

Tarawih & the Holy Qur'an

Origins of Tarawih

Hazrat Ibn Abbas narrated that Sayyidina Rasulallah(pbuh) used to pray 20 Rakat by himself, followed by Witr (every night) in the month of Ramadan.

[Sunan Al-Baihaqi, Hadith Number 12102]

When Hazrat Umar(RA) ruled, he decided that during Ramadan it was best to gather the people in the Masjids, which began to empty at that time of year, & perform the Tarawih prayer together.

This was to strengthen the community ties & reinforce the bond in the community.

Hazrat Abdur Rahman bin Abdul Qari said, "I went out in the company of Umar bin Al-Khattab one night in Ramadan to the Masjid and found the people praying in different groups. A man praying alone or a man praying with a little group behind him. So, Umar(RA) said, 'In my opinion I would better collect these (people) under the leadership of one Qari (reciter) (i.e. let them pray in congregation)'. So, he made up his mind to congregate them behind Ubai bin Kaab. Then on another night I went again in his company and the people were praying behind their reciter. On that, Umar (RA)remarked, 'What an excellent Bid'a (i.e. innovation in religion) this is..."

[Bukhari, Vol. 3, Book 32, Number 227]

20 Rakats or Not?

Hazrat Sa'eeb ibn Yazid said, "In the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab the people used to observe 20 rak'ahs (Tarawih) and the witr."

[Marifatus-Sunan wa'l Athar - Imam Bayhaqi, Volume 004, Page No. 42, Hadith Number 5409]

From the above Hadith, under the rule & instruction of Hazrat Umar(RA) Tarawih was 20 Rakats.

This was also true for other prominent Companions:

Imam Tirmidhi says:

"The majority amongst People of Knowledge, (agree) upon praying 20 Rakahs (of Tarawih) as is narrated from (RA) , Ali (RA) and other Sahaba of Prophet , Sufyan Thawri , Abdullah Ibn Mubarak and Imam Shafi said the same. Imam Shafi said that he saw people of Makkah praying 20 Rakahs (Tarawih)."

[Sunnan Jami'i al Tirimdhi, Book of Fasting, Chapter on Qiyaam in Ramadan

- Volume 3 Page No. 169 Hadith No. 806]

Abdur Rahman Sulami narrates that Hazrat Ali called the reciters of the Qur'an in Ramadan and commanded one of them to perform "twenty rakat" (Tarawih) while Hazrat Ali himself used to lead the witr prayer.

[Bayhaqi Sunan al-Kubra Volume 002, Page No. 699, Hadith Number 4620]

Imam Hassan Basri said, "Umar Al-Khattab gathered people behind Ubay Ibn Kaab in the Qiyaam of Ramadan and he led them for '20 Rakat.'"

[Siyar al A'lam wa al Nubalah Volume 001, Page No. 400-1, Biography of 'Ubay Ibn Kaab']

About the above narration, Imam Nawawi has said, "Its Isnad is Sahih (authentic)."

[Al-Khulasa al-Ahkam, Hadith Number 1961]

It should be noted that reports of 23 Rakats being performed refer to 20 Rakat of Tarawih and 3 Rakats Witr.

How to Perform Tarawih

Tarawih prayers are supererogatory but are strongly advised. It is a Sunnat-e-Mu'aqida.

Tarawih should be read after Isha and before Fajr. It can be performed individually but there is more reward if read in congregation.

It is a Sunnah & therefore a common practise in the Masjids and of much benefit to recite the Khatme Qur'an during Tarawih – i.e. to finish reading the entire Qur'an in Tarawih by the last day of Ramadan.

Sayyidina Rasulallah (pbuh) would recite all of the Holy Qur'an that had been revealed at the time, during Ramadan. In the year that Sayyidina Rasulallah (pbuh) passed away, he recited the entire Holy Qur'an twice.

Narrated by Hazrat Abdullah ibn Amr:

Sayyidina Rasulallah (pbuh) said, "Fasting and the Qur'an intercede for a man. Fasting says, 'O my Lord, I have kept him away from his food and his passions by day, so accept my intercession for him.' The Qur'an says, 'I have kept him away from sleep by night, so accept my intercession for him.' Then their intercession is accepted."

[Al-Tirmidhi, 1963]

Tarawih is read in sets of 2 Rakats. A break is taken after every 4 Rakats, and a break is also taken after the final Rakat of the prayer (before the Witr is performed).

This is the practise of the righteous leaders before us since Hazrat Ubay bin Kaab lead Tarawih under the rule of Hazrat Umar (RA).

The word 'Tarawih' literally means to take a break or rest.

There are no specified instructions regarding what should be done/recited during these breaks, so it is advisable to do Zikr, recite Durood Sharif, make Duaa or remain silent.

3 Rakats of Witr is usually performed after the Tarawih prayer, but after Tarawih if one intends to perform Tahajjud then he can read the Witr after that.