newly invented acts for which there is no textual evidence in the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of the Messenger (peace be upon him). How can anyone present evidence for the desirability of Salat al-Raghaib or the adhan for the 'Eid and Taraweeh prayers? Such acts, by their nature of lacking evidence, are deemed innovations. Their case is akin to someone who considers Taraweeh prayers desirable in the months of Rajab and Sha'ban.

As for Taraweeh prayers in the month of Ramadan, they are prescribed. Both the verbal and practical Sunnah indicate their desirability, and there is consensus among Muslims on their prescribed nature, except for those who follow their desires. Moreover, the verbal Sunnah and Quranic verses indicate the legitimacy of making night prayers a provision for oneself, and Taraweeh prayers are a part of the night prayer. Furthermore, the practical Sunnah concerning Taraweeh does not

contradict these general rulings but is part of them; the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) implemented part of his verbal guidance. The general rulings and what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not perform are two separate matters. What he did not do does not exist, and thus it cannot restrict the general rulings of the Book and Sunnah. How can there be a similarity between someone who prays Taraweeh with additional rak'ahs and someone who prays Salat al-Raghaib?

Whoever considers both cases as equal is like someone who equates the performance of acts proven legitimate by the general rulings of the Book and Sunnah with someone performing acts without legitimacy from the Book of Allah and the purified Sunnah. Furthermore, those who believe in the desirability of adding to the eleven rak'ahs of Taraweeh include a large number of Islamic scholars, and there is a consensus among Muslims on this. How, then, can it be correct to place their practice and fatwas concerning additional rak'ahs of Taraweeh in the same category as those fatwas endorsing innovations? I pray to Allah to grant us the ability to perform actions that He loves and that please Him, and to protect us from innovations in the religion. Ameen.

Chapter Three

A Critical Review of Two Articles by Shaykh Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him)

I came across two articles included in the books of our esteemed teacher, Shaykh Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him), in which he discusses several important aspects regarding the rulings of Taraweeh prayer. I have a few observations on these articles, which I believe are worth sharing here.

First Article: In this article, Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen writes: The number of eleven rak'ahs for Taraweeh is supported by the Sunnah in the form of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) practice, and Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) followed this. Thus, this is the best, most complete, and most excellent path of guidance. Allah says:

{الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا}

[It is He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed.] (Surah Al-Mulk, 67:2).

Allah did not say 'which of you does more deeds.' The best and most complete deed is that which is done with utmost sincerity for Allah and in strict adherence to the Prophet (peace be upon him). From this perspective, eleven or thirteen rak'ahs of Taraweeh is the most virtuous and excellent. At the same time, if someone prays twenty-three (23), forty-three (43), forty-nine (49), or seventeen (17) rak'ahs of Taraweeh, there is no objection, as scholars have different opinions regarding the number of rak'ahs for this prayer."⁸² His statement ends here.

⁸² Al-Dhiya Al-Lame, P: (469)

Response: I have two observations regarding Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen's statement:

First Observation: This pertains to his statement that the number of eleven rak'ahs is supported by the Sunnah through the Prophet's (peace be upon him) practice, and Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) followed this, making it the best, most complete, and most excellent path of guidance.

Response: It is well known that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not adhere to a specific number of rak'ahs in Ramadan or outside of it, as he prayed seven, nine, eleven, and thirteen rak'ahs. All these numbers are reported concerning him, and it is established that multiple Sunnahs together form a single Sunnah when their indications are united. There is no evidence for the person who claims that eleven rak'ahs is the best, most complete, and most excellent path of guidance. Rather, each of these numbers is guidance, truth, and religion. If one were to give preference to one of these numbers over the others solely because it was the Prophet's practice, then nine rak'ahs would be preferred, as reported in Sahih Muslim (6/27) by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) that "When the body of the Prophet (peace be upon him) became heavy, he prayed nine rak'ahs. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) then said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would like to continue what he was steadfast upon." This was the Prophet's prayer in his later life, which he preferred to remain steadfast upon, and it is preferable to follow the Prophet's final practice. However, this is problematic because the virtue lies in prolonged Tahajjud. Moreover, if any specific number were preferred, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have adhered to that

number. Therefore, the absence of adherence to a specific number indicates that none of these numbers is preferred over the others. All of the Prophet's prayers are equally virtuous because he consistently prayed as he could easily manage. It cannot be thought that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed seven or nine rak'ahs, he abandoned a prayer he could easily perform, or that his eleven rak'ahs prayer was the only virtuous one. This does not align with the command given to him and his Ummah to recite the Qur'an in night prayer with ease.

Hence, the variation in the number of rak'ahs and the timing of the Prophet's night prayer does not affect its virtue. These were prayers that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed throughout his life with ease and comfort. Achieving the highest level of virtue in Qiyam al-Layl can be done in two ways: by prolonging the Tahajjud or by extending the prayer itself. The texts of the Quran and Sunnah indicate this, as mentioned earlier, but it requires that both methods be undertaken with ease and comfort, as Allah says:

{فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۗ}

[So recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur'an.] (Surah Al-Muzzammil, 73:20)

{مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ}

[We have not sent down to you the Qur'an that you be distressed.] (Surah Ta-Ha, 20:2).

Therefore, if praying one-third of the night is easy and praying half the night is difficult, then praying one-third of the night is better. If it is not difficult, then praying half the night is better because Allah says:

{فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ}

[So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it.] (Surah Al-Zalzalah, 99:7).

The same applies to prolonged prayers; their virtue lies in extended Tahajjud. This shows that the virtue of the number of rak'ahs is due to prolonged Tahajjud and extended prayer. Thus, someone who prays nine rak'ahs in one-third of the night has a prayer better than someone who prays eleven rak'ahs in one-third of the night because nine rak'ahs are longer than eleven. Someone who prays eleven rak'ahs in one-third of the night is better than someone who prays twenty-three (23) rak'ahs in the same duration. Someone who prays twenty-three (23) rak'ahs in half the night is better than someone who prays eleven rak'ahs in one-third of the night. This preference is due to the extended time of Tahajjud.

The variation in the number of rak'ahs in the Prophet's night prayer should be understood in this context. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would pray as much as he could manage each night. And Allah knows best.

Second Observation: This relates to his statement that Allah says:

{الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا}

[It is He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed.] (Surah Al-Mulk, 67:2) Allah did not say to test you as to who does more deeds.

Response: As Shaykh mentioned, the best deed is the one that is done with utmost sincerity for Allah and in strict adherence to the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, the quality of being 'good' does not include being 'less.' Good deeds are encouraged in abundance, and more of them is desirable because Allah says:

{فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ}

[So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it.] (Surah Al-Zalzalah, 99:7).

and Allah also says:

وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

[So let those who compete compete in this.] (Surah Al-Mutaffifin, 83:26).

Therefore, whoever performs more good deeds and their deeds are also good, is superior to the one who performs fewer deeds. This is because excelling in good deeds is desirable. Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen's interpretation of the verse is not correct, as it implies that the meaning of the verse is: 'Who among you does the least deeds.' The opposite of

abundance is scarcity, so if abundance is negated, as Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen suggests, then scarcity of deeds would be desired, which is not consistent with the meaning of the verse. The verse indicates that there is excellence in performing good deeds, meaning one deed is superior to another. The opposite of good deeds is bad deeds, not abundant deeds. Rather, an increase in good deeds enhances goodness, especially when there are clear and explicit texts that encourage performing as many of these deeds as possible, such as Qiyam al-Layl. Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen does not disagree that performing Qiyam al-Layl for one-third of the night is better than performing it for one-sixth of the night, and performing it for half the night is better than performing it for one-third of the night, and performing it for two-thirds of the night is better than performing it for half the night. This preference is due to abundance. If abundance were not good, then performing Qiyam al-Layl for one-sixth of the night would be better than performing it for half the night because it is lesser.

Similarly, performing eleven rak'ahs over half the night is better than performing seven rak'ahs over one-third of the night, and performing twenty-three (23) rak'ahs over two-thirds of the night is better than performing fewer rak'ahs over the same duration. This preference is due to abundance. This proves that the interpretation that abundance in good deeds is not desired and not encouraged in Sharia, especially in Qiyam al-Layl, is incorrect.

Every act of worship for which there are texts encouraging its maximum performance falls under the meaning of the verse, such as charity. Thus, a person's charity of one thousand is better than their charity of one

hundred if they have the ability and capacity. This preference is due to abundance, not scarcity.

This is the general principle in good deeds and acts of worship. However, there are certain types of worship where the preferred abundance has been specified because there is evidence in the Sunnah for this specification. For example, the abundance of voluntary fasting is recommended, but not absolutely; rather, the maximum recommended limit is to fast one day and not the next. Continuous fasting every day (Sawm al-Dahr) is disliked because there is evidence in the Sunnah for this. Similarly, it is recommended to pray the Fajr Sunnah lightly, and it is disliked to pray more than two rak'ahs because, even though it is during the time for performing voluntary prayers, it goes against the established practice. It is known and established that the time of prohibition begins after the break of dawn, and this is when the two rak'ahs of Fajr Sunnah are prescribed. Therefore, it is necessary to perform these two rak'ahs as established from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to reconcile all the evidences. Similarly, performing prayers connected to specific causes during prohibited times is also subject to the established practice. For instance, the number of rak'ahs in Eid and Kusuf prayers. Likewise, performing Qiyam al-Layl for the entire night throughout the year is disliked. The reason for specifying these acts of worship is the presence of evidence, not because the principle is that lesser deeds are better than more deeds.

Therefore, equating Taraweeh with these examples is incorrect because there is no opposing evidence to prevent increasing the number of its rak'ahs. Moreover, Allah says:

{فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ}

[So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it.] (Surah Al-Zalzalah, 99:7).

Furthermore, it is reported about the Prophet (peace be upon him) that "When the last ten nights of Ramadan would come, he would spend his nights in worship, wake his family, and tighten his belt," as narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) in the Sahihayn. Additionally, Al-Nasa'i reported from Khabbab bin Al-Arat (may Allah be pleased with him) that "I watched the Prophet (peace be upon him) one night. He continued praying throughout the night until he finished his prayer with the break of dawn." Al-Nawawi said its chain is authentic.

What is disliked is to always pray the entire night. Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim narrated from Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-As (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Has it not been informed to me that you fast during the day and pray all night? I said: O Messenger of Allah! Yes, it is so. He said: Do not do that. Fast and break your fast, pray at night and sleep."

This hadith prohibits praying Qiyam al-Layl for the entire night regularly, which does not contradict the fact that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sometimes prayed the entire night and sometimes did not. Imam Al-Nawawi established a chapter in his book "Al-Khulasa":

"Disliking to pray the entire night regularly and recommending to do so occasionally." (p. 588).

Second Article: Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) says: One of the prayers of the night is Witr. The least is one rak'ah and the most is eleven rak'ahs. The worshiper has the option to pray one rak'ah, three rak'ahs, five rak'ahs, seven rak'ahs, nine rak'ahs, or eleven rak'ahs.

He then explains that there are two ways to pray Witr with three rak'ahs: either pray all three rak'ahs with one Tasleem or pray two rak'ahs, say Tasleem, and then pray one rak'ah separately.

For Witr with five, seven, and nine rak'ahs, he describes only one method: praying them all with one Tasleem. However, he mentions that for Witr with nine rak'ahs, one should sit for Tashahhud in the eighth rak'ah.

For Witr with eleven rak'ahs, he outlines two methods: either the worshiper can say Tasleem after every two rak'ahs and then pray one rak'ah separately, or he can pray all eleven rak'ahs with one Tashahhud or with two Tashahhuds, performing one Tashahhud in the final rak'ah and another Tashahhud in the tenth rak'ah. He states that this is the opinion of Hanbali and Shafi'i jurists. His statement ends here.

Response: The detailed explanation of how to perform Witr is correct, but there are two observations:

First Observation: From the context of Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen's statement, it appears that the only legitimate way to perform Witr with five, seven, and nine rak'ahs is the method he described, and he did not mention performing them as two rak'ahs each, concluding with one rak'ah and a separate Tasleem. However, when explaining the method for Witr with three and eleven rak'ahs, he explicitly stated that they should be performed as two rak'ahs each, concluding with one rak'ah and a separate Tasleem. When I referred to him on this matter, he explained that in the ahadith regarding Witr with five, seven, and nine rak'ahs, it is not mentioned that the preferred method is to perform them as two rak'ahs each; rather, these ahadith indicate that the Prophet (peace be upon him) intended to perform them with one Tasleem. His statement ends here.

Nevertheless, the correct view is that performing all these as two rak'ahs each is also legitimate, and this method is even superior to performing them all with one Tasleem, as there is a hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim reported by Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The night prayer is in pairs of two rak'ahs. If any of you fears that dawn is approaching, let him pray one rak'ah to make his prayer Witr." This hadith is general, indicating that it is prescribed for every night prayer to be performed in pairs of two rak'ahs, regardless of the number, as there is no specific evidence to exempt these numbers from this rule. Therefore, these prayers are included in the general rule of the hadith. Although the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed these prayers in a manner contrary to the hadith's general meaning, it indicates the diversity of methods, not that they should be performed only in that manner.

Performing these prayers as two rak'ahs each is prescribed due to the verbal Sunnah, while performing them all with one Tasleem is a practical Sunnah. There is no contradiction between verbal and practical Sunnah, as they are understood as variations. If we assume a conflict between verbal and practical Sunnah, verbal Sunnah takes precedence. Thus, performing these prayers as two rak'ahs each is prescribed because verbal Sunnah is stronger than practical Sunnah, and practical Sunnah can be specific to the Prophet (peace be upon him), while verbal Sunnah is not. This is a well-established principle in Islamic jurisprudence.

Shaykh Ibn Muflih (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote that one who prays Witr with nine rak'ahs may do so with one Tasleem, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) did, or may pray them as two rak'ahs each. Those who hold the contrary view say that performing them as two rak'ahs each is preferable, and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) practice was to show permissibility. He also mentioned that Imam Ahmad explicitly stated the permissibility of this method. After discussing Witr with nine, seven, and five rak'ahs, he wrote that Ibn Aqil reported two ways of performing these prayers: one is to say Tasleem after every two rak'ahs and then perform one rak'ah of Witr at the end, and this is the more correct method. The other way is to perform eight rak'ahs in one go, say Tasleem, and then perform one rak'ah.⁸³ His statement ends here.

Second Observation: Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen's explanation of Witr with three and eleven rak'ahs suggests that neither method is superior to the other because he provided evidence for each method without indicating a preference. Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on

⁸³ Al-Mubdi (2/6)

him) also equated these methods, as inferred from his explanation of the hadith "The night prayer is in pairs of two rak'ahs." He says: This hadith has been used to argue that it is obligatory to separate every two rak'ahs in the night prayer. Ibn Daqiq al-Eid says: This is the apparent meaning of the hadith because the predicate is dependent on the subject. The majority have interpreted this as indicating the preferred method because the contrary has also been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, this hadith does not necessarily indicate the preferred method; it may guide towards an easier and more manageable method, as performing every two rak'ahs separately with Tasleem is easier for the worshiper than performing four or more rak'ahs continuously. There is a break in performing two rak'ahs, and if any matter arises, it can be attended to. If performing continuously (i.e., without separating) was only to show permissibility, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not have adhered to it. Whoever claims that this method was specific to the Prophet (peace be upon him) must provide evidence. It is established that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed both separated and continuous prayers.⁸⁴

It appears that separating is better than continuous prayer because it involves two Sunnahs: a verbal Sunnah and a practical Sunnah. The verbal Sunnah is the hadith: "The night prayer is in pairs of two rak'ahs," and the practical Sunnah is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed separated prayers, as reported by Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Continuous prayer involves only one Sunnah, the practical Sunnah. A prayer that includes two Sunnahs is preferred over one that includes only

⁸⁴ Fath Al-Baari (2/479)

one. Additionally, the verbal Sunnah takes precedence over the practical Sunnah because the verbal Sunnah is directed to the Ummah, while the practical Sunnah may be specific to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Most scholars believe that separated prayer is superior.⁸⁵

As for Ibn Hajar's statement that if the Prophet's continuous prayer was only to show permissibility, he would not have adhered to it, we say: This adherence was not only to show permissibility but also to demonstrate legitimacy and preference. However, the preferred act may vary in its degree of preference due to the presence of other religious evidence, and there are two Sunnahs in separating the prayer.

Moreover, the status of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not the same as that of the Ummah. What is preferred for the Prophet (peace be upon him) may not be preferred for the Ummah. Thus, continuous prayer was preferred for the Prophet (peace be upon him), so he mostly prayed continuously, while separating the prayer is preferred for the Ummah. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) addressed the Ummah by saying: "The night prayer is in pairs of two rak'ahs." Another example is fasting continuously without breaking the fast. The Prophet (peace be upon him) practiced it and forbade the Ummah from it. Then he permitted the Ummah to fast continuously until the pre-dawn meal time, but it is better for the Ummah to avoid continuous fasting.

In the following chapter, Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) states that separated prayer is better than continuous prayer, indicating that his opinion had changed. He says: This statement that the Prophet

⁸⁵ Al-Mughni (2/123), Al-Majmu (3/501)

(peace be upon him) prayed the night prayer in pairs of two rak'ahs indicates the superiority of separating the prayer because he commanded it and practiced it. As for continuous prayer, it is supported only by his practice.⁸⁶ His statement ends here.

There are also three ways to perform the continuous prayer. One way is to pray four rak'ahs with one Tasleem, then pray four more rak'ahs with one Tasleem, and then perform the Witr prayer. The second way is not to separate the Witr with Tasleem, as mentioned in the cases of nine, seven, and five rak'ahs prayers. Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah have mercy on him) says that for the daytime prayers, it is permissible to end with Tasleem after two rak'ahs or four rak'ahs. One should not pray more than four rak'ahs together. For the nighttime prayers, one can pray two, four, six, or eight rak'ahs with one Tasleem but should not pray more than eight rak'ahs with one Tasleem.⁸⁷ However, he also states that the Witr prayer should be performed with three rak'ahs and one Tasleem. He interpreted the narration about the Prophet (PBUH) performing Witr with nine and seven rak'ahs with one Tasleem.⁸⁸

The third way is to pray nine rak'ahs with one Tasleem and then perform two rak'ahs separately, as narrated by Aisha (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH) did this.

The majority of scholars state that the voluntary night prayer should only be performed in sets of two rak'ahs. Ibn Qudamah says that most scholars hold this view, including Abu Yusuf and Muhammad. Ibn

⁸⁶ Fath Al-Baari (2/486)

⁸⁷ Al-Majmu (3/501)

⁸⁸ See: Sharh Fath al-Qadeer wa Mulhaqatuhu (1/426, 428).

Qudamah also uses the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH): "The night prayer is in sets of two rak'ahs." as evidence.⁸⁹

Regarding the second method of continuous prayer without separating Witr with Tasleem, the majority agree that it is permissible. They differ on the most preferred number of rak'ahs to combine with Witr in this manner.⁹⁰

It is clear that performing Witr separately with a distinct Tasleem is preferable to combining it with two, four, or six rak'ahs and one Tasleem. This is because the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The night prayer is in sets of two rak'ahs. When you fear that dawn is approaching, perform one rak'ah of Witr." This hadith indicates that it is preferable to perform the night prayer in sets of two rak'ahs rather than combining it with Witr in one Tasleem.

The reason is that the hadith allowing the option of performing Witr in one, three, or five rak'ahs indicates the permissibility without preference. However, the hadith "The night prayer is in sets of two rak'ahs. When you fear that dawn is approaching, perform one rak'ah of Witr" is specific and gives a command to perform one rak'ah of Witr after finishing the sets of two rak'ahs. Therefore, the specific should take precedence over the general. This is what has become clear to me. Allah knows best.

May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his Companions, and those who follow them in righteousness

⁸⁹ Al-Mughni (124, 2/123)

⁹⁰ Al-Mughni (2/150)

until the Day of Judgment. Our last prayer is that all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.

Written by

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