

THE NUMBER OF RAK'AAT IN TARAWEEH

The claim that the *taraweeh salaah* constitutes only eight *rak'aat* is incorrect because:

1. It is in conflict with the *sunnah*.
2. It is in conflict with the *ijmaa'* (consensus) of the *Sahaabah* (ra).
3. It is in conflict with the *ijmaa'* of the four *madh'haahib*.

The Sunnah in this Regard

Although many '*ulamaa* (e.g. Ibn Taymiyyah, As-Subki and Ash-Shawkaani) are of the opinion that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* never fixed the exact number of *rak'aat* for the *taraweeh salaah*,¹ we are convinced that the correct and *sunnah* number of *rak'aat* in *taraweeh* is twenty. This conviction is based on the fact that twenty *rak'aat taraweeh* was introduced by Sayyiduna 'Umar (ra) and Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* commanded us to follow the rightly guided *Khulafaa*, especially Sayyiduna Abu Bakr and Sayyiduna 'Umar (ra). Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said:

- "Hold firmly on to my *sunnah* and the *Sunnah* of the rightly-guided *Khulafaa* after me."²

¹ Fataawa Ibn Taymiyyah V.2 Pg.46, Al-Masaabih Pg.44, Nayl-ul-Awtaar V.1 Pg.46

² Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmed

- "Follow the two after me (Sayyiduna Abu Bakr and Sayyiduna 'Umar)."

Badr-ud-Deen Al-'Aini writes that we understand from the second *hadith* that those who follow Sayyiduna Abu Bakr and Sayyiduna 'Umar (ra) will be rewarded and those who do not follow them will be punished.³

The Ijmaa' of the Sahaabah (ra)

The twenty *rak'aat taraweeh* that was introduced by Sayyiduna 'Umar (ra) was unanimously accepted by all the *Sahaabah* (ra) without any objection.⁴ Many *aayaat* of the Qur'aan and *ahaadith* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* denote the *shar'i* authority of such *ijmaa'*.

- "And whoever opposes the Rasool after the guidance (of Allah) became manifest to him and follows a path other than that of the Believers, we appoint for him that to which he has turned and we will enter him into *jahannam*."⁵
- "My *ummah* will never unite upon falsehood."⁶

Before proceeding any further, it should also be borne in mind that consensus of the *Sahaabah* (ra) represents the highest and strongest form of *ijmaa'*.⁷

³ Al-Binaayah Sharh-ul-Hidaayah

⁴ Dars-e-Tirmidhi – citing 'Allaamah Habeeb-ur-Rahmaan A'zami, As-Suyuti and An-Nawawi.

⁵ Surah An-Nisaa, Aayah 115

⁶ Sunan Ibn Majah (283) and Tirmidhi V.2 Pg.49

⁷ Al-Manaar Ma' Nur-ul-Anwaar Pg.226

The Madhaahib

While Imaams Abu Haneefah, Shaafi'i and Ahmad (ra) agree that the *taraweeh salaah* comprises twenty *rak'aat*, there are two narrations from Imaam Maalik (ra). According to one narration he too agreed that the *taraweeh salaah* comprises twenty *rak'aat*. However, according to the narration of Ibn-ul-Qaasim, he preferred thirty six *rak'aat* (and three *rak'aat* of *witr* thereafter).⁸ Interestingly, most Maaliki texts only mention the twenty *rak'aat* narration.⁹

Note 1

The thirty six *rak'aat* opinion of Imaam Maalik (ra) does not mean he rejected the *ijmaa'* of the *Sahaabah* (ra). In those days the people of Makkah would perform a *tawaaf* between every four *rak'aat* of *taraweeh*. Considering that *tawaaf* can only be performed in Makkah, the people of Madeenaah would perform an additional four *rak'aat* of *nafl salaah* between every four *rak'aat* of *taraweeh*. Since twenty comprises of five sets of four, there would sixteen extra *rak'aat* if one were to perform four extra *rak'aat* of *nafl salaah* between every four *rak'aat* of *taraweeh*. This it's self is sufficient proof that according to this narration from Imaam Maalik (ra), the actual amount of *rak'aat* in *taraweeh* is *twenty*. Further proof that Imaam Maalik (ra) agreed with the other *Fuqahaa* is that:

1. These sixteen *rak'aat* were regarded as *nafl* instead of *sunnah muakkadah* as the actual *taraweeh*.

⁸ Aap Ke Masaail Aur Un Ka Hal, Pg.54

⁹ Ibid

2. Unlike the actual *taraweeh*, these sixteen *rak'aat* were performed individually.¹⁰

Note 2

According to Shaikh 'Atiyyah Muhammad Saalim (ra), from the fourth century, only twenty *rak'aat taraweeh* was performed in Madeenah. Thereafter, in the eighth century, when Zain-ud-Deen 'Iraaqi was appointed as the Imaam of the *Masjid-un-Nabawi*, the people would return to the *musjid* later during the night to perform the additional sixteen *rak'aat*. The famous historian, As-Sa'ood writes that this practice continued until the late ninth and early tenth *Hijri* century.¹¹

Note 3

Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* commanded us to follow the *sawaad-al-a'dham* (the vast majority).¹² Since the four *madhaahib* are the only true *madhaahib* in existence (all other true *madhaahib* no longer exist), they constitute the *sawaad-al-a'dham*. Hence, opposing their *ijmaa'* is impermissible.

Note 4

Many '*ulamaa* (e.g. At-Tahaawi, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Qudaamah) have discussed the divergent opinions of the *Fuqahaa* in various topics. None of them have ever mentioned a single *Faqeeh* who held the opinion the taraweeh salaah comprises only eight *rak'aat*.

¹⁰ Rak'aat-e-Taraweeh by Moulana Habeeb-ur-Rahmaan A'zami (Pg.60-61) and Dars-e-Tirmidhi V.2 Pg.653

¹¹ At-Taraweeh by Shaikh 'Atiyyah M. Saalim (Pg.60, 67 and 69)

¹² Mishkaat Pg.30 (citing Ibn Majah)

The Narration of Sayyidah ‘Aaisha (ra)

Imaam Bukhaari (ra) recorded a narration from Sayyidah ‘Aaisha (ra) in which she says:

“Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* would never perform more than eleven *rak’aat*, neither in Ramadaan nor in any other month. He would perform four *rak’aat* and do not ask about their beauty and length. He would thereafter perform another four *rak’aat* and do not ask about their beauty and length. He would then perform three *rak’aat* (of *witr*).” Sayyidah ‘Aaisha (ra) says that she asked Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* whether he slept before performing the *witr salaah*. He replied: “O ‘Aaisha, my eyes sleep but not my heart.”¹³

This hadith is often cited in substantiation of the claim that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* performed only eight *rak’aat* in the *taraweeh salaah*. However, this *hadith* is discussing the *tahajjud salaah* and not the *taraweeh salaah*.¹⁴

The words “nor in any other month” clearly indicate that this *hadith* is not regarding the *taraweeh salaah* which is only performed in the month of Ramadaan.¹⁵

There is another hadith in which Sayyidah ‘Aaisha (ra) narrated that during the last ten days of Ramadaan Rasulullah *sallallahu*

¹³ Bukhaari V.1 Pg.135, 152, 269 and 503

¹⁴ Ahsan-ul-Fataawa V.3 Pg.530, Fataawa Raheemiyah V.1 Pg.331 and Dars-e-Tirmidhi V.2 Pg.663

¹⁵ Ahsan-ul-Fataawa V.3 Pg.530

alaihi wasallam would stay awake throughout the night and exert himself in *'ibaadah*. It is possible that upon hearing this statement of Sayyidah 'Aisha (ra), some people would think that compared to the rest of the year, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* would perform more *rak'aat* of *tahajjud* in salaah in Ramadaan. In order to dispel such doubts, Sayyidah 'Aisha (ra) explained that the *tahajjud* salaah of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* never exceeded eleven *rak'aat*, neither in Ramadaan nor in any other month of the year.¹⁶

Imaam Bukhaari (ra) quoted the above-mentioned hadith of Sayyidah 'Aisha (ra) in the following chapters of his *Al-Jaami' As-Saheeh*:

1. The chapter regarding the *salaah* of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* during the nights of Ramadaan and other months
2. The chapter regarding the virtue of salaah during Ramadaan
3. The chapter that the eyes of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* would sleep but not his eyes
4. The chapter on *witr salaah*

Imaam Bukhaari (ra)'s non-inclusion of this *hadith* in the chapter on *taraweeh* indicates that he too understood that this hadith is with regards the *tahajjud* salaah instead of the *taraweeh* salaah. In fact, none of the *Muhadditheen* included it in the chapter on *taraweeh*. In his *Qiyaam-ul-Layl*, Al-Marwazi dedicated a separate chapter to discuss the number of *rak'aat*

¹⁶ Ibid

in the *taraweeh salaah*. Despite quoting a number of *ahaadith* in this chapter, he made no indication to the above (eight *rak'aat*) narration of Sayyidah 'Aaisha (ra).¹⁷

Is Tahajjud and Taraweeh the Same?

Proponents of the eight *rak'aat taraweeh* reject the above explanation saying that *tahajjud* and *taraweeh* are the same thing. This claim is also incorrect. There are a number of differences between the two. For example:

1. *Tahajjud* was introduced in Makkah whereas *taraweeh* was introduced in Madeenah.
2. *Taraweeh* is performed immediately after the '*isha salaah* whilst *tahajjud* is performed much later, in the last third night of the night.¹⁸

Note: Neither Imaam Bukhaari and Imaam Marwazi nor any other *Muhaddith* regarded *tahajjud* and *taraweeh* as the same.

Weak Substantiation

It is mentioned in a *hadith* attributed to Sayyiduna Jaabir (ra) that once, during the month of Ramadaan, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* led them in eight *rak'aat* (of *taraweeh*) and the *witr salaah* thereafter. The following night they gathered in the masjid hoping that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* would again lead them in *salaah* as he had done the previous night. They continued waiting for Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* until the morning. In the morning he *sallallahu alaihi*

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ahsan-ul-Fataawa V.3 Pg.532

wasallam explained to them that he did not join them that evening due to fear that by (continuously) doing so, *taraweeh salaah* would be made compulsory upon them.¹⁹

However, this *hadith* is extremely weak and cannot form the basis for any *shar'i* ruling. There are two reasons for the weakness of this *hadith*:

1. The person narrating this *hadith* from Sayyiduna Jaabir (ra) is 'Eesa bin Jaariyah. He is an extremely unreliable narrator. Imaams Abu Da'ud and Nasa'i (ra) have both labelled him as *munkar-ul-hadith* – a person whose narrations are *munkar*. A *munkar* narration is the narration of an unreliable narrator that contradicts the narration of one or more reliable narrators. Imaam Nasa'i (ra) also called him *matrook*. Literally meaning *discarded*, the *Muhadditheen* use it (and many other words) to indicate the unreliability of a narrator.²⁰ (Although Abu Zur'ah and Ibn Hibbaan have commented positively on 'Eesa bin Jaariyah, the *Muhadditheen* still declare him unreliable because their principle is that when a narrator is declared reliable by some scholars and unreliable by others, the opinion of those who regard him unreliable will be given preference.)

¹⁹ Qiyaam-ul-Layl Pg.90

²⁰ Fataawa Raheemiyyah V.1 Pg.335

2. Muhammad bin Humaid Ar-Raazi, another narrator in the *sanad* (chain of transmission) is also very weak. Abu Zur'ah Ar-Raazi and others have declared him a liar.²¹

The Narration of Saa'ib bin Yazeed (ra)

Imaam Maalik (ra) recorded a narration from Saa'ib bin Yazeed that Sayyiduna 'Umar (ra) commanded Sayyiduna Ubay bin Ka'b and Sayyiduna Tameem Ad-Daari (ra) to lead the people in eleven *rak'aat* of *salaah* (eight *rak'aat* of *taraweeh* and three *rak'aat* of *witr*).²²

On the basis of this narration it is claimed that Sayyiduna 'Umar (ra) had commanded the performance of eight *rak'aat* and not twenty. However, a thorough study of this narration's *asaaneed* reveals that three people narrated it from Sayyiduna Saa'ib bin Yazeed (ra). They are:

1. Haarith bin Abdir Rahmaan
2. Yazeed bin Khusayfah
3. Muhammed bin Yusuf

Haarith bin Abdir Rahmaan and Yazeed bin Khusayfah have narrated twenty *rak'aat* from Sayyiduna Saa'ib (ra). Yazeed bin Khusayfah has three students viz. Ibn Abi Dhi'b, Muhammed bin Ja'far and Imaam Maalik. All three of them narrated twenty *rak'aat* from Yazeed.

²¹ Fataawa Raheemiyah V.1 Pg.33

²² Mu'atta Imaam Maalik Pg.98

Muhammed bin Yusuf also had three students. They are:

1. Imaam Maalik
2. Ibn Ishaq
3. Da'ud bin Qays

While Imaam Maalik narrates eleven *rak'aat* from Muhammed bin Yusuf, Ibn Ishaq narrates thirteen *rak'aat* and Da'ud bin Qays narrates twenty one *rak'aat*. When there are conflicting versions of a *hadith* and giving preference to any one version over the others or drawing a correlation between them is not possible, the *Muhadditheen* call it *madtarib*. The *mudtarib hadith* is weak and insufficient evidence for the deduction of a *shar'i* ruling. Muhammed bin Yusuf's narration is *madtarib*. It is neither possible to draw a correlation between eleven, thirteen and twenty one nor is it possible to give preference to one of the three versions of the other two.

On the other hand, the narrations of Haarith bin Abdir Rahmaan and Yazeed bin Khusayfah are authentic and supported by many other narrations in the books of *hadith*.²³

The Opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah (ra)

Some of Ibn Taymiyyah (ra)'s writings imply that he was of the opinion that eight, twenty, thirty, thirty six and forty *rak'aat* are all *sunnah*.²⁴ It is clear from the preceding discussion that we disagree. Nevertheless, he also explains that the more virtuous (and preferred) practice differs according to the condition of

²³ Aap Ke Masaail Aur Un Ka Hal V.3 Pg.39-41

²⁴ Dars-e-Tirmidhi V.2 Pg.654 (footnotes continued from Pg.653)

the Muslims. If the Muslims are able to perform eight very lengthy *rak'aat* as was the practice of Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam, the performance of eight *rak'aat* would be better. However, if they are unable to perform such lengthy *rak'aat*, it would be better for them to perform twenty *rak'aat*.²⁵

Note: The length of the salaah that Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam performed at night may be estimated from the following:

- He would perform such lengthy *rak'aat* that his feet would swell.
- He would engage in *salaah* until half the night had passed.²⁶
- At times, he continued performing *salaah* until the time of *suhoor* almost expired.²⁷
- Sayyiduna Abu Dhar (ra) narrates that one night he performed salaah with Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam. He says: "I stood in salaah with him until I began resting my head on the wall due to the length of the salaah."²⁸

Considering the worldly commitments of modern-day Muslims and their physical weakness, it is obvious that none of them can

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Bukhaari Ma'-al-Fath V.3 Pg.12 and V.8 Pg.449

²⁷ Tirmidhi (Chapter on the Qiyaam of Ramadaan) V.1 Pg.99

²⁸ Ahmed, Majma'-uz-Zawaaid V.3 Pg.172

manage such lengthy *rak'aat*. Therefore, even according to Ibn Taymiyyah (ra)'s opinion, twenty *rak'aat* is best for them.²⁹

Conclusion

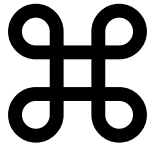
In view of the preceding discussion we conclude that:

1. Taraweeh consists of twenty *rak'aat* and not eight *rak'aat*
2. The performance of only eight *rak'aat* in taraweeh is not established from any sound *shar'i* proof.

Abu Hudhaifa Muhammad Karolia

Jaami'ah Mahmoodiah

Persida, Springs



²⁹ Dars-e-Tirmidhi V.2 Pg.655

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Ahsan-ul-Fataawa
Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Ludhianwi (ra)
2. Aap Ke Masaail Aur Un Ka Hal
Moulana Muhammed Yusuf Ludhianwi (ra)
3. Dars-e-Tirmidhi
Mufti Muhammed Taqi Uthmaani
4. Fataawa Raheemiyyah
Mufti Abdur Raheem Lajpuri (ra)
5. At-Taraweeh
Shaikh 'Atiyyah Muhammed Saalim (ra)
6. Is Taraweeh Twenty Rak'aats?
Published by Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azaadville

