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Supererogatory Salah (prayer)

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Witr (Prayer with an odd number of units)

Fatwa No. 1443

Q: Did the Prophet (peace be upon him) perform Witr as one or three consecutive Rak'ahs (units of Prayer)? Did he continue performing Qunut (supplication recited while standing after bowing in the last unit of Prayer) until he died? Did he ask people to do it?

A: The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed Witr as one Rak'ah. He taught anyone who asked him about supererogatory night Salah to perform two Rak'ahs and then perform one Rak'ah as Witr before Fajr (dawn) prayer. `Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: ﴿ "When Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) finished the `Isha' (Night) Prayer, he would offer eleven Rak'ahs before the Fajr (Dawn) Prayer, concluding each two Rak'ahs with Taslim (salutation of peace ending the Prayer) and observing the Witr Rak'ah at the end." ﴾ This Hadith was reported by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Al-Nasa'y. It was also reported that Ibn `Umar said: ﴿ "A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked him: 'How can I offer Qiyam Al-Layl (the optional night prayer)'. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: 'Pray two Rak'ahs at a time and then two and then two and so on and if you are afraid of the approach of the time of Fajr (Dawn) Prayer, perform one Rak'ah as Witr.'" ﴾ This Hadith was reported by the Group of Compilers of Hadith (Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhy, Al-Nasa'y, and Ibn Majah). It was reported that Ibn `Umar and Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them) said that they heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying: ﴿ "Witr is a rak'ah at the end of prayer." ﴾

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This Hadith was reported by Ahmad and Muslim.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed Witr as three consecutive Rak'ahs without separating them with Taslim many times. It was reported on the authority of Ubay Ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) that ﴿ The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to recite ﴿ Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, ﴾, during Witr in the first Rak'ah ﴿ Say: (O Muhammad peace be upon him to these Mushrikûn and Kâfirûn): 'O Al-Kâfirûn (disbelievers in Allâh, in His Oneness, in His Angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Day of Resurrection, and in Al-Qadar.)! ﴾ in the second Rak'ah

and (Say (O Muhammad peace be upon him): "He is Allâh, (the) One.) in the third one. He used to perform them without Taslim except after the third one.) This Hadith was reported by Al-Nasa'iy. `Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: ("Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to observe the Witr with three (Rak'ahs) without breaking them apart.") This Hadith was reported by Ahmad, Al-Nasa'iy and Al-Hakim. Al-Hakim said that this Hadith is authentic according to the conditions stipulated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. Moreover, it was reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade performing Witr as three Rak'ah. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ("Do not observe Witr as three Rak'ah but five or seven Rak'ah, and do not make it similar to Maghrib (Sunset) Prayer.") This Hadith was reported by Al-Daraqutny with a chain of transmitters and said that they are all reliable. Many scholars have tried to integrate these Hadiths

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through interpreting the prohibition of performing Witr as three Rak'ahs as performing them in the same manner as Maghrib (Sunset) Prayer. They interpreted the Hadiths that denote that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed Witr as three Rak'ahs as performing them without Taslim except at the end of it. Some of them said that prohibition in this regard means a reprehensible act. They said it is better not to perform Witr as three Rak'ahs. A person is allowed to do any of these things. Abu Ayyub reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ("The witr is a duty for every Muslim so if anyone wishes to observe it with five Rak'ahs, he may do so; if anyone wishes to observe it with three, he may do so, and if anyone wishes to observe it with one, he may do so.") This Hadith was reported by Imams Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Al-Nasa'iy and Ibn Majah. But a person should perform Witr as one Rak'ah as the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to do this a lot and due to the numerous authentic Hadiths reported in this regard.

As for Qunut during Witr, it was reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did it and taught it to Al-Hasan Ibn `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him). It was reported by `Aly (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say in the last Rak'ah of his Witr: ("O Allah! I seek refuge in Your Pleasure from Your Displeasure and in Your Pardon from Your Punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your Praise, You are as You have praised Yourself.")

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This Hadith was reported by the Five Compilers of Hadith (Imams Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhy, Al-Nasa'y and Ibn Majah). Al-Hasan Ibn `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: ("The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) taught me some words that I say during the supplication of the Witr. They were: 'O Allah, guide me among those You have guided, grant me security among those You have granted security, take me into Your charge among those You have taken into Your charge, bless me in what You have given, guard me from the evil of what You have decreed, for You do decree, and nothing is decreed for You. He whom You become his Waliyy is not humbled. Blessed and Exalted are You, our Lord.'") This Hadith was reported by the Five Compilers of Hadith (Imams Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhy, Al-Nasa'y and Ibn Majah). The followers of the Hanafy and Hanbaly Madh-hab (School of Jurisprudence) worked according to this Hadith. Some of the scholars of Hadith deemed these two Hadiths as weak. Following any of these views is pardonable. But it is better to perform Qunut during Witr Salah according to these two Hadiths because they are not less than Hadith Hasan (a Hadith whose chain of narration contains a narrator with weak exactitude, but is free from eccentricity or blemish). But we do not have an authentic Hadith that denotes that the Prophet (peace

be upon him) performed Qunut during Witr until he died.

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions!

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