

The Fiqh of *Taraweeh*

**A Selected Translation from the Chapter of
'Recommended Prayers' From the Book:
*Haashiyah ar-Rawdh al Murbi' Sharh Zaad al
Mustaqni.***

By Ibn Qaasim al Hanbali (1392h)

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Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem

NOTE: The text in bold is from the text *Zaad al Mustaqni'* by Imam al Hajjaawi and the rest of the text is its commentary from *ar-Rawdh al Murbi'* by Imam al Bahooti. The footnotes have been taken from the *Haashiyah* of Ibn Qaasim (rh).

THE TEXT

(Taraweeh) is a highly emphasised recommended prayer¹. It was called that because after they used to pray four units they would rest for a short while.² **([it] is 20 rak'ah)** due to what Abu Bakr 'Abdul 'Azeez narrated in '*ash-Shaafi'* on the authority of 'Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet (saw) used to pray 20 *rak'ah* in the month of Ramadan.³ **(it is prayed)** in units of two **(in congregation as well as the *witr* prayer)**⁴ in the mosque in

¹ i.e. in Ramadan according to the consensus of the Muslims. The Prophet (saw) established it according to the hadeeth of 'A'ishah which will be mentioned soon. It is not considered to be a newly invented matter by 'Umar. It is also considered to be from the manifest emblems of this religion. It has been mentioned (in importance) before the daily recommended prayers due to the Prophet's (saw) performance of it and his affirmation of it, as well as the agreement of the companions that it is to be performed in congregation according to the command of the rightly guided caliph, 'Umar (ra), who the Prophet (saw) commanded us to follow in his statement: "Follow my *sunnah* and the *sunnah* of the rightly guided caliphs". The companion's performance of this prayer is well known and has been received by the *ummah* from the early generations up until today. There are also many narrations that state the virtue of this prayer such as the *hadeeth*: "Whoever stood in prayer in Ramadan with *iman* and hope for its reward will have his sins forgiven." (Agreed upon). It is not considered to be an obligation since the Prophet (saw) prayed it with his companions for two or three nights then left it saying: "[I left it] out of fear that it would become obligatory upon all of you and then you would be unable to perform it."

² Some linguists stated that *Taraweeh* is the plural of *Tarweehah*, which in origin is a name given for the practice of sitting. Then it was used to refer to the sitting that takes place every four units of prayer during the nights of Ramadan so that people could rest, or because they used to rest after every two units of prayer. It was stated in *al Misbaah*: The term: '*arihna bis-salaah*' (lit. soothe us by the prayer) means to establish the prayer. Thus praying achieves a sense of *raahah* (repose/tranquillity). Thus the word *taraweeh* has been derived from that word. It (i.e. *Taraweeh*) is prayed in the month of Ramadan. It was stated in *al Furoo'*: 'One (can) rest between every 4 unit of prayer according to the agreement of the scholars, and supplicate therein. This was done by the pious predecessors. However, there is no harm in leaving that.'

³ This was reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah. However, the chain of narration contains Ibrahim bin 'Uthman who is considered to be weak according to the agreement of the scholars. Al Bayhaqi narrated in '*al Ma'rifah*' on the authority of Saa'ib bin Yazeed who said: 'We used to pray at the time of 'Umar (ra) 20 *rak'ah* as well as *witr*.' Imam an-Nawawi said: 'its chain of narration is *sahih*.' Malik also reported as well as others that: the people used in the time of 'Umar (ra) in the month of Ramadan 23 *rak'ah*. Thus 20 was the established practice of the rightly guided caliphs. Al Qaadhi said: 'There is no difference of opinion that there is no specific limit that one cannot go beyond or decrease from. Rather the difference of opinion lies in how much the Prophet (saw) exactly prayed and what he chose for himself to pray.' It has been reported from the Prophet (saw) through multiple chains of narration that he did not pray more than 11 *rak'ah* in Ramadan or outside of Ramadan, and according to another narration; 13. When the Prophet (saw) became old he would pray 9 or 7 *rak'ah*. It was the case that Imam Ahmad as well as the majority of scholars chose 20 *rak'ah* since the night prayer is an act of worship which its reward for it is increased the more it is performed. This is something the scholars do not dispute over.

⁴ I.e. the *tasleem* is performed every two *rak'ah* due to the *hadeeth*: "The night prayer should be prayed in units of two." The *witr* should be performed with two (sets of) *tasleems* as has already been mentioned. It is more virtuous to perform it in congregation rather than individually according to the consensus of the companions as well as scholars. It is however permissible to pray it individually. Malik and Shaafi'e said: 'it is better to pray it at home' due to the narration: "The best prayer of a person is at home unless it is an obligatory prayer." Al Baghawi and others stated: "The difference of opinion lies in the case for the one who has memorised the Qur'an and does not fear becoming lazy if he prayed by himself as well as the

beginning of the night (after the *'isha* prayer) and better to pray it after its *sunnah* (in Ramadan)⁵ due to the *hadeeth* found in the two *sahheehs* which was reported by A'ishah (ra) who mentioned that he (saw) prayed it for some nights and they prayed it with him, then he would not come out and prayed it in his house for the rest of the month, and he (saw) said: "I feared that it would become obligatory upon you and you would be unable to perform it."⁶ It was reported in al Bukhari that 'Umar gathered the people together and were led in the *Taraweeh* prayer by Ubayy bin Ka'b.⁷ Imam Ahmad and at-Tirimidhi reported that the Prophet (saw) said: "Whoever prayed with the Imam until he finishes will have written for him that he prayed for the entire night."⁸ **(The one who prays**

congregation in the mosque being affected by his absence. If any of these conditions are not met, than praying in congregation is more virtuous without any dispute.'

⁵ Sheikh ul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah stated: "This is according to the agreement of the pious predecessors and the leaders of the Muslims. It is also called: *Qiyaamu Ramadan* as the Prophet (saw) stated: "Indeed Allah (swt) has ordained upon you fasting in Ramadan and praying in Ramadan (*Qiyaamahu* [i.e. *Qiyaamu Ramadan*] so the one who fasts and prays will have his sins forgiven." As for it being held at the beginning of the night, then this is because the people used to do this in the time of 'Umar (ra) and it will be seen that they used to extend it towards the end of the night. As for the statement: 'It is better to pray it after its *sunnah*' i.e. it is better to pray *taraweeh* after the *'isha* prayer after its *sunnah* due to the emphasis of the *sunnah* of *'isha*. It is however permissible for one to pray it between *'isha* and its *sunnah*, however it is better to pray it after *'isha's sunnah* due to what (Ahmad) stated. Al Majd stated: "This is because it is disliked to delay the *sunnah* of *'isha* beyond the preferred (*mukhtar*) time of *'isha*, thus to follow *'isha* with its *sunnah* is better.' Likewise it is permissible if one was to pray it after *witr* and before *fajr*, but it will not be accepted to pray it before *'isha* according to consensus. Ibn Taymiyyah stated: 'Whoever prays it before *'isha* has traversed the path of the innovators, and once *fajr* has entered, the time for the prayer would have elapsed.' The (timing of it) as stated by *al 'iqnaa'* & others is as follows: 'Its timing begins after *'isha* & its *sunnah*, before *witr* up until the second *fajr*.'

⁶ What is apparent is that he (saw) feared that praying during the nights of Ramadan in congregation would become obligatory for the people due to his (saw) continual observance of the prayer. It was reported in the *sahheeh* (i.e. Bukhari): 'On the fourth night the people were unable to fit into the mosque' and in the *hadeeth* of Zayd: 'Until I feared that it would become obligatory upon all of you, and if it was prescribed for you, you would have not been able to do it.' The *shaahid* (point of note) lies in his statement: "They prayed with him and he acknowledged that'. He (saw) also said: "Whoever prayed with the Imam until he finishes will have it written for him that he prayed for the whole night." The companions used to pray it in the mosque at first in separate groups during his lifetime whilst he was aware of that and acknowledged what they were doing.

⁷ Imam Ahmad (rh) stated: 'Ali (ra), Jaabir and 'Abdullah used to pray in congregation, and the companions continued to do this. It was also reported by al Bayhaqi & others that 'Ali used to appoint an Imam for the men and an Imam for the women.

⁸ This is an encouragement to pray with the Imam (until he finishes), and is more stressed than an absolute *sunnah*. If they delayed *taraweeh* or part of it towards the end of the night or extended the prayer to then end of the night; then that is better. Allah (swt) says: "*Verily, the rising by night (for Tahajjud prayer) is very hard and Most potent and god for governing (the soul), and Most suitable for (understanding) the word (of Allāh).*" (73:6). This is a time that Allah (swt) descends and says: 'Is there anyone in need of something, is there anyone seeking forgiveness, is there anyone seeking to repent?' And it is (better to delay the prayer) during the last ten nights, and Ibn Taymiyyah preferred that one spend the night in prayer. He stated: "To pray some of the nights in entirety has been reported in the *sunnah*. It was reported in the two *Sahheehs* that: 'When the last ten nights entered he (saw) would spend the night in prayer and awoke his family and tightened his waist wrapper.' It was also reported in at-Tirmidhi that: 'Towards the end of the month, he (saw) would call his family and prayed with them so that they would fear that the time of *suhoor* would pass by them' and the companions used to extend their prayers in the last ten nights close to the time of *fajr* as was reported in many narrations. Abu Dawud reported that 'Umar (ra) said: 'To delay the prayer towards the end of the night is the *sunnah* of the Muslims.' And Imam Malik reported that 'Umar commanded Ubayy and Tameem to lead the people in prayer with chapters that were longer than 100 verses (*mi'een*) such that people would lean on their sticks due to the length of the prayer, and we did not leave until *fajr* had almost entered.' He also reported that Ubayy said: 'When we used to finish from our night prayers in Ramadan we would hurry our servants in serving *suhoor* out of fear that *fajr* would enter.' Likewise, the *hadeeth*: "Indeed, the prayer towards the end of the night is witnessed (*mashoodah*), and that is better." There is no dispute over this, and likewise to depend on a stick for the night prayer is permissible according to the agreement of the scholars.

tahajjud should pray witr i.e. the one who prays after he sleeps (**after it**) i.e. after his *tahajjud*⁹ due to the statement of the Prophet (saw): “Make your last prayer at night odd.” Agreed upon.¹⁰ (**If one prays with his Imam**) and prayed *witr* with him or prayed *witr* by himself, and then wanted to pray *tahajjud*, should not annul his *witr*¹¹ rather pray without praying *witr*.¹² And if (**he should make it even by adding one extra rak'ah**) i.e. added to his *witr* which he prayed behind the Imam; one *rak'ah*, then it is permissible. Moreover, he will attain the reward of following the Imam as well as making *witr* his final prayer.¹³ (**And it is disliked to pray supererogatory prayers between them**) i.e. between the *taraweeh* prayers. Al Athram reported that Abu Dardaa' saw some people praying between *taraweeh* and said: ‘What prayer is this? Are you praying whilst the Imam is in front of you? Indeed, the one who seeks other than our way is not from us.’¹⁴ (**But Ta'qeeb is not**) disliked which is to pray (**after it**) i.e. after *taraweeh* and *witr* (**in congregation**).¹⁵ This is due to the statement of Anas: ‘Do not return except for some good that you hope for’.¹⁶ Likewise it is not disliked to do *tawaaf* between *taraweeh*¹⁷. It is not recommended for the Imam to recite more than the whole Qur'an (throughout Ramadan) in *taraweeh*¹⁸ unless the people prefer to increase upon that¹⁹. Likewise, it is not

⁹ *Tahajjud* is a prayer which is performed at night or after sleeping at night. Al Jawhari stated: '*hajada & tahajjada* means to sleep at night and it also means to stay awake. Thus it is from the verbs that have opposite meanings. From this, the word the term for the night prayer; *tahajjud* was formed.

¹⁰ The Prophet's (saw) *witr* used to end towards the end of the night, and there are many authentic narrations that show this. Thus if one does not want to pray *tahajjud*, should pray *witr* with the Imam to attain the reward of praying in congregation.

¹¹ The description of annulling his *witr* for the one who wants to pray more after his *witr* is as follows: he prays one extra *rak'ah* intending to annul his *witr* and then after completing that extra *rak'ah* it would be as if he prayed an even (*shaf*) amount of *rak'ah*. Then he prays whatever he wishes in units of two and then concludes with *witr* with one *rak'ah* due to the narration: “There are no two *witr* in one night”. A'ishah (ra) was asked about the one who annuls his *witr* to which she replied: ‘He is the one who plays with his *witr*; if he wishes to leave the *taraweeh* and pray *witr* at the end of the night should do that.’

¹² i.e. he should pray an even amount of prayers until the second *fajr*; since it has been established that the Prophet (saw) used to pray 2 *rak'ah* after *witr* and not conclude with another *witr* since the 1st *witr* sufficed. This is due to the narration: “There are no two *witr* in one night.” Reported by Ahmad & Abu Dawud. This is the opinion of the majority of scholars such as Malik, ibn al Mubarak, ash-Shafi'ee, Ahmad and others. This narration was also declared authentic by at-Tirmidhi & others. This is also because the *witr* that he (saw) has prayed was completed and thus it is not deemed correct to nullify it after completing it.

¹³ This is also the case if the Imam appointed somebody else to lead them for that *ra'kah*. Thus, if the Imam finished the prayer the other person will come and lead the people in prayer for that *rak'ah* in order to attain the virtue of praying in congregation as well as attaining the reward of making *witr* the last prayer of the night. And the evidences for the virtue of that have already been mentioned.

¹⁴ Similar has also been reported from 'Ubaadah and 'Uqbah bin 'Aamir. It was mentioned to Imam Ahmad (rh) that some companions permitted this and thus replied: “That is falsehood (*baatil*)”. That is the case because it shows that the person is not content with the Imam. This all applies if there was no large gap between the prayers; for example if the Imam left the mosque or the Imam delayed part of the prayer towards the end of the night, which in that case; is permissible. This was stated by our Sheikh. As for the aforementioned al Athram, then his full name is Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Haani' at-Taa'ee, of the great scholars of Islam and the author of *as-Sunan* and other works. He narrated from Imam Ahmad, 'Affan and others. Imam an-Nasaa'ee narrated from him as well as others. He died in the year 260ah.

¹⁵ Al Majd and others stated: if the prayer was delayed to midnight it is not disliked according to the *mathhab*, even if they prayed supererogatory prayers after resting, or if they prayed towards the end of the night. This was explicitly stated by Imam Ahmad and his view was chosen by many.

¹⁶ He used to see no problem with that since it is an act of worship, even if they delayed it towards the end of the night.

¹⁷ What is apparent is that the *sumah* of *tawaaf* is also not disliked due to what has been mentioned. This is the case even if they returned to it before sleep or they did not delay it to midnight.

¹⁸ This is in order not to make it difficult for the people. This was stated by al Qadhi and others. Imam Ahmad said: ‘He should recite in the month of Ramadan that which is easy for the people and not make it difficult for them, especially in the shorter nights. It was stated in *al Ghunyah*: ‘One should not recite more

recommended for him to recite less than the entire Qur'an in order to attain the reward of it.²⁰

than the whole Qur'an (throughout Ramadan) as it might be difficult for the people as well as result in them leaving the prayer, and thus his sin will become greater.' It was also said that one should look into the state of the people. Ibn Taymiyyah also stated as previously mentioned that the best for the one who cannot manage a lot; is to lighten the prayer for him.

¹⁹ In such a case, it is recommended according to consensus.

²⁰ i.e. the reward of the *khatmah*. Thus the people should be able to listen to the entire Qur'an with him. Ibn Taymiyyah stated that to recite the (entire) Qur'an in *taraweeh* is recommended according to the agreement of the scholars of the Muslims. In fact, one of the intended objectives of *taraweeh* is to recite the Qur'an so that people can listen to the speech of Allah (swt). This is the case since Ramadan was the month in which the Qur'an descended, and in this month Jibreel used to revise the entire Qur'an with the Prophet (saw). The Prophet (saw) was also the most generous of people and he used to be even more generous in Ramadan when he used to meet Jibreel and revise the Qur'an with him.

One should try and finish the Qur'an in the last *taraweeh* before the *rukoo'*, and it is recommended for one to supplicate after that as was stated by Imam Ahmad. He also used in support of his view that he saw the people of *Shaam* as well as Sufyan bin 'Uyaynah doing that. It was also transmitted from the people of Basrah that they used to do that in addition to 'Uthman and other companions. And there is no harm if a person was to raise his hands in doing so. Likewise many scholars recommended that. Ibn Taymiyyah had a supplication for the *khatm* of the Qur'an which was very comprehensive. He said: 'It was reported that there is a supplication that is answered at the time of a *khatmah*. Thus if a person supplicated at the end of a *khatmah* for himself, his parents, his scholars, the believing men & women etc, then that is legislated.' It is befitting that the one who delays part of the *taraweeh* in the last ten nights to do so to the last part of the night, so that those who didn't attend the first part could attend the second part. Likewise they can begin another *khatmah* so that those who attend the second part of the prayer can listen to the entire Qur'an.