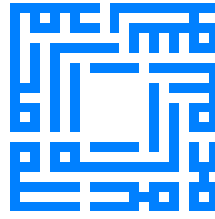




**Advanced Level Topics of Study for:  
Taraweeh Prayer Eight or Twenty Rakaat**



## **Taraweeh Prayer Eight or Twenty Rakaat** by Ahmed ibn Muhammad

In a handout by al-Albani's followers in England, by the title "*Some common questions answered*" (dated October 1990), there appeared the following question and answer (No. 22):

- (a) Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) reports that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) never prayed more than 8 rak'aats in Taraweeh, so how come nobody disapproves of 20?**
- (b) Is it true that Umar (Allah be pleased with him) introduced it?**

***Ans. 22***

**(a) As regards the Taraweeh prayer - people agree that the Sunnah of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the best way is 11 rak'aats. As regards any addition - then this is DISAPPROVED of and DECLARED AS A BID'AH (A bad innovation) by Shaykh al-Albani and by a few earlier scholars - that being reported from Imam Malik, Ibn ul-Arabee and as-San'aanee (see Salat-ut-Taraweeh of Shaykh al-Albani).**

**(b) It is not true that Umar (Allah be pleased with him) either prayed or ordered 20 rak'aats. Rather he ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b to lead the people with 11 rak'aats (al-Muwatta 1/137, with a Sahih Isnad).**

I do not wish to go into much detail on this issue, but *Insha'Allah* a separate publication is what is really required, to show which opinion is the most correct. But any way it should be said that the vast MAJORITY of the scholars of Hadith, Fiqh, and even the four Mujtahid Imams are in agreement that 20 rak'ahs are the most appropriate, followed by 3 rak'ahs of Witr, and this is also the opinion of the Imam of the "Salafiyya", Ahmad ibn Taymiyya!

First, it should be said that the Hadith reported from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) about 11 rak'ahs is not at all to do with Taraweeh, according to the majority of scholars, but in fact concerns the number of rak'ahs of TAHAJJUD prayer! The Hadith in question is as follows:-

**Narrated Abu Salama ibn Abdur Rahman that he asked Aisha (Allah be pleased with her), "How was the prayer of Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) in Ramadan?" She replied, "He did not pray more than eleven raka'at in Ramadan or in any other month. He used to pray four raka'at - let alone their beauty and length - and then he would pray four - let alone their beauty and length - and then he would pray three rak'aat (witr)." She added, "I asked, 'O Allah's Apostle! Do you sleep before praying the Witr?' He replied, 'O Aisha, My eyes sleep but my heart does not sleep.'" (Bukhari, 3/230, English edn)**

According to the author of "Fatawa Rahimiyyah", Mufti Abdur Rahim Lajpuri (vol. 1, pg. 275); in his defence of 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh: **"The commentator of al-Sahih al-Bukhari and the erudite traditionist, Shaykh Shamsud-Din al-Kermani (d. 786 AH; Rahimahullah) said: 'In the Hadith (above), the Tahajjud prayer is meant. Abu Salama's question and Hadrat Aisha's answer concerned the Tahajjud.'** He adds further: **'If the Tahajjud prayer is not meant, then this tradition will be at variance with the tradition that states that the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) led twenty rak'ahs each for two nights, and in the case of such clash the tradition of twenty rakah's which is affirmative (muthbit) shall have precedence because according to the principles of Hadith, the affirmative takes precedence over the negative (naaf)"** (vide: Al-Kawakib ud-Durari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 9, pg 155-156). I say, does this not mean that people who perform 8 rak'ahs of Taraweeh, should pray 20 rak'ahs instead? Since according to the principles of Hadith (as affirmed by al-Albani), **"The affirmative takes precedence over the negative in certain cases."**

A great fact that should also be noted by the reader is that the Imam's of Hadith have placed the Hadith from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) under the section of Tahajjud prayers, which indicates their belief that the Hadith applies to Tahajjud only. The Imam al-Muhaddithin al-Bukhari (Rahimahullah) has placed the Hadith from Aisha under at least two sections of his Sahih, first under the section of '21: The Tahajjud Prayer at Night' (see Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 2, chapter 15, no. 248, English ed'n) and then under the section of '32: The Book of Taraweeh Prayers' (see Sahih al-Bukhari, 3/230, pg. 128 English ed'n). This means that Imam Bukhari believed that the prayer mentioned by Aisha was that of Tahajjud only, and since the Tahajjud prayer is performed also in Ramadan, then Imam Bukhari also quoted the same Hadith under 'The book of Taraweeh prayers', but Allah knows best. Imam Muslim (Rahimahullah) has also placed the Hadith from Aisha under the Tahajjud prayer section (see Sahih Muslim 1/1607, pg. 356, English ed'n). Also Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) has placed Aisha's Hadith under the Book of Tahajjud (see Al-Muwatta, Book 7, section 7.2, no. 9, pg. 5, English ed'n). The Imam Abu Dawood (Rahimahullah) has also placed the same Hadith under the chapter 'On the number of Rak'ahs of the prayer at night (Tahajjud)' (see Abu Dawood 1/1336, pg. 351, English version). Even Imam's Tirmidhi and Nisai (Allah's mercy be upon them) placed Aisha's Hadith under the Tahajjud section (see Tirmidhi, vol. 1, pg. 58 and Nisai, vol. 1, pg. 154). Even one of the most prominent Imams of the 'Salafiyya', Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya placed the aforementioned Hadith in the section of Tahajjud prayers in his book Zaad al Ma'ad (vol. 1, pg. 86)!

Mufti Abdur Rahim said about Aisha's Hadith: "And if this tradition may have been quoted in some book under the devotions of Ramadan along with the Taraweeh. Like the taraweeh, the Tahajjud, too, is a prayer of Ramadan, and because of this affinity, it can be mentioned along with the Taraweeh (as Imam Bukhari did). Hence, supposing it may have been mentioned in some book, it cannot be made thereby a categorical argument. 'When uncertainty creeps in, the argument is falsified.' Moreover, Hafiz al-Hadith Imam Qurtubi's (d. 671/1273; Rahimahullah) statement regarding this Hadith (of Aisha) should not be overlooked that, 'many a man of knowledge considers the aforesaid Hadith mudtarib (i.e. confounded).'" (vide: Imam Ayni in his Sharh Sahih al Bukhari, vol. 2, pg. 187).

In short, the aforesaid report is in no way a proof for eight rak'ahs of Taraweeh. In contradistinction to this, as regards the twenty rak'ahs the Companions Consensus (Ijma-as-Sahaba) has taken place over the approval of Ibn Abbas' Hadith (about 20 Rak'ahs being performed by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him) and practically the majority of Ulama have accepted it." (Fatawa Rahimiyah, vol. 1, pg 276-277).

Although Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) had said: "He did not pray more than 11 Raka'at," we also have reports from her that the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) also prayed more than 11 Raka'ats! The proof for this was given by her in another narration involving Abu Salama ibn Abdal Rahman (Rahimahullah). Abu Salama asked Aisha about the prayer of the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), she said, "He observed 13 Raka'ahs (in the night prayer). He observed 8 raka'ahs and would then observe (three rak'ahs of) witr and then observe two raka'ahs sitting (nafl prayer), and when he wanted to bow he stood up and then bowed down, and then he observed two raka'ahs in between the Azan and Iqama of the dawn prayer (i.e. fajr)." (See Sahih Muslim 1/1603, pg. 357 and also al-Albani's Sifah Salah an-Nabee, appendix 7, pg. 110). So does this not mean that the 'Salafiyya' should perform 13 Raka'ats of Taraweeh in Ramadan?

Now, the statement 'the best way is 11 rak'aats' is only the opinion of a small group of the ulama, in fact there are more than 50 opinions to say that the best way is 20 rak'ahs according to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and his Companions (Allah be pleased with them all) practise! What is more interesting to note is that the four great Mujtahids, Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah's mercy be upon them) are in agreement that the Taraweeh consists of twenty Rak'ahs. The statement that Imam Malik approved of eight Rak'ahs needs to be proved, most likely this ascription was made to him because he quoted the Hadith which is used to prove eight Rak'ahs of Taraweeh in his al-Muwatta (see Muwatta, 6.2, no. 4, pg. 48) by a small group of scholars. Although Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) quoted this Hadith in his book, it has no bearing on what his actual opinion and practise was, on the contrary Imam Malik believes in thirty-six rak'ahs of Taraweeh (i.e. 20 Rak'ahs and 16 rak'ahs of extra nafl prayers, see later for the official verdict of the Maliki Madhhab)! Also the Hadith which seems to prove 11 Rak'ahs of Taraweeh (including three rak'ahs of Witr) in Imam Malik's Muwatta has been explained away by many other convincing arguments.

Recently I came across a booklet by the title, "Is Taraweeh 20 Rakaats?" (Published by Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azaadville, South Africa, author unknown). In this booklet the

Hadith quoted from the Muwatta of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah), about 11 rak'ahs of Taraweeh (including three Witr) was quite eloquently analysed.

The actual Hadith in question was related by Yahya ibn Yahya al-Laythi, who related from his teacher Imam Malik, who related from Muhammad ibn Yusuf, who said that as-Saaib ibn Yazid said, "Umar ibn Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim ad-Dari (Allah be pleased with them) to watch the night in prayer with the people for eleven rak'ahs. The reciter of the Qur'an would recite the Mi'in (a group of medium sized surah's) until we would be leaning on our staffs from having stood so long in prayer. And we would not leave until the approach of dawn." (see above reference in al-Muwatta).

It was stated in the aforementioned booklet (chapter 7, pg. 20), after quoting the above narration, "If we analyse the chain (Isnad) of this Hadith, we notice that Muhammad ibn Yusuf narrates from Saaib ibn Yazid. Muhammad (ibn Yusuf) has 5 students and the narration of each student differs from the next (i.e. the text of the Hadith is different from each student). The five students are:

- (1) Imam Malik
- (2) Yahya ibn Qattan
- (3) Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad
- (4) Ibn Ishaq and
- (5) Abdur Razzaq

Their narrations are as follows :

(1) Imam Malik says that Umar ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Dari to perform 11 rakaats. (What practise occurred thereafter is not mentioned, nor is Ramadaan mentioned).

(2) Yahya ibn Qattan says that Umar made the people gather with Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Dari and both of them began performing 11 rakaats. (Hadrat Umar's command is not mentioned, nor is any mention of Ramadaan made).

(3) Abdul Aziz (ibn Muhammad) says that we used to perform 11 rakaats in the era of Umar. (Neither is the command mentioned, nor is Ubayy ibn Ka'b or Ramadaan mentioned).

(4) Ibn Ishaq says that we used to perform 13 rakaats in Ramadaan during the era of Umar. (Neither is the command of Umar mentioned. Instead of 11 rakaats, 13 are mentioned).

(5) Abdur Razzaq says that Umar gave the command of 21 rakaats. (In this narration 21 rakaats are mentioned instead of 11).

Besides the narration of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah), 11 rakaats can not be established from the other narrations. Due to this difference, the narrator Ibn Ishaq gave preference to

13 while Ibn Abdal Barr al-Maliki preferred 21 (from the narration of Abdur Razzaq). Therefore this narration is Mudtarib (A Hadith that is transmitted in different manners, so that the contents of each transmission differ, and it is not possible to give preference to any particular transmission) with regards to the number (of rak'ahs) and hence unacceptable.

The above was an analysis of Muhammad ibn Yusuf's narration via Saaib ibn Yazid. Now let us examine the narration of Yazid ibn Khaseefah via Saaib (ibn Yazid), which is mentioned in the Sunan al- Kubra of al-Bayhaqi (vol. 2, pg. 496): Abu Zi'b narrates from Yazid ibn Khaseefah, who reports from Saaib ibn Yazid that the people used to perform 20 rakaats in the month of Ramadaan during the era of Umar.

Imam Nawawi, Iraqi and Suyuti (all three were great scholars of Hadith) amongst others have accepted the authenticity of this Hadith (see Tuhfatul Akhyaar, pg. 192 and Irshaadus Saari, pg. 74, (by Imam al-Qastallani]).

Muhammad ibn Jafar (another narrator in the chain) has quoted the statement from Yazid (ibn Khaseefah) as Abu Zi'b (had). This narration is mentioned in Marifatul Sunan of al-Bayhaqi. Allamah Subki and Mullah Ali al-Qari have stated in Sharh Minhaaj and Sharh Muwatta respectively that the chain of narrators of this Hadith are correct. (Tuhfatul Ahwazee, vol.2, pg 75).

From the above narration we can clearly see that both the students of Yazid (ibn Khaseefah), unanimously narrate the fact that during Umar's (Allah be pleased with him) era 20 rakaats was the standard practise. On the contrary, the 5 students of Muhammad ibn Yusuf quote Saaib (ibn Yazid) differently.

In such a situation the correct approach would be to rely on the narration of Yazid ibn Khaseefah. However the Ahl al-Hadith (another name for the "Salafiyya") have unjustly discarded this narration and adopted the doubtful one of Muhammad ibn Yusuf, which has differing versions. This goes against the principles of Hadith." Here ends the quote .

Another Hadith that is used by the protagonists of eight rak'ahs of Taraweeh has been related by Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him): "The Prophet (Peace be upon him) led the people in prayer during Ramadan with 8 rak'ahs and the Witr. We gathered in the Mosque the following night hoping that he would come again. We remained waiting till the next morning (until he came out). The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, 'I feared that the Witr may become incumbent on you.'" (related by Ibn Nasr al-Marwazi in Qiyamul-Layl, pg. 90, al-Tabarani and Ibn Hibban - see below for the actual Hadith)

The above Hadith has been analysed by Shaykh Abdur Rahim in his "Fatawa" (vol. 1, pg. 278-9) with the conclusion that the Hadith is Da'eef. The Shaykh said: "The strange thing about this Hadith is that its chain of authorities (Isnad) is not trustworthy. Please examine the statements of the Imams of this science concerning the narrators of this chain. In this chain one narrator is Ibn Hameed Razi, about whom the opinions of the great and august critics of Hadith are as under:

- (1) 'He is weak.' - Hafiz al-Dhahabi (see his Mizanul I'tidal, vol.3, pp. 49-50)
- (2) 'He narrates many disowned (munkar ) Hadiths.' - Ya'qub ibn Shaybah
- (3) 'He is objectionable.' - Imam Bukhari
- (4) 'He is a liar.' - Abu Zur'ah
- (5) 'I testify that he is a liar.' - Ishaq Kausaj
- (6) 'He narrates Hadiths about everything; I have not seen a man bolder than him vis-a-vis God.' - Sauleh Jazrah
- (7) 'By God! He is a liar.' - Ibn Kharash
- (8) 'He is not reliable.' - Imam Nisai

Now, about the second narrator, Ya'qub ibn Abdullah Ash'ari al-Qummi:-

- (1) 'He is not strong.' - Daraqutni (see Mizanul I'tidal, vol. 3, pg. 324).

About the third narrator, Isa ibn Jariyah:-

- (1) 'He has had disowned (munkar) Hadiths.' - Ibn Ma'een
- (2) 'His Hadiths are disavowed.' - Nisai
- (3) 'His Hadiths are rejected (matruk ).' - Nisai
- (4) 'His Hadiths are disavowed.' - Abu Dawood - synopsis
- (5) 'He is counted among the weak.' - (see Mizanul-I'tidal, vol. 2, pg. 311, by Hafiz al-Dhahabi)." Here ends the quote.

Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (Rahimahullah) has reported a similar narration to the above Hadith in his Bulugh al-Maram min Adillat al-Ahkam (no. 396, pg. 159), on the authority of Hafiz Ibn Hibban (Rahimahullah): "Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him): Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) prayed during the night in Ramadan; the people waited for him on the next day, but he did not come out; and he said, 'I feared that the Witr might be enjoined on you.'" Note the above narration does not even state how many rak'ahs were performed by the Prophet (Peace be upon him)!! The above two Hadiths can not be used as justifiable proof in favour of 8 rak'ahs of Taraweeh on their own.

Al-Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) has in fact quoted a Hadith which proves the performance of 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh in Ramadan; and that is as follows:-

Yahya related to me from Malik that Yazid ibn Ruman said, "The people used to watch the night in prayer during Ramadaan for 23 rak'ahs (i.e 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh, followed by 3 rak'ahs of witr) in the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab." (vide: al-Muwatta, 6.2, No. 5, pg. 48, English ed'n)

Although the above Hadith is Munqati (a link is missing in the chain) and has thus been declared to be Da'eef by some scholars (including al-Albani), it never the less has been used as proof. Besides, the Hadith has been given a full Isnad (chain) by either Imam Ibn Abdal Barr al-Maliki (d. 463/1071; Rahimahullah) or Shaykh Muhammad Habibullah ibn Mayabi ash-Shanqiti (Rahimahullah), in their thorough research to complete all the chains of transmission (Isnad) which have an incomplete chain; as found in the Muwatta of Imam Malik!

In fact the latest edition of the English version of al-Muwatta (translated by A. A. at-Tarjumana and Yaqub Johnson) says (pg. xxxiv): "Ibn Hajar (al-Asqalani) said, 'The book of Malik is sound by all the criteria that are demanded as proofs in the mursal, munqati (two types of Hadith which have a missing link) and other types of transmission.' Then as-Suyuti followed what Ibn Hajar said here; and said, 'The mursal Hadith in it are a proof with him (i.e. ash-Shafi'i) as well because the mursal is a proof with us when it is properly supported. Every mursal in the Muwatta has one or more supports as will be made clear in this commentary (i.e. Suyuti's commentary on al-Muwatta called Tanwir al-Hawalik). It is absolutely correct to say that the Muwatta is sound without exception.'

Ibn Abdal-Barr collected together all the mursal, munqati and mu'addil Hadiths in the Muwatta and said that the total number of Hadiths in the Muwatta which do not have an Isnad are sixty one. He stated that he found the isnads of all of them in other sources with the exception of four Hadiths. The erudite scholar of Hadith, Shaykh Muhammad Habibullah ibn Mayabi ash-Shanqiti says in Ida'a al-Halik that he had found witnesses for these four Hadith and he then mentioned these witnesses. He said, 'Some of the people of knowledge made these Isnads complete.' He mentioned from Ibn Abdal-Barr that there was no munkar(rejected) Hadith in the Muwatta, nor anything fundamentally refuted."

In the light of what the erudite scholars of Hadith have said above, we may emphatically state that the apparently 'munqati' Hadith from Yazid ibn Ruman has a complete Isnad; hence it may be used as a proof, since Imam Ibn Abdal-Barr has said that there is, "No munkar Hadith in the Muwatta nor anything fundamentally rejected." Hence, many scholars of Hadith and Fiqh have used the above Hadith as a proof in favour of 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh.

The quote from "Some common questions answered," also claimed that, "Rather he (Umar) ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b to lead the people with 11 rakaats." I say, this is half of the truth, since it is clearly stated in al-Muwatta : "Umar ibn Khattab ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b AND Tamim ad-Dari ....(see Muwatta, 6.2, no. 4, pg. 48)!!

Al-Albani has said that if anyone performs more than 11 rak'ahs of Taraweeh, then he or she is basically committing a Bid'ah (a very bad innovation)! We seek refuge in Allah from such a disgusting statement! Since this tantamountally means that the foremost Imams of the saved sect (al-Firqat an-Najdiyyah) of Ahl-al-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah have been committing a gross innovation (Allah forbid). Al-Albani seems to be implying that the venerable Companions (may Allah be pleased with them and increase their rank), the four great Mujtahid Imams (Allah's mercy be upon them), as well as the foremost scholars of Hadith and Fiqh of the last 1400 years have 'innovated' the practise of 20 rak'ahs of



Taraweeh, if considered in the light of penetrative elaboration, implicitly and covertly! What alternative conclusion can one derive, if the "Albani Madhhab" says, "As regards any addition (to 11 rak'ahs) - then this is disapproved of and declared as a bid'ah by 'Shaykh' al-Albani?"

I ask you, are the so called "Salafiyya" in the true path of the original and true Salaf-as-Salihin (the pious predecessors of the first three generations of Islam), when they have declared the practise of 20 rak'ahs to be a bid'ah, even though the Salaf have been reported to have practised 20 rak'ahs?

The actual Hadith which states that the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) performed 20 rak'ahs of taraweeh has been reported by Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him). He said, "Verily, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) in the month of Ramadaan, used to perform 20 rak'ahs and the witr prayer (afterwards) without congregation." (Reported in al-Sunan al-Bayhaqi, vol.2, pg. 496, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, Kabiri of Imam al-Tabarani, Ibn Aadi in his Musnad, and by Imam Baghawi in his Majmua-as-Sahabah )

Although some scholars have declared this Hadith to be Daeef on its own, it does not mean that it should be whole heartedly rejected; since Daeef does not mean Maudu (fabricated). Please refer to the next section on Daeef Hadiths, and when they are acceptable to scholars for further elaboration. The Hadith related from Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) is supported by many other narrations coming from great Companions like Uthman, Ali, Ibn Masood...(Allah be pleased with them all), as well as their successors (Tabi'in). Besides, some of the scholars of Hadith have even declared some weak Ahadith to be Sahih, if it has a firm basis. It was stated in the book "Criticism of Hadith among Muslims with reference to Sunan Ibn Maja," (pg. 131, by one of the leading "Salafi" Shaykhs in Britain, Suhaib Hasan): "Shafi'i also recognises a weak Hadith as authentic (sahih) if it is found to be accepted by the whole Ummah (see al-Sakhawi: Fath al-Mugith). But he does not accept Malik's view of restricting the practise to the people of Madinah. According to the later scholars of the Hanafi school like Ibn al-Humam, a Hadith will be declared Sahih, if it is supported by the practise of the Ummah (see Abdal Rashid Nu'mani: Ma tamusu ilaihe al-Haja, pg. 18). Among traditionalists, Tirmidhi often remarks, after quoting a less authentic Hadith: 'It is being practised by the people of learning (Ahl al-Ilm).' Suyuti deduces: 'It indicates that the Hadith is supported by the sayings of the people of learning. More than one scholar has said that a Hadith is declared Sahih if supported by the sayings of the people of learning, even if it lacks a proper Isnad (see Suyuti: al-Ta'aqubat, folio 20)."

As stated above, the great research scholar (Muhaggiq) Hafiz Kamal ibn al-Humam (d. 861/1457; Rahimahullah) had actually said: "One of the factors from which the authenticity of a Hadith is known is that the learned (Ulama) may conform to it, which is a proof of its being sound (vide: Fath al-Qadir, vol. 3, pg. 349).

There are many quotes from scholars which prove a near universal juridical acceptance of 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh, but I content myself by quoting a select few from some of the

foremost scholars of the Ahl-as-Sunnah, as well as the Imam of the "Salafiyya" (when it suits their whims and desires), Ahmad ibn Taymiyya.

(1) Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852/1449; R.A.)

The Hafiz of Hadith, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani has reproduced from Imam Rafi'i (Allah's mercy be on him):

"For two nights the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) led twenty rak'ahs of prayer each night; on the third night the people gathered but the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not come out. Then the next morning, he told the people, 'It so occurred to me that it would be made obligatory for you, and you would not be able to discharge this obligation.'"

After reproducing this tradition, Hafiz Ibn Hajar said:

"All the traditionalists (Muhaddithin) are unanimous about the soundness of this report." (see Talkhis al-habir fi takhrij ahadith al-Rafi'i al-Kabir, vol. 1, pg. 119, by Hafiz ibn Hajar).

(2) Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifah (d. 150 AH; Rahimahullah)

It was stated in Fayd ul-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari (by Shaykh Anwar Shah Kashmiri):

"Imam Abu Yusuf (Rahimahullah) asked Imam Abu Hanifah (Rahimahullah), 'Did Hadrat Umar (Allah be pleased with him) have any compact from the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) for 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh?' The Imam replied, 'Hadrat Umar was not one to invent on his own; certainly he had some proof with him for this!'" (also found in Maraql ul-Falah, pg. 81, by Imam al-Shurunbulali and Bahr ur Ra'iq, vol.2, pg. 66, by Imam ibn Nujaim al-Misri).

(3) Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279/892; Rahimahullah)

Imam Tirmidhi said:

"Umar, Ali as well as other Companions (Allah be pleased with them all) and Sufyan al-Thauri, Ibn al-Mubarak and Imam al-Shafi'i (Allah's mercy be upon them), all believed in 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh, and Imam Shafi'i has stated that he had seen the people of Makkah saying 20 rak'ahs (see Sunan al-Tirmidhi, vol.1, pg. 99).

(4) Imam Malik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH; Rahimahullah)

It was written in the most authentic book on Maliki Fiqh, al-Mudawwanah (vol.1, pg. 193-94), by Qadi Sahnoun (Rahimahullah):

"Ibn al-Qasim said, 'The rak'ahs (of Taraweeh) with witr are 39.' Imam Malik said, 'This is what the people have agreed upon from amongst the predecessors, and the people have not stopped doing it.'" (For an explanation of why it was 36 rak'ahs see the quote below from Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri).

(5) Hafiz Ibn Humam (d. 861/1457; Rahimahullah)

Allamah Ibn Humam asserts that it has been established from genuine authority that the Companions and their Successors (tabi'in) used to say twenty rak'ahs of Taraweeh during the auspicious time of Umar (Allah be pleased with him); this authority of Yazid ibn Ruman has been reported from Sa'ib ibn Yazid that, 'during Umar's auspicious time we used to say twenty rak'ahs.' The genuineness of this authority has been verified by Imam Nawawi in the synopsis (see Fath al-Qadir, vol.1, pg. 407 and Nasb-ur-Rayah, vol.1, pg. 294, by Hafiz al-Zaylai). Hafiz Ibn Humam also said in Fath al-Qadir (vol.1, pg. 470):

"At last unanimity was formed on 20 rak'ahs of prayer and this alone is in succession." This last statement has also been said in similar words by Ibn Taymiyya in his Minhaj us-Sunnah (vol.2, pg. 224).

(6) Imam Ata ibn Abi Rabah (Rahimahullah)

The august successor (Tabi'in) and Mufti of Makkah in his time said:

"I have seen the Companions, and other people in Makkah saying 23 rak'ahs, including the witr."

This report is Hasan (good). (see Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, pg. 406, Fath al-Bari, vol.4, pg. 219, of Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Qiyam ul-Layl, pg. 91, by Imam Ibn Nasr al-Marwazi).

(7) Imam Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi (d. 620/1223; R.A)

The Imam of the Hanbali's in his time, Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi, said in his book al-Mughni (vol.1, pg 803):

"There has been the Companion's consensus (Ijma-as-Sahaba) on 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh."

(8) Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d. 1352 AH; Rahimahullah)

It was stated in his published lecture, Tirmidhi al-ma'ruf ba-Arfa'sh-Shazzi (vol.1 pg. 329) :

"Not even one of the the four Imams believes in less than 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh; the practise and belief of the majority of the Companions was also this. Imam Malik (Allah's mercy be upon him) believes in more than

20 rak'ahs; he is positive that they are 36. According to Imam Malik's practise only 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh will be said in congregation, but the general practise and method of the citizens of Madinah was that during the brief rest interval (after every 4 rak'ahs), when the Imam sat down after 4 rak'ahs, they used to perform 4 more rak'ahs. The men who said the Taraweeh in the sacred mosque at Makkah, used to circumambulate (Tawaf) the Ka'ba during this brief recess. The people of Madinah, naturally, could not circumambulate the Ka'ba and hence, instead, they used to perform 16 rak'ahs more (in total) during these brief recesses."

(9) Imam al-Ayni (d. 855/1451; Rahimahullah)

Allamah Ayni wrote in his Sharh al-Bukhari:

"The number of rak'ahs in the Taraweeh is twenty. Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmed (Allah's mercy be upon them) assert the same thing. Their proof is the report which Bayhaqi has, with genuine authority, narrated from Sa'ib ibn Yazid. The great Companions, including Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them), as also the revered Successors (Tabi'in), used to perform twenty rak'ahs."

Then he said:

"The most excellent and the most advisable course to conform to is that of the Holy Prophet's and his (Peace and blessings be upon him) Companions (practise)." (Umdat ul-Qari Sharh-al-Bukhari, vol. 7, pg. 178).

(10) Hafiz Taqi-ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya al-Hanbali (d. 728/1328)

He has said in his Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya (vol.1, pg. 191):

"It has been proven without doubt that Ubayy ibn Ka'b (Allah be pleased with him) used to lead the Companions, during Ramadan, for 20 rak'ahs and 3 rak'ahs of witr. Hence it is the principle (maslak) of most of the Ulama that this is the Sunnah, because Ubayy ibn Ka'b led 20 rak'ahs of prayer in the presence of the Muhajirin (the emigrants) and the Ansars (the helpers) and not a single Companion repudiated it!"

So please ask yourselves: "Who are the 'Salafiyya'; are they the people who conform to the way of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), and their successors (this includes the four Mujtahid Imams, Allah's mercy be upon them) consensus on 20 rak'ahs, or is it the likes of al-Albani and his followers?"

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**Nasir al-Albani's slanderous declaration that  
the companion's unanimous practice of  
20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh  
is a reprehensible innovation (*bid'ah*)!**

by

**Ahmed ibn Muhammad**

It has been discussed previously in *Al-Albani Unveiled*, and by the admission of his own followers, that al-Albani has declared the practice of 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* prayer in the holy month of Ramadan to be a reprehensible innovation (*bid'ah*)! What concerns us here is not the actual number of *rak'ahs*, but the consideration that he has over reached himself by declaring a known practice of the Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them) to be a *bid'ah*! To any sane, sincere and objective minded reader the implication of his claim is clear, namely, he has declared the unanimous practise of the Companions to be a *bid'ah*! Allah forbid.

We will discuss, *insha'Allah*, what he actually said and prove to him and his blind followers that they are the ones who deliberately overlook Sahih Hadiths on this issue, as well as avoiding the practice and Consensus of the venerable Companions, and our beloved Messenger, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) who initiated this practice and number. This issue is no doubt a critical test for those who claim to be on the path of the venerable Companions and their Successors. May Allah be pleased with them all.

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**Evidence for 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh  
from authentic ahadith**

In the following synopsis we will provide the most authentic evidence to support the claims of the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Zahiri<sup>[1]</sup> schools of Islamic jurisprudence, and most importantly that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and in the unanimous view and practice of the Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them all) the *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* are twenty.

The narration's that will be presented have the stamp of authentication by at least ten distinguished scholars. Al-Imam al-Hafiz Jamaluddin al-Zayla'i[2] has recorded in his book *Nasb ur-Rayah*[3] that:

**"Al-Bayhaqi has related in *al-Marifa*[4] (via the following chain of transmission):**

**Abu Tahir al-Faqih - Abu Uthman al-Basri - Abu Ahmad Muhammad ibn Abdal Wahhab - Khalid ibn Mukhallad - Muhammad ibn Ja'far - Yazid ibn Khaseefah - Sa'eeb ibn Yazid,**

who said:

**'In the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab (radiallahu anhu) the people used to observe 20 rak'ahs and the witr.'**

Al-Nawawi said in *al-Khulasa*:

**'Its Isnad is Sahih.'**

Hafiz al-Zayla'i has also mentioned after reporting the authenticity of this Hadith, that Imam al-Bayhaqi has also reported another version of the above narration through a different channel of transmission, in his *Sunan al-Kubra*. The narration referred to has been mentioned in the footnotes by the council of Islamic scholars (Majlis al-Ulama) who edited *Nasb ur-Rayah*[5], in the following words:

**"(Bayhaqi) has related in *al-Sunan*[6] (via the following *isnad*):**

**Abu Abdullah al-Hussain ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hussain finjuwayh al-Dinawari - Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Sunni - Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdul Aziz al-Baghawi - Ali ibn al-J'ad - Ibn Abi Dhib - Yazid ibn Khaseefah - Sa'eeb ibn Yazid,**

who said:

**"In the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab, radiallahu anhu, they would perform 20 rak'ats in the month of Ramadan. He said (also): And they would recite the Mi'in[7], and they would lean on their sticks in the time of Uthman ibn Affan, radiallahu anhu, from the discomfort of standing."**

**All the men in the (above) *isnad* are trustworthy, as mentioned by the Indian research scholar, Shaykh al-Nimawi[8], in *Athar al-Sunan*[9]."**

The evidence which proves that Umar (radiallahu anhu) ordered the practise of 20 rak'ahs has been recorded by Shaykh Ali al-Muttaqi al-Hindi[10] in the largest collection of Hadith available today: *Kanz al-Ummal fi Sunan al-aqwal wal Af'al*[11], as follows from Ubayy ibn Ka'b (radiallahu anhu):

"Umar (radiallahu anhu) ordered him (Ubayy) to lead the people in prayer at night in Ramadan, because the people fast during the day and can not recite (the Qur'an) well, therefore it is better that you should recite (the Qur'an) during the night. I (Ubayy) asked: "O commander of the believers, this thing was not done before." He said: "I know, but it is a good practise", and so (Ubayy) led (the Companion's) for 20 *rak'ahs*."

There are many other narration's which prove the case for twenty *rak'ahs*, but some of these narration's are less authentic than others, nevertheless they are weighty enough to back each other up and raise the level of authentication to at least Hasan (good); as Shaykh Nimawi and others have verified.

For the readers benefit one may refer to the following books of Hadith for at least 25 further proofs:

1. **Muwatta Imam Malik** from Yazid ibn Ruman[12]
2. **Sunan al-Kubra** of Imam al-Bayhaqi[13] from: Ibn Abbas, Yazid ibn Ruman (same as Imam Malik's narration), Suwayd ibn Ghafalah, Ali ibn Abi Talib etc. Also refer to *Marifatus Sunan* of al-Bayhaqi.
3. **Musannaf** of Imam Abdur Razzaq[14] from: Sa'eeb ibn Yazid and al-Hasan.
4. **Musannaf** of Imam Ibn Abi Shaibah[15] from some 13 different *isnads*.
5. **Qiyam ul-lail**[16] of Imam Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi from: Sa'eeb ibn Yazid, Yazid ibn Ruman, Ibn Mas'ud, A'mash al-Kufi, Ibn Sirin, Malik, al-Shafi'i and others.

A selection of the scholars of Hadith who authenticated and used al-Bayhaqi's narrations as a proof for 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh

**(i) Imam Yahya al-Nawawi (d. 676 AH)** He has authenticated the narration recorded and mentioned above from al-Bayhaqi's *Marifatus-Sunan*, in his book *al-Khulasa* - this was mentioned by Hafiz al-Zayla'i in *Nasb ur-Rayah* (see above). Besides this narration, he has also recorded the alternative narration recorded by Imam al-Bayhaqi in his *Sunan al-Kubra*.

He has declared this variant narration to be a decisive argument and proof for the Shafi'i Madhhab, as well as saying: "Its Isnad is Sahih", in his voluminous work: *al-Majmu' Sharh al-Muhadhab*[17].

**(ii) Imam Jamaluddin Yusuf al-Zayla'i (d. 762 AH)**

We have mentioned above that Hafiz al-Zayla'i in his analysis of the narration's found in the Hanafi fiqh book: *al-Hidaya*, has recalled the narration from al-

Bayhaqi's *Marifat-us-Sunan*, and quoted Imam al-Nawawi as his authority to declare this narration to be Sahih.

### (iii) Imam Badruddin al-Ayni (d. 855 AH)

He said in his famous commentary to Sahih al-Bukhari: *Umdat ul-Qari*[\[18\]](#) :

**"The argument of our companions (the Hanafi scholars) as well as the Shafi'is and Hanbali's is what al-Bayhaqi has related with an authentic chain of transmission (Sahih Isnad)..."**

### (iv) Imam Ali al-Qari (d. 1014 AH)

He has noted in *Sharhul-Nuqayah*[\[19\]](#) :

**"Imam al-Bayhaqi has reported on genuine authority (Sahih) the performing of 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh during the periods of Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them), and hence there has been consensus on it."**

### (v) Imam Kamaluddin ibn al-Humam (d. 861 AH)

Imam Ibn al-Humam asserts that it has been established from genuine authority (sahih) that the Companions and their Successors used to say 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh during the auspicious time of Umar (radiallahu anhu); this authority of Yazid ibn Ruman (as in Imam Malik's narration) has been reported from Sa'eeb ibn Yazid that, **"During Umar's auspicious time we used to say 20 rak'ahs."** The genuineness of this authority has been verified by Imam Nawawi in the synopsis[\[20\]](#).

### (vi) - (viii) Imam's Taqi al-Din as-Subki (d. 756 AH), Zayn al-Din al-Iraqi (d. 806 AH) & Jalaluddin as-Suyuti (d. 911 AH)

According to Imam Abdal Hayy Lucknawi[\[21\]](#) in his work *Tuhfatul Akhyar*[\[22\]](#), Imam Nawawi, Iraqi and Suyuti[\[23\]](#) have all considered Bayhaqi's narration as reported in his *Sunan al-Kubra* to be Sahih.

Shaykh Habibur Rahman al-A'zami has also affirmed that Nawawi, Iraqi and Suyuti have declared Imam al-Bayhaqi's narration to be Sahih. He has also reported that Imam al-Subki[\[24\]](#) and Mullah Ali al-Qari have both declared the alternative narration recorded by Bayhaqi in his *Marifat-us-Sunan* to be Sahih[\[25\]](#).

### (ix) Imam Muhammad Shauq Nimawi (d. 1322 AH)

We have mentioned previously that Shaykh Nimawi has declared Imam al-Bayhaqi's narration to be Sahih in *Athar al-Sunan*[\[26\]](#).



**(x) Imam Ibrahim al-Halabi (d. 956 AH)**

He has noted in *al-Kabiri*[\[27\]](#) :

**"The argument of the majority of people is the report which Imam al-Bayhaqi has reported with sound authority (Sahih), that during Umar as well as Uthman and Ali's (may Allah be pleased with them), 20 rak'ahs was performed."**

***Other contemporary scholars***

Other prominent scholars who have used Imam al-Bayhaqi's narration's, besides other proofs include: Shaykh Habibur Rahman al-A'zami (see above), Shaykh Isma'il Ansari (see later), Shaykh al-Muqri in *Tahqeeq al-Taraweeh*, Shaykh Zafar Ahmad Uthmani in his monumental *I'la as-Sunan*[\[28\]](#), Shaykh Abdur Rahim Lajpuri in *Fatawa al-Rahimiyya*[\[29\]](#), Shaykh Ahmad Khan in *Ja'al Haqq*[\[30\]](#), Shaykh Taqi al-Uthmani in *Dars-e-Tirmidhi*[\[31\]](#) and many others.

A writer once claimed that Imam al-Bukhari held the view that the *rak'ahs* of Taraweeh were eight, excluding the *witr*. What is surprising to note is that despite his bold ascription of this view to Imam al-Bukhari, he did not furnish one shred of proof or reference to the works of Imam al-Bukhari to verify his claim.

On the contrary, the commentators of Sahih al-Bukhari, like Hafiz Ibn Hajar and Hafiz al-Ayni have not ascribed any view for 8 *rak'ahs* to Imam al-Bukhari to our knowledge. What is unsurprising to note is that the two aforementioned scholars of Hadith have mentioned the proofs in favour of 20 *rak'ahs*. One may raise the catechism - if Imam al-Bukhari had held the view ascribed to him, would there be no doubt that his great student, Imam Abu Isa al-Tirmidhi[\[32\]](#), would not have failed to mention this?

For we know that Imam al-Tirmidhi only knew of either 20 or 41 *rak'ahs*[\[33\]](#) in his time.

He has recorded in *al-Jami us-Sahih*, that Umar[\[34\]](#), Ali (may Allah be pleased with them) and other Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to perform 20 *rak'ahs* of Taraweeh, as well as saying that Sufyan al-Thauri (d. 161 AH), Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (d. 181 AH) and al-Shafi'i (d. 204 AH) held the same view. He has also quoted Imam al-Shafi'i as saying that he saw the people of Makkah performing 20 *rak'ahs* of Taraweeh.

The only proof to suggest that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) performed 20 *rak'ahs* has been reported on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas (radiallahu anhu):

**"Verily, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in the month of Ramadan, used to perform 20 rak'ahs and the witr (afterwards) without congregation."**[\[35\]](#)

This narration has been shown to have a weak (*da'eef*) *isnad* by the verifying scholars like al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani[\[36\]](#), Hafiz al-Zayla'i and others, due to the presence of the narrator: Abu Shaiba[\[37\]](#) Ibrahim ibn Uthman. He was the grandfather of the Imam of Hadith: Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaiba, as well as being a Qadi; but as for his status as a reporter of Hadith, he has been declared to be discarded (*matrook*) by Hafiz Ibn Hajar in *Taqreeb ul-Tahdhib*[\[38\]](#) and al-Bayhaqi has declared him to be weak in *al-Sunan al-Kubra*[\[39\]](#).

One may wish to note that al-Albani has gone to the added length of declaring Ibn Abbas' narration to be *Maudu* (fabricated)[\[40\]](#), whereas no previous scholars of Hadith have gone beyond declaring its *isnad* to be *da'eef* (weak). This is nothing strange, for al-Albani usually goes to the added lengths and extremities of declaring narration's which do not suit his whims and desires to be either *da'eef* or *maudu*.

An interesting study prepared and published on this issue by a Shaykh who is said to have memorized the six most authentic collections of Hadith, is available to verify this assertion.

Let us now see what a number of Imams of sacred law have said about the aforementioned narration from Ibn Abbas (radiallahu anhu).

(a) Imam Ahmad al-Tahtawi[\[41\]](#) has said in *Sharh Durr al-Mukhtar*[\[42\]](#) :

**"On the authority of Ibn Abbas' statement, 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh has been established from the Holy Prophet's (peace be upon him) practice."**

(b) Shaykh Abdal Haqq al-Dehlawi[\[43\]](#) has been quoted by the author of *Fatawa Rahimiyya*[\[44\]](#) as follows: "Shaykh Abdul Haqq Muhaddith of Delhi writes in his book, *Fath-e-Sirr-ul-Mannan*:

**'The obvious thing is that, according to the holy Companion's, the Holy Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying 20 rak'ahs had been established, as is mentioned in Ibn Abbas' tradition, and for this reason Umar (radiallahu anhu) adopted 20 rak'ahs...'**

He also quoted Shaykh Abdal Haqq as saying from his book: *Ma sabata minas Sunnah*[\[45\]](#),

**'According to our belief, the taraweeh consists of 20 rak'ahs, for Bayhaqi has reported with sound authority that the holy Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) used to**

perform 20 *rak'ahs* during Umar's time; moreover, this practice continued during Uthman and Ali's (may Allah be pleased with them) periods also."

(c) Shaykh Abdur Rahim continued to say in his *Fatawa*:

**"The fact is that Hadrat Ibn Abbas and Hadrat Umar are both Companions; there is no 'weak' narrator between them, wherefore Ibn Abbas' tradition may be called weak and the Companion's action may be considered to be based on a weak tradition. Their action was based on a sound basis; how can those who follow them be called 'the deluded'? In short, according to the Companion's reckoning, the afore said hadith is not at all weak, though, due to the inclusion later of a weak narrator. Ibrahim ibn Uthman may be according to the latter-day authorities called weak 'by way of narration', but 'intelligibly' it must be authentic because the well-guided Caliphs and other Companion's conformity to and continuance of 20 *rak'ahs* is the proof of its being reliable.**

Allamah Bahrul-Ulum[\[46\]](#) says:

**"The Companions continued conformity to 20 *rak'ahs* is the context and sign of the soundness of this tradition."**

In support of what we have mentioned, let us quote to you what a leader of Salafiyyism has mentioned in his book: *Criticism of Hadith among Muslims with reference to Sunan Ibn Maja*[\[47\]](#) :

**"Shafi'i also recognizes a weak Hadith as authentic (sahih) if it is found to be accepted by the whole ummah (see al-Sakhawi: *Fath al-Mugith*). But he does not accept Malik's view of restricting the practise to the people of Madinah. According to the later scholars of the Hanafi school like Ibn al-Humam, a Hadith will be declared Sahih, if it is supported by the practise of the Ummah (see Abdal Rashid Nu'mani: *Ma tamusu ilaihe al-Haja*, p. 18). Among traditionalists, Tirmidhi often remarks, after quoting a less authentic Hadith: 'It is being practised by the people of learning (*Ahl-ul-Ilm*).' Suyuti deduces: 'It indicates that the Hadith is supported by the sayings of the people of learning. More than one scholar has said that a Hadith is declared Sahih if supported by the sayings of the people of learning, even if it lacks a proper Isnad (see Suyuti: *al-Ta'aqubat*, folio 20)."**

In closing this section, consider what Imam Abu Hanifah (rahimahullah) said to his student Imam Abu Yusuf (rahimahullah). Shaykh Anwar Shah Kashmiri stated in *Fayd ul-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*:

**"Imam Abu Yusuf (rahimahullah) asked Imam Abu Hanifah (rahimahullah), 'Did Hadrat Umar (radiallahu anhu) have any compact from the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh?' The Imam replied, 'Hadrat Umar (radiallahu anhu) was not one to invent on his own; certainly he had some proof for this!'"** [\[48\]](#)

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### Ijma us-Sahabah on the rak'ahs of

#### Taraweeh being twenty

A number of Imams of sacred law have inferred from the evidences available, that there is a definite consensus of the Companions (*Ijma us-Sahabah*) [\[49\]](#) on this issue. For the readers benefit we will provide some quotes below (including one from a "Salafi" writer).

(i) Imam Ali ul-Qari al-Hanafi (d. 1014 AH)

He said in *Sharh ul-Nuqayah* [\[50\]](#):

**"Imam Bayhaqi has reported on genuine authority (*sahih*) about the performance of 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh during the periods of Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them), and hence there has been consensus (*Ijma*) on it."**

(ii) Shaykh ul-Islam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 974 AH)

Allamah Abdal Hayy Lucknawi has reported in *Tuhfat ul-Akhyar* [\[51\]](#) and in his *Majmu' Fatawa* [\[52\]](#), the fact that Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Haytami has declared *Ijma us-Sahabah* on the rak'ahs of Taraweeh being twenty.

(iii) Imam Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi (d. 620)

The leading Imam of the Hanbali's in his time has declared in his famous fiqh book: *al-Mughni* [\[53\]](#) :

**"There has been the Companion's consensus (*Ijma us-Sahabah*) on 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh."**

(iv) Shaykh Bahrul-Ulum Abdul Ali ibn Nizamuddin (d. 1235)

He said in *Rasa'il ul-Arkan*[\[54\]](#) :

**"Then there was unanimity regarding the 20 rak'ahs."**

(v) Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlawi[\[55\]](#) (d. 1824 CE)

He has declared in his *Majmu' Fatawa Aziz*[\[56\]](#) :

**"Thereafter, they (the Companions) adopted twenty (rak'ahs of Taraweeh) and three rak'ahs (of witr), on which number consensus had been formed."**

(vi) Shaykh Qutubuddin Khan (d. 1289 AH)

He has stated in his commentary to the Hadith collection known as *Mishkat ul-Masabih*: Madhahir ul-Haqq[\[57\]](#) :

**"But the Companions consensus was formed on this that the Taraweeh consists of 20 Rak'ahs."**

(vii) Imam Kamaluddin ibn al-Humam (d. 861 AH)

He has said in *Fathul-Qadir*[\[58\]](#) :

**"At last unanimity was formed on 20 rak'ahs of prayer and this alone is in succession."**

(viii) Imam Malik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH)

It was written in the most authentic record of Imam Malik's most accurate sayings[\[59\]](#), known as *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrah*:

**"Ibn al-Qasim said, 'The rak'ahs (of taraweeh) with witr are thirty nine.' Imam Malik said, 'This is what the people have agreed upon from amongst the predecessors, and the people have not stopped doing it.'"[\[60\]](#)**

(ix) Shaykh Shabir Ahmad al-Uthmani (d. 1369 AH)

Shaykh Abdur Rahim said in his *Fatawa*[\[61\]](#) :

**"Allamah Shabir Ahmad Uthmani says that none of the Companions ever took exception to 20 rak'ahs, and hence all of them were unanimous on twenty rak'ahs."[\[62\]](#)**

(x) Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan Bhopali (d. 1307 AH)

He was one of the leading personalities of the "Salafi" movement in India. It has been recorded by him in his *Awnu'l Bar*[\[63\]](#) :

**"The practice of 20 rak'ahs established during Hadrat Umar's time has been considered by the Ulama as consensus."**

All praise be to Allah, the synopsis of the proofs, their authenticity and the resulting of *Ijma us-Sahabah*, has been demonstrated by way of recouring to some of the most reputable scholars of the various Madhhab of this blessed Ummah.

I (Ahmed ibn Muhammad) asked my teacher, the faqih, Shaykh Muhammad Asaddar Ali (b. 1911), may Allah preserve him: **"What do you say about those people who claim to be the followers of the pious predecessors (*Salaf us-Salihin*), but insist on praying 8 rak'ahs of Taraweeh year in year out?"** He replied:

**"I take it you are referring to those people who go around with the title 'Salafi' over their heads. I will say a few things about these pseudo-Salafites. They are violators of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) consensus on this and other issues - just as their master Ibn Taymiyya was; and the scholars of the past have declared the violators of the *Ijma us-Sahabah* to be either corrupt innovators or even unbelievers - depending on the nature of the question. The Muhaddith, Shaykh Abdal Hayy Lucknawi (rahimahullah) has declared in his *Taliqatul-Hidaya*[\[64\]](#) : 'One who performs 8 rak'ahs of Taraweeh will be an abandoner of the insisted sunnah.' So, if you come across a man who has been shown the proofs and what the vast majority of scholars, including the Imams like Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal have said; but still persists on avoiding the Companions unanimity on 20 rak'ahs of Taraweeh, and prefers 8 rak'ahs - then know that he is not a Salafi, rather a follower of his desires and avoider of the Companion's (may Allah be pleased with them) unanimous practice. And Allah knows best."**

O believers, have we not heard that Allah has said:

**"O you who believe, Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, And those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, If ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination"[\[65\]](#)**

O believers, have we not heard that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said on two occasions:

"Hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs[66], clamp your molars upon it, avoid new novelties, for every novelty is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance." [67]

"Allah will never let my Ummah agree upon misguidance, and the hand of Allah is over the group (Jama'ah), so follow the great mass of believers (Sawad ul-'Azam), and whoever dissents from them departs to hell." [68]

We will finish this section by mentioning the titles of two books written on this issue. The first is a book written by a Qadi at the Shariah court in Medinah al-Munawwara, as well as being a lecturer in the Holy Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) mosque - Shaykh Atiyya Muhammad Salim, and the second is by - Shaykh Isma'il ibn Muhammad al-Ansari. As the title below suggests, al-Ansari's book is a refutation of al-Albani's research and views on this issue.

1. ***Al-Taraweeh - Akthar min alf Aam fi Masjid al-Nabi alaihis-salatu wa sallam***[69].
2. ***Tashih Hadith Salatul-Taraweeh Ishrin Rak'ah wa'l Radd ala al-Albani fi Tadaeefah***[70].

Finally, the reader may be interested to know that even today, just as in the time of the Salaf us-Salihin (may Allah be well pleased with them), 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* is still being adhered to in Makkah and Madinah.

May Allah keep us on the practice of the Companion's and guide those who deliberately avoid so and claim to be on the path of the righteous Salaf. Amin.

### Notes

1 The view that Imam's Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal and Dawud al-Zahiri all preferred 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* excluding the *witr* has been mentioned by Qadi Ibn Rushd in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* (1/239).

2 He was a famous Hanafi Hafiz of Hadith, as well as being one of the teachers of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. He died in the year 762 AH, rahimahullah.

3 2/154, Majlis al-Ulama, India, 4 vols. 1357 AH.

4 The full title is *al-Marifat-us-Sunan wa'l athar*.

5 2/154, footnote 2.

6 2/496.

- 7** A group of medium sized chapters from the Qur'an.
- 8** His full name was Muhammad Shauq al-Nimawi; (d. 1322 AH - rahimahullah).
- 9** 2/54.
- 10** He died in the year 975 AH, rahimahullah.
- 11** 4/284, no. 5787 (8 vols. 1st edn; Hyderabad, India, 1312-14 AH), reported by him on the authority of the Muhaddith, Ibn Man'i.
- 12** This report is very similar to Bayhaqi's narration (see *Muwatta*, 6.2, no. 5, p. 48, English edn.) .
- 13** 2/496-7.
- 14** 4/260-3, no's. 7730-1 & 7733.
- 15** 2/392-4. Printed in Hyderabad, India, 1387/1967.
- 16** PP. 91-2, India, 1320 AH.
- 17** 4/32-3, printed with Imam al-Rafi'i's (d. 623 AH) *Fath al-Aziz* and Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani's *Talkhis ul-habir* in the footnotes; Idara al-Tibat al-Muniriyyah, Egypt.
- 18** 7/178, Idara al-Tibat al-Muniriyyah, Egypt.
- 19** 1/104.
- 20** Quoted in *Fatawa Rahimiyya* (1/241) of Mufti Abdur Rahim; on the authority of Ibn al-Humam's *Fath al-Qadir* (1/407).
- 21** He was a celebrated Indian Muhaddith who has also been recognised by the "Salafiyya" for his services to Islam. He passed away in 1304 AH. Rahimahullah.
- 22** P. 192, quoted in *Is Taraweeh 20 raka'ats?* p. 22, Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azadville, South Africa.
- 23** According to the aforementioned booklet (*Is Taraweeh 20 raka'ats?*), p. 5; Imam Nawawi has authenticated Bayhaqi's narration (from his *Sunan*) in *al-Khulasah*, al-Iraqi has authenticated it in *Sharh Taqreeb*, and Suyuti has authenticated it in his book on Taraweeh: *Masabeeh*.
- 24** See his *Sharh Minhaj*.
- 25** See Shaykh al-A'zami's *Raka'at Taraweeh*, p. 63, Ma'arif press, Azamgarh, India.
- 26** 2/54.
- 27** P. 388.
- 28** 7/47, chapter on Taraweeh.
- 29** 1/235-300.



**30** PP. 105-114 .

**31** 1/651-664.

**32** He passed away in the year 279 AH. Rahimahullah.

**33** The practice of 41 *rak'ahs* was that of the people of Madinah in the time of the Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and Imam Malik ibn Anas (may Allah be pleased with them). It is in reality 20 *rak'ahs*, for the people of Madinah used to perform an extra 4 *rak'ahs* without congregation, (after the performance of the standard 4 *rak'ahs*); hence this amounts to an extra 16 *rak'ahs* on top of the standard 20 *rak'ahs*. After this they would perform 3 *rak'ahs* of *witr*, and sometimes another 2 *rak'ahs* of *nafl* on top, making a total of 41 *rak'ahs* (20 *rak'ahs taraweeh* + 16 *nafl* + 3 *witr* + 2 *nafl* = 41). The reason why the people of Madinah introduced an additional 16 *rak'ahs* was due to the fact that the people of Makkah would make *tawaf* around the Ka'bah after every 4 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, hence the Madinans wanted to compensate for this. Allah knows best. See Shaykh Anwar Shah Kashmiri's: *Tirmidhi al-ma'ruf ba arfash shazzi* (1/329) for details.

**34** 3/170, Ahmad Shakir edition, edited by Fu'ad Abdal Baqi, Maktaba Faisalia, Makkah.

**35** This narration has been collected by Bayhaqi in *al-Sunan al-Kubra* (2/496), Ibn Abi Shaiba in *al-Musannaf* (2/394), Ibn Adi in *al-Kamil* (1/2), Tabarani in *al-Kabeer* (3/148), Ibn Manda in *al-Muntakhab min al-fawaid* (2/268), Baghawi in *Majmu as-Sahaba*, Musnad Abd ibn Humaid and others.

**36** See Ibn Hajar's *Talkhis ul-habir fi takhreej ahadith al-Rafi'i al-kabir* (1/119) and *Al-Matalib al-'Aliyya* (1/146, no. 534) or Zaylai's *Nasb ur-Rayah* (2/153).

**37** He passed away in the year 235 AH. His *Musannaf* has been printed in some 15 volumes.

**38** 1/39, no. 241.

**39** 2/496.

**40** See his "*al-Da'eefah*", (2/35, no. 560), 3rd edn; Maktaba al-Islamia, Amman, 1406 AH.

**41** He was a leading Egyptian Hanafi scholar who has written a number of well known and regularly used commentaries to classical Hanafi fiqh texts. He passed away in the year 1231/1816 CE. Rahimahullah.

**42** 1/466.

**43** d. 1052 AH in India.

**44** Mufti Abdur Rahim Lajpuri, 1/280, Maktaba Rahimiyyah, Rander, India.

**45** P. 223.

**46** He died in 1235/1820 CE, rahimahullah. Shaykh Abdur Rahim has quoted this statement from his book *Rasa'il ul-Arkan*, p. 138.

**47** P. 131, Hasan, Suhaib, Al-Qur'an society, 2nd edn; 1407/1986.

**48** This report is also found in Imam al-Shurunbulali's *Maraqī ul-Falah*, p. 81, and Imam Ibn Nujaim al-Misri's *Bahr ur-Ra'iq*, 2/66.

**49** *Ijma us-Sahabah* is the third source of Islamic law after the Qur'an and Sunnah.

**50** 1/104.

**51** P. 197.

**52** 1/182.

**53** 1/803.

**54** P. 138.

**55** He was the son of the famous Indian scholar: Shah Waliullah.

**56** 1/126.

**57** 1/433.

**58** 1/470; quoted in *Fatawa Rahimiyya* (1/245).

**59** This book contains the direct questions asked by Imam Malik's two famous disciples: Ibn al-Qasim and Ibn Wahb to their teacher. It was compiled by Ibn al-Qasim's student: Qadi Sahnoon (see 1/193-4).

**60** The reason for praying 39 *rak'ahs* has been explained previously. The fact that Imam Malik preferred this number has been verified by the Maliki Qadi: Ibn Rushd (d. 595 AH) in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* (1/239). He has also quoted a narration from Ibn Abi Shaibah proving 39 *rak'ahs* was in vogue during the caliphate of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz.

**61** 1/249.

**62** Quoted from his *Fathul-Mulhim Sharh Sahih al-Muslim*, (2/320).

**63** 4/307, quoted in *Fatawa Rahimiyya*, (1/245).

**64** 1/131.

**65** Qur'an 4:59.

**66** Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them).

**67** A Sahih Hadith recorded in (no. 4590), *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (5/43, no. 2676), *Sunan Ibn Majah* (1/15-6, no. 42), *Sunan al-Darimi* (no. 96), Ibn Abi Aasim in *al-Sunnah* (no. 54), Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* (4/126), al-Hakim in *al-Mustadrak* (1/95-6) and Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih* (1/166, no. 5).

**68** A narration authenticated and reported by al-Hakim (1/116), and al-Dhahabi agreed with him. A very similar report has been recorded by al-Tirmidhi (4/2167). Imam al-Munawi said in commentary to Tirmidhi's Hadith: (Allah's hand is over the Jama'ah) meaning his protection and

preservation of them, signifying that the collectivity of the people of Islam are in Allah's fold, so be also in Allah's shelter, in the midst of them, and do not separate yourselves from them. (And whoever descends from them departs to hell) meaning that whoever diverges from the overwhelming majority concerning what is lawful or unlawful and on which the Community does not differ has slipped off the path of guidance and this will lead him to hell. (see Imam al-Azizi's: *al-Siraj al-Munir Sharh al-Jami us-Saghir*, 3/449, cf. *Reliance of the Traveller*, p. 25).

**69** Printed by Maktaba Dar al-Turath, Madinah al-Munawwarah, 1st edn. 1407/1987.

**70** Printed by Maktaba Rashidia, Pakistan.

