

## Salaah at-Taraweeh (The Night Prayer)

Taraweeh literally means “rest pauses.” This name was given in later generations to the night prayer during Ramadan because of the pause observed after every four rak’ahs (units of prayer). The name was not used by the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) neither did he pray twenty rak’ahs. In fact, he called it Salaatul-Layl and prayed eleven rak’ahs, consisting of two sets of four rak’ahs with three rak’ahs of witr.

Abu Salamah ibn ‘Abdur Rahman reported that he asked ‘Aa’ishah, “How was Allah’s Messenger’s (night) Salaah in Ramadan? ‘Aa’ishah replied, ‘Allah’s Messenger never used to exceed eleven rak’aat in Ramadan or other months. He would pray four rak’aat –don’t ask me about their beauty and length – then four more rak’aat – don’t ask me about their beauty and length either – then he would pray three more.’[1]

This prayer can be observed individually at home or as a group in the Masjid, as the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) did both.[2]

### The Merits of Taraweeh

The night prayer is a means of gaining Allah’s forgiveness for sins done in the past, if the prayers are sincerely done. The Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was quoted by Abu Hurayrah as saying, “Whoever prayed at night throughout the month or Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah will have all of his previous sins forgiven.” [3]

He also reported the Prophetic statement, “Whoever faithfully established prayers on the Night of Power (Laylatul-Qadr), seeking his reward only from Allah, will have his past sins forgiven.”[4] This special night is a great mercy and blessing from Allah. Worship during Laylatul-Qadr equals about 83 years (1,000 months) of worship, as stated by Allah,

“The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.” (Surah al-Qadr (97:3))

It is also recommended to spend the last ten days and nights of Ramadan in seclusion in the mosque (i’tikaaf), as the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) used to do. ‘Aa’ishah stated, “The Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) used to seclude himself in the Masjid during the last ten days of Ramadan until he died, and his wives continued the practice after him.”[5]

- [1] Collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol.3, p. 128 no.230.)
- [2] Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol.3, pp 127-8 no.229.
- [3] Collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol.3, p. 126, no.227.
- [4] Collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol.3, p. 69-70, no.125).
- [5] Collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol.3, pp. 135-6, no.243) and Muslim (Sahih Muslim (English Trans.), vol.2, p.575, no.2640).