
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

The virtues of prayer at night

Article was collected by Ummu Mariam

Verily, all praises and thanks are due to Allah, we praise Him, seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our souls and evils of our deeds. One whom Allah guides none can lead him astray, and one whom He misguides, none can guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad (SAAS) is His servant and His messenger.

"O you who believe! Fear Allah (by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden) **as He should be feared.** (Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always), **and die not except in a state of Islam** [as Muslims (with complete submission to Allah)]." (*Al-Qur'aan* 3:102 - interpretation of the meaning)

"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you." (*Al-Qur'aan* 4:1 - interpretation of the meaning)

"O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (SAAS) he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e. he will be saved from the Hell-fire and made to enter Paradise)." (*Al-Qur'aan* 33:70-71 - interpretation of the meaning)

Ammaa ba'd (as for what follows), the best of speech is the speech of Allah that is the Book of Allah. The best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (SAAS). Of all matters, the worst are innovations; and everything new is an innovation, and every innovation is a deviation, and every deviation leads to Hell-fire.

Introduction

The night prayer is any voluntary prayer performed at night between *al-'ishaa'* prayer and dawn. There is no specific time for this prayer so it may be performed at any time of night but the preferred time is the last third of the night.

"*Qiyaam al-layl* (the night prayer) is *sunnah mu'akkadah* (a confirmed *sunnah*). Many texts of the Koran and *Sunnah* encourage it and speak of its high status and great reward.

Qiyaam al-layl plays a great role in strengthening one's faith and helping one to do good deeds. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"O you wrapped in garments [i.e. Prophet Muhammad (SAAS)]! Stand (to pray) all night, except a little – half of it, – or a little less than that, or a little more. And recite the Koran (aloud) in a slow (pleasant tone and) style. Verily, We shall send down to you a weighty Word (i.e. obligations, laws). Verily, the rising by night (for at-tahajjud prayer) is very hard and most potent and good for governing oneself, and most suitable for (understanding) the Word (of Allah)." (Al-Qur'aan 73:1-6)**

Allah praises those who have faith and are pious for their noble characteristics and good deeds, one of the most special of which is *qiyaam al-layl*. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"Only those believe in Our aayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.), who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate, and glorify the Praises of their Lord, and they are not proud. Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend (in charity in Allah's Cause) out of what We have bestowed on them. No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do." (Al-Qur'aan 32:15-17)**

Allah describes them elsewhere in the following terms (interpretation of the meaning): **"And those who spend the night in worship of their Lord, prostrate and standing. And those who say: 'Our Lord! Avert from us the torment of Hell. Verily, its torment is ever an inseparable, permanent punishment. Evil indeed it (Hell) is as an abode and as a place to rest in.' And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes). And those who invoke not any other ilaah (god) along with Allah, nor kill such person as Allah has forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse – and whoever does this shall receive the punishment. The torment will be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein in disgrace; except those who repent and believe (in Islamic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds; for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds; then verily, he repents towards Allah with true repentance. And those who do not bear witness to falsehood, and if they pass by some evil play or evil talk, they pass by it with dignity. And those who, when they are reminded of the aayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat. And those who say: 'Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders of al-muttaqoon (the pious).' Those will be rewarded with the highest place (in Paradise) because of their patience. Therein they shall be met with greetings and the word of peace and respect. Abiding therein – excellent it is as an abode, and as a place to rest in." (Al-Qur'aan 25:64-76)**

From this we may note the virtue of *qiyaam al-layl* and its good consequences that cannot be ignored; it is one of the means of avoiding the punishment of Hell and attaining Paradise, and we may note the great blessing it brings of conversing with the Lord. May Allah make us among those who attain success thereby.

Allah has described the pious in *suurat adh-Dhaariyaat* as having a number of characteristics – including praying *qiyaam al-layl* – by means of which they attain Paradise. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "**Verily, al-muttaqoon** (the pious) **will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs** (in the Paradise), **taking joy in the things which their Lord has given them. Verily, they were before this muhsinuun** (good-doers). **They used to sleep but little by night** [invoking their Lord (Allah) and praying, with fear and hope]." (*Al-Qur'aan* 51:15-17)

The Prophet (SAAS) encouraged us to pray *qiyaam al-layl* in many *ahaadiith*, such as the following: The Prophet (SAAS) said: "*The best prayer after the obligatory prayer is prayer at night.*" (Narrated by Muslim)

And he (SAAS) said: "*You should pray qiyaam al-layl, for it is the custom of the righteous who came before you and it brings you closer to your Lord, expiate for bad deeds and prevent sin.*" (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, classed as *hasan* by al-Albaani in *Irwa' al-Ghaleel*, 452)

"*The custom of the righteous*" means it was their usual practice.

"*It brings you closer to your Lord*" means it is an act of worship by means of which one may draw closer to Allah.

"*And prevent sin*" means, it prevents one from committing sin. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "**...Verily, as-salaat** (the prayer) **prevents from al-fahshaa'** (i.e. great sins of every kind, unlawful sexual intercourse) **and al-munkar** (i.e. disbelief, polytheism, and every kind of evil wicked deed)..." (*Al-Qur'aan* 29:45)

It was narrated that 'Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhani (RAA) said: A man came to Allah's Messenger (SAAS) from *Qudaa'ah* and said to him: "O Allah's Messenger, what do you think if I bear witness that there is no god except Allah and that you are His Messenger, and I pray the five daily prayers, and fast the month (of Ramadan), and pray *al-qiyaam* in Ramadan, and pay *az-zakaat*?" The Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Whoever dies on that will be among as-seddiqeen (those who tell the truth) and the martyrs.*" (Narrated by ibn Khuzaymah; classed as *sahiih* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih* ibn Khuzaymah, 2212.)

At-Tirmidhi narrated that 'Ali (RAA) said: The Prophet (SAAS) said: "*In Paradise there are apartments the outside of which can be seen from the inside and the inside of which can be seen from the outside.*" A Bedouin stood up and said: "Who are they for, O Allah's Messenger?" He (SAAS) said: "*They are for those who speak good words, feed others, fast regularly and pray to Allah at night when people are sleeping.*" (Classed as *hasan* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih* at-Tirmidhi)

Al-Haakim narrated that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Jibreel came to me and said: 'O Muhammad, live as long as you want, for you will die. Love whomever you want, for you will leave him. Do whatever you want for you will*

be requited for it. Remember that the believer's honour is his praying at night, and his pride is his being independent of people." (Classed as *hasan* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 73)

Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: "*Whoever prays al-qiyaam reciting ten verses will not be recorded as one of the negligent. Whoever prays al-qiyaam reciting one hundred verses will be recorded as one of the devout. Whoever prays al-qiyaam reciting one thousand verses will be recorded as one of al-muqantereen.*" (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 1398; classed as *sahiih* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih Abi Dawud*)

Al-muqantereen are those who will be given a *qintaar* of reward. A *qintaar* is a large amount of gold, and most of the scholars of Arabic language are of the view that it is four thousand dinars. And it was said that a *qintaar* is a bull's hide full of gold, or eighty thousand, or a large but unspecified amount of wealth. See *an-Nihaayah fi Ghareeb-il-Hadiith* by ibn al-Atheer.

What is meant by this *hadiith* is to emphasize the greatness of the reward earned by the one who recites a thousand verses. At-Tabaraani narrated that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*A qintaar is better than this world and everything in it.*" (Classed as *hasan* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih at-Targheeb*)

Note: Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar *rahimahullaah* said: From *suurat Tabaarak* [*al-Mulk*, no. 67] to the end of the Koran is one thousand verses.

Whoever prays *al-qiyaam* reciting from *suurat Tabaarak* to the end of Koran has prayed *al-qiyaam* with one thousand verses." (*Fatwaa* no. 50070)

There are three kinds of night prayers: *al-qiyaam*, *at-tahajjud* and *at-taraaweeh*. *Al-qiyaam* is the night prayer which is performed after *al-'ishaa'* before one goes to sleep. If the prayer is performed after one had slept then it is called *at-tahajjud* or *naashi'at al-layl*. The night prayer during Ramadan is also called *at-taraaweeh* because *as-salaf* or early generations of Islam *rahimahumullaah* used to rest after every two or four *rak'aat*, because they made their prayers long in order to make the most of this season of great reward. It should be noted that performing the night prayer during Ramadan is better than during other months.

Oiyaam Ramadan

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

Abu Huraira (RAA) said: "Allah's Messenger (SAAS) used to encourage us to pray at night in Ramadan, without making it obligatory. Then he (SAAS) said, '*Whoever prays al-qiyaam in Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.*' When Allah's Messenger (SAAS) died, this is how things were (i.e., *at-taraaweeh* was not prayed in congregation), and this is how they remained during the caliphate of Abu Bakr (RAA), until the beginning of the caliphate of 'Umar (RAA)."

'Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhani (RAA) said: "A man from *Qudaa'ah* came to Allah's Messenger (SAAS) and said: 'O Allah's Messenger! What do you think if I testify that there is no god except Allah, and that you, Muhammad, are His Messenger, and I pray the five daily prayers, and fast in the month (of Ramadan), and pray at night in

Ramadan, and pay *az-zakaat*?' The Prophet (SAAS) said: '*Whoever dies on that will be among as-seddiqeen (those who tell the truth) and the martyrs.*'"

Laylat al-qadr and its timing

The best of its (Ramadan) nights is *laylat al-qadr* (the night of decree), because the Prophet (SAAS) said: '*Whoever prays at night during laylat al-qadr {and manages to "catch" it} out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.*'"

According to the most correct opinion, it is the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan. Most of the *ahaadiith* state this, such as the *hadiith* of Zurr ibn Hubaysh, who said: "I heard Ubay ibn Ka'b saying – and it was said to him that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said: 'Whoever follows *as-Sunnah* will "catch" *laylat al-qadr*!' – Ubay (RAA) said: '*Rahimahullaah*, he (ibn Mas'ud) did not want people to take it for granted and only stay up to pray on one night. By the One besides Whom there is no other god, it is in Ramadan – he was swearing without a doubt – and by Allah, I do know which night it is. It is the night in which Allah's Messenger (SAAS) commanded us to pray (*al-qiyaam*). It is the night the morning of which is the twenty seventh, and the sign of it is that the sun rises on that morning white and without rays.'" In another report, this was attributed to the Prophet (SAAS). (Reported by Muslim and others)

Praying *al-qiyaam* in congregation

It is allowed to pray *al-qiyaam* in congregation (in Ramadan), indeed it is better than praying individually, because this is what the Prophet (SAAS) did himself and explained its virtues. Abu Dharr (RAA) said: "We fasted Ramadan with Allah's Messenger (SAAS) and he did not lead us in *al-qiyaam* at all until there were only seven nights left, then he led us in prayer until a third of the night had passed. When there were six nights left, he did not lead us in *al-qiyaam*. When there were five nights left, he led us in prayer until half the night had passed. I said, O Allah's Messenger, I wish that you had continued until the end of the night. He (SAAS) said, '*If a man prays with the imam until he leaves (finishes), it will be counted as if he prayed the whole night.*' When there were four nights left, he did not lead us in *al-qiyaam*. When there were three nights left, he brought together his family, his wives and the people, and led us in *al-qiyaam* until we were afraid that we would miss *al-falaah*." I (Jubair ibn Nufayr, the sub-narrator) asked, "What is *al-falaah*?" He (Abu Dharr) said, "*As-suhuur*." Then he did not lead us in *al-qiyaam* for the rest of the month." (*Sahiih hadiith* reported by the authors of *as-Sunan*)

The reason why the Prophet (SAAS) did not continually lead the people in praying *al-qiyaam* in congregation:

The Prophet (SAAS) did not lead them in *al-qiyaam* for the rest of the month because he feared that it would then become obligatory, and they would not be able to do it, as is stated in the *hadiith* of 'Aisha (RAA) reported in *as-Sahiihayn* (*Sahiih* al-Bukhari and *Sahiih* Muslim) and elsewhere. Following the death of the Prophet (SAAS), that fear was no longer a factor, because Allah had completed the religion. The reason for not praying *al-qiyaam* in congregation during Ramadan no longer applied, and the previous ruling, that congregational prayer is something prescribed in Islam, remained in effect. So 'Umar (RAA) revived the practice, as is recorded in *Sahiih* al-Bukhari and elsewhere.

Women can pray *al-qiyaam* in congregation

Women can attend the prayers too, as is stated in the *hadiith* of Abu Dharr (*RAA*) referred to above. Indeed, it is permissible to appoint an imam just for them, apart from the imam of the men. It was proven that when 'Umar (*RAA*) gathered the people to pray *al-qiyaam*, he appointed Ubay ibn Ka'b (*RAA*) to lead the men and Sulaimaan ibn Abi Hathmah to lead the women. 'Arfajah ath-Thaqafi *rahimahullaah* said: " 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (*RAA*) used to command the people to pray during the night in Ramadan, and he would appoint an imam for the men and an imam for the women. I was the imam for the women."

I (al-Albaani) say: This is fine in my view so long as the mosque is big enough so that they will not disturb one another.

Number of *rak'aat* of *al-qiyaam*

The number of *rak'aat* is eleven, and it is preferable in our opinion not to exceed this number, following the practice of Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*), because he never did more than that in his life. 'Aisha (*RAA*) was asked about how he (*SAAS*) prayed in Ramadan. She said, "Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) never prayed more than eleven *rak'aat* (of *al-qiyaam*), whether during Ramadan or any other time. He would pray four, and don't ask me how beautiful or how long they were. Then he would pray four, and don't ask me how beautiful or how long they were. Then he would pray three." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and others)

A person may do less than that, even if it is only one *rak'ah* of *al-witr*, because of the evidence that the Prophet (*SAAS*) did this and spoke about it.

With regard to him doing it, 'Aisha (*RAA*) was asked how many *rak'aat* Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) used to pray in *al-witr*. She said, "He used to pray four and three, or six and three, or ten and three^{*}. He never used to pray less than seven, or more than thirteen." (Reported by Abu Dawud, Ahmad and others)

^{*}) Al-Albaani *rahimahullaah* said: This includes the two *sunnah* (supererogatory) *rak'aat* performed after *al-'ishaa'* or the two short *rak'aat* the Prophet (*SAAS*) used to begin his night prayer with. This is based on al-Haafidh ibn Hajar's opinion. See *Salaat at-Taraaweeh* (pg. 19-20).

With regard to him (*SAAS*) speaking about it, he said: "*Al-witr is true, so whoever wishes can pray five, and whoever wishes can pray three, and whoever wishes can pray one.*"

Reciting the Koran in *al-qiyaam*

As regards reciting from the Koran during *al-qiyaam*, whether in Ramadan or at other times, the Prophet (*SAAS*) did not set a limit or state what was too much or too little. His recitation used to vary; sometimes it would be long, at other times short. Sometimes in every *rak'ah* he would recite the equivalent of *yaa ayyuh-al-muzzammil* (*suurat al-Muzzammil*, no. 73), which is twenty verses; sometimes he would recite the equivalent of fifty verses. He (*SAAS*) used to say, "*Whoever prays at night and reads one hundred verses will not be recorded as one of the negligent.*" According to another *hadiith*: "*...and reads two hundred verses, will be recorded as one of the devout and sincere believers.*"

When he was sick, the Prophet (SAAS) recited the seven long *suwar* (chapters) in his night prayers, i.e., *al-Baqarah* (no. 2), *Aali 'Imraan* (no. 3), *an-Nisaa'* (no. 4), *al-Maa'idah* (no. 5), *al-An'aam* (no. 6), *al-A'raaf* (no. 7) and *at-Taubah* (no. 9).

In the account of Hudhaifah ibn al-Yaman (RAA) praying behind the Prophet (SAAS), in one *rak'ah* he (SAAS) recited *al-Baqarah*, *an-Nisaa'* and *Aali 'Imraan*, and he recited them in a slow and flowing tone. It is proven with the most authentic chain of narration, that when 'Umar (RAA) appointed Ubay ibn Ka'b (RAA) to lead the people in praying eleven *rak'aat* in Ramadan, Ubay used to recite verses by the hundreds, so that the people behind him would be leaning on sticks because the prayers were so long, and they did not finish until just before *al-fajr*.

It is also reported in a *sahiih* account that 'Umar (RAA) called the readers during Ramadan, and told the fastest of them to recite thirty verses, the moderate ones to recite twenty-five verses, and the slowest ones to recite twenty verses.

So based on this, if a person is praying *al-qiyaam* by himself, he can make it as long as he wishes; if others agree with the imam, he may also make it as long as he wishes. The longer it is, the better, but a person should not go to extremes and spend the whole night in *al-qiyaam*, except on rare occasions, following the example of the Prophet (SAAS) who said: "*The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad.*"

If a person is praying as an imam, he should make it only as long as it is easy for the people behind him, because the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*If any of you leads the people in prayer, let him make it short, because among them are the young and the old, the weak, and those who have pressing needs. But if he is praying alone, let him make it as long as he likes.*"

The timing of *al-qiyaam*

The time for praying *al-qiyaam* is from after *al-'ishaa'* until *al-fajr*, because the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Allah has added one more prayer for you, which is *al-witr*, so pray it between *salaat al-'ishaa'* and *salaat al-fajr*.*"

Praying at the end of the night is better, for those who can manage it, because the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Whoever is afraid that he will not get up at the end of the night, let him pray *al-witr* at the beginning of the night, but whoever feels that he will be able to get up at the end of the night, let him pray *al-witr* at the end of the night, for prayer at the end of the night is witnessed [by the angels], and that is better.*"

If it is the matter of choosing between praying in congregation at the beginning of the night and praying alone at the end of the night, it is preferable to pray with *al-jamaa'ah*, because that is counted as if one had prayed the whole night through.

This is what *as-sahaabah* did at the time of 'Umar (RAA). 'Abdurrahman ibn 'Ubayd al-Qaari *rahimahullaah* said: "I went out with 'Umar ibn al-Khattab to the mosque one night during Ramadan, and saw the people scattered throughout the mosque, some praying individually, and some praying in small groups. He ['Umar (RAA)] said, 'By Allah, I think that if I gathered all of them behind one reader it would be better.' So he resolved to do that, and he gathered them behind Ubay ibn Ka'b. Then I went with him on another night, and the people

were all praying behind their reader, and 'Umar said, 'What a good innovation this is'*. What they sleep and miss – meaning the latter part of the night – is better than what they are doing,' – the people used to pray *al-qiyaam* at the beginning of the night."

*) Sheikh-ul-Islam ibn Taymiyah *rahimahullaah* said, when refuting the view of those who quoted 'Umar's words "What a good innovation this is" as meaning that innovation (*bid'ah*) is permissible: With regard to *al-qiyaam* in Ramadan, Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) introduced this to his *ummah*, and he led them in prayer for a number of nights, because at his time they used to pray in congregation and individually. But he did not persist in leading them in one congregation, lest that be made obligatory for them. When the Prophet (*SAAS*) died, *ash-sharee'ah* was established (and would not change after that). When 'Umar (*RAA*) became caliph, he united them behind one imam, Ubay ibn Ka'b, who united the people in one congregation on the orders of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (*RAA*). 'Umar (*RAA*) was one of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, of whom the Prophet (*SAAS*) said: "I urge you to adhere to my *Sunnah* and the way of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs after me; cling tightly to it." So what he ['Umar (*RAA*)] did was *sunnah* but he said, "What a good innovation this is," because it was an innovation in the linguistic sense, as they were doing something that they had not done during the life of Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*), i.e., gathering to do this, but it is *sunnah* in *ash-sharee'ah* sense." (*Majmuu' al-Fataawaa*, 22/234, 235)

Zaid ibn Wahb said: " 'Abdullah used to lead us in prayer in Ramadan, and he used to finish at night."

The Prophet (*SAAS*) forbade praying *al-witr* as three *rak'aat*, and explained this by saying: "Do not make it resemble *salaat al-maghrib*." Therefore the person who wants to pray three *rak'aat* for *al-witr* must find a way to make it different (from *salaat al-maghrib*). There are two ways he can do this: either by making *at-tasleem* after the first two *rak'aat*, which is the best way; or by not sitting after the first two *rak'aat* (i.e., praying three *rak'aat* non-stop). And Allah knows best.

Recitation during three *rak'aat* of *al-witr*

It is *sunnah* to recite *suurat al-A'laa* (no. 87) in the first *rak'ah*, *suurat al-Kaafiroon* (no. 109) in the second *rak'ah*, and *suurat al-Ikhlaas* (no. 112) in the third *rak'ah*. Sometimes he (*SAAS*) would add *suurat al-Falaq* (no. 113) and *suurat an-Naas* (no. 114) to the third *rak'ah*.

It was reported in a *sahiih* report that the Prophet (*SAAS*) once recited one hundred verses of *suurat an-Nisaa'* in one *rak'ah* of *al-witr*.

Supplication of *al-qunuut*

A person may also humble himself before Allah by reciting *ad-du'aa'* which the Prophet (*SAAS*) taught to his grandson al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (*RAA*), which is: "*Allaahummahdinee feeman hadayt, wa 'aafinee feeman 'aafayt, wa tawallanee feeman tawallayt, wa baarik lee feemaa a'tayt, wa qinee sharra maa qadayt, fa-Innaka taqdee wa laa yuqdaa 'Alayk, wa innahu laa yadhillu man waalayt, wa laa ya'izzu man 'aadayt, tabaarakta Rabbanaa wa ta'aalayt, wa laa manjaa Minka illa Ilayk* (O Allah, guide me along with those whom You have guided, heal me with those You have healed, be an ally to me along with those whom You are an ally to, and bless for me that which You have bestowed. Protect me from the evil You have decreed for verily, You decree and none can decree over You. For surety, he whom You show allegiance to is never abased and he whom You take an enemy is never honoured. O our Lord, Blessed and Exalted are You. There is no refuge from You except with You)."

Sometimes one may send blessings on the Prophet (SAAS), and there is nothing wrong with adding other supplications that are known from *as-Sunnah*.

There is no harm in reciting *al-qunuut* after *ar-rokuu'* (bowing position), and in adding curses against *al-kuffaar*, sending blessings on the Prophet (SAAS) and supplicating for the Muslim, during the second half of Ramadan, because it is proven that the imams used to do this at the time of 'Umar (RAA). It is mentioned in the last part of the afore-mentioned *hadiith* of 'Abdurrahman ibn 'Ubayd al-Qaari: "And they would curse *al-kuffaar* in the second half (of Ramadan), saying: '*Allaahumma qatil al-kafarata alladhiina yasodduuna 'an sabeelik, wa yukadhdhibuuna rusulak, wa laa yu'minuuna bi wa'dik. Wa khaalif bayna kalimatihim, wa alqi fi quluubihim ar-ro'b, wa alqi 'alayhim rijzaka wa 'adhaabak, Ilaah-al-Haqq* (O Allah! Curse *al-kuffaar* who prevent (people) from following Your Path, who deny Your Messengers and do not believe in Your Promise (the Day of Judgement). Divide their ranks and place fear into their hearts. And send Your punishment and torment upon them, O God of Truth!)' Then he (i.e. the imam) would send blessings on the Prophet (SAAS), supplicate for good for the Muslims as much as he could, and seek forgiveness for the believers."

He ('Abdurrahman) then said: "After invoking curses on *al-kuffaar*, sending blessings on the Prophet, asking forgiveness for the believing men and women and making requests to Allah, he would say: '*Allaahumma Iyyaaka na'bud, wa Laka nusallee wa nasjud, wa Ilayka nas'aa wa nahfid, wa narjuu rahmataka Rabbanaa, wa nakhaafu 'adhaabak al-jadd. Inna 'adhaabaka liman 'aadayta mulhaq* (O Allah, You we worship and to You we pray and prostrate, and for Your sake we strive and toil. And we hope for Your Mercy, our Lord. And we fear Your stern Punishment. Verily, Your Punishment befalls Your enemies.)' Then he would say "*Allaahu akbar*" and go down in *sujuud* (prostrating position)."

What should be said at the end of *al-witr*

It is *sunnah* to say at the end of *al-witr* (before or after the *salaam*): "*Allaahumma innee a'uudhu biridaaka min sakhatek, wa bimu'afaatika min 'uqoobatik, wa a'uudhu bika Minka. Laa uhsee thanaa 'an 'Alayk, Anta kamaa athnayta 'alaa Nafsik* (O Allah, I seek refuge in Your good pleasure from Your wrath, and in Your protection from Your punishment. I seek refuge with You from You. I cannot praise You enough, and You are as You have praised Yourself.)"

When one gives *salaam* at the end of *al-witr*, he should say: "*Subhaan-al-Malik-il-Qudduus, subhaan-al-Malik-il-Qudduus, subhaan-al-Malik-il-Qudduus* [How perfect the King, the Most Holy (trice)]," elongating the syllables, and on the third time raising his voice.

Two *rak'aat* after *al-witr*

A person may pray two *rak'aat* after *al-witr* if he wishes, because it is proven that the Prophet (SAAS) did this^{*}. Indeed, he said, "*This travelling is exhausting and difficult, so after any one of you prays *al-witr*, let him pray two *rak'aat*. If he wakes up, this is fine, otherwise these two *rak'aat* will be counted for him.*"

It is *sunnah* to recite *Idhaa zulzilatil-il-ard* (*suurat az-Zalzalah*, no. 99) and *Qul yaa ayyuh-al-kaafiroon* (*suurat al-Kaafiroon*, no. 109) in these two *rak'aat*.

From *Qiyaam Ramadan* by al-Albaani *rahimahullaah*.

(*Fatwaa* No. 3452)

*) An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said in *al-Majmuu'*, 3/512: "If a person prays *al-witr* then he wants to offer *an-naafilah* prayer etc at night, that is permissible and is not *makrooh* (something hated), but he should not repeat *al-witr*."

Ummu Salamah (*RAA*) reported that the Prophet (*SAAS*) used to pray two *rak'aat* after *al-witr*. (Reported by at-Tirmidhi and others) It was proven in *Sahiih* Muslim from 'Aisha (*RAA*) that the Prophet (*SAAS*) used to pray two *rak'aat* after *al-witr* whilst sitting down.

An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: The correct view is that he (*SAAS*) performed these two *rak'aat* after *al-witr* sitting down, to demonstrate that it is permissible to pray after *al-witr*, and to demonstrate that it is permissible to offer *an-nawaafil* prayers sitting down. He did not do that all the time.

Thus there is nothing wrong if the person prays *al-witr*, then he wants to pray *al-qiyaam* or *at-tahajjud* after that. He should pray them two by two, even though it is *mustahabb* (recommended) for the last of his prayer at night to be *al-witr*. The Prophet (*SAAS*) commanded that the last prayer offered at night should be *al-witr*, but this command is in the sense that it is *mustahabb*, not obligatory. In this case he should not repeat *al-witr*, rather *al-witr* that he prayed at the beginning of the night is sufficient, because it was narrated that Talq ibn 'Ali (*RAA*) said: I heard Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) say: "*There should not be two witr in one night.*" (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 470; an-Nasaa'ee, 1679; Abu Dawud, 1439. Classed as *sahiih* by Sheikh al-Albaani in *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 7567.)

The virtues of al-qiyaam during Ramadan

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

Firstly: *At-taraaweeh* prayer is *sunnah mustahabbah* (i.e., recommended) according to scholarly consensus, and comes under the heading of *qiyaam al-layl* (night prayers). It is supported by the evidence of the Koran and *Sunnah* which encourages *qiyaam al-layl* and describes its virtues. We have already quoted some of this evidence in *al-fatwaa* no. 50070.

Secondly: Praying *al-qiyaam* in Ramadan is one of the greatest acts of worship by means of which a person can draw closer to his Lord in this month. Al-Haafidh ibn Rajab *rahimahullaah* said: Note that in the month of Ramadan the believer engages in **jihad** *an-nafs* on two fronts: during the day by fasting and during the night by praying *al-qiyaam*. Whoever combines these two types of **jihad** will be given reward without limit.

There are some *ahaadiith* which speak specifically about praying *al-qiyaam* in Ramadan and describe the virtue of doing so. For example:

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from Abu Huraira (*RAA*) that Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) said: "*Whoever prays al-qiyaam in Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.*"

"*Whoever prays al-qiyaam in Ramadan*" means spends its nights in prayer.

"*Out of faith*" means believing in Allah's promise of reward.

"And in the hope of reward" means seeking the reward and with no other intention such as showing off etc.

"Will be forgiven his previous sins": Ibn al-Mundhir *rahimahullaah* was certain that this includes both minor and major sins, but an-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: What is known among *al-fuqahaa'* (the scholars of jurisprudence) is that this applies only to forgiveness of minor sins, not major sins. Some of them said: It may mean that the burden of major sins is reduced, so long as there are no minor sins. (*Fath-ul-Baari*)

Thirdly: The believer should be keen to strive in worship in the last ten nights of Ramadan more than at other times, because in these ten nights is *laylat al-qadr*, of which Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "**The night of al-qadr (decree) is better than a thousand months** (i.e. worshipping Allah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e. 83 years and 4 months)." (*Al-Qur'aan* 97:3)

Concerning the reward of *al-qiyaam* on this night, it is narrated that the Prophet (*SAAS*) said: "*Whoever prays at night during laylat al-qadr out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.*" (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1768; Muslim, 1268)

Hence Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) used to strive hard in worship in the last ten nights more than he did at other times. (Narrated by Muslim, 1175)

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that 'Aisha (*RAA*) said: "When the last ten days began, the Prophet (*SAAS*) would tie his lower garment (*al-izaar*) tight and stay up at night, and wake his family."

"The last ten days" means the last ten days of Ramadan.

"Tie his lower garment (*al-izaar*) tight" - it was said that this is a metaphor for striving hard in worship, or for keeping away from his wives, and it may be that it includes both meanings.

"Stay up at night" means staying up and praying and doing other acts of worship.

"And wake his family" means, he would wake them up to pray at night.

An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: This *hadiith* indicates that it is *mustahabb* to do more acts of worship during the last ten nights of Ramadan, and to stay up at night to worship.

Fourthly: We should be keen to pray *qiyaam al-layl* in Ramadan in congregation, and to **stay with the imam until he finishes praying**. In this way the worshipper will attain the reward for praying the whole night, even if he only spends a short part of the night in prayer. And Allah is the Owner of great bounty.

An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: The scholars are agreed that it is *mustahabb* to pray *at-taraaweeh*, but they differed as to whether it is better to pray it alone at home or in congregation in the mosque. Ash-Shafi'i and most of his companions, and Abu Hanifa, Ahmad, some of the *fuqahaa' al-madhab al-Maaliki* (the scholars of jurisprudence, who follow Imam Malik) and others said that it is better to pray it in congregation as 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and *as-sahaabah* (*RAA*) did and as the Muslims continued to do, because this is one of the manifest rituals.

At-Tirmidhi narrated that Abu Dharr said: Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: "Whoever prays *al-qiyaam* with the imam until he leaves, will be recorded as having spent the whole night in prayer." (Classed as *sahiih* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih at-Tirmidhi*)

And Allah knows best.

(*Fatwaa* no. 48957)

When should one start praying at-taraaweeh?

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

It is prescribed for the Muslim to perform *at-taraaweeh* prayer after *al-ishaa'* on the first night of Ramadan, which is the night on which the new moon is sighted or the Muslims complete thirty days of *Sha'baan*.

Similarly at the end of Ramadan, *at-taraaweeh* prayer should not be offered if it is proven that the month has ended, either by sighting of the new moon of *al-'eid* or if the thirty days of Ramadan has been completed.

It is clear that *at-taraaweeh* prayer is not connected to the fast during the day in Ramadan, rather its beginning is connected to the onset of the month at night and it ends with the last night of Ramadan.

We should not say that *at-taraaweeh* prayer is a *naafilah mutlaqah* (unconditional optional) prayer and it is permissible to offer it on any night and in congregation, because *at-taraaweeh* prayer is limited to the month of Ramadan, and those who offer this prayer are seeking the reward that comes for praying it. The ruling on offering this prayer in congregation is different from the ruling on offering other prayers in congregation. In Ramadan it is permissible to pray *at-taraaweeh* in congregation on each night, whilst announcing it and encouraging others to join, unlike *al-qiyaam* at other times, where praying *al-qiyaam* in congregation is not part of the *Sunnah* unless it is done without having the intention beforehand, or it is done for the purpose of encouraging and teaching others. So it is *sunnah* to do it sometimes without committing to doing it all the time or persisting in that.

Sheikh ibn al-'Utheimeen *rahimahullaah* said: *At-taraaweeh* at times other than Ramadan is an innovation (*bid'ah*). For example, if the people wanted to gather to pray *al-qiyaam* in congregation in the mosque at times other than Ramadan, this would be an innovation.

There is nothing wrong with a person praying in congregation in his house occasionally at times other than Ramadan, because this is what the Prophet (SAAS) did. Once he led ibn 'Abbaas, and once ibn Mas'ud and once Hudhaifah ibn al-Yaman, in prayer in his house, but he did not adopt that as a regular *sunnah* and he did not do that in the mosque. (*Ash-Sharh al-Mumti'*, 4/60, 61)

Based on this, whoever offers *at-taraaweeh* prayers before it is proven that Ramadan has begun is like one who offers a prayer at the wrong time. No reward will be written for him, even if he is free of the sin of doing that deliberately.

And Allah knows best.

(Fatwaa no. 50547)

Is it permissible to pray at-taraaweeh at home?

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

At-taraaweeh prayer is *sunnah mu'akkadah* which the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged when he (SAAS) said: "Whoever prays *al-qiyaam* in Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 37; Muslim, 759)

The Prophet (SAAS) led his companions in praying *at-taraaweeh* for several nights, then he feared that it may be made obligatory for them, so he did not go out to them. Then 'Umar (RAA) united the people under one imam, and it has been prayed in congregation ever since. It was narrated that Isma'il ibn Ziyaad *rahimahullaah* said: 'Ali passed by the mosques in which there were lamps during the month of Ramadan and said, "May Allah illuminate 'Umar's grave for him as he illuminated our mosques for us." (Narrated by al-Athram, quoted in *al-Mughni*, 1/457)

Al-Bahooti *rahimahullaah* said in *Daqaa'iq Uli an-Nuhaa*, 1/2245: It is better to pray *at-taraaweeh* in the mosque than at home, because the Prophet (SAAS) gathered the people to pray *at-taraaweeh* for three consecutive nights, as was narrated by 'Aisha... and he (SAAS) said: "Whoever prays *al-qiyaam* with the imam until he leaves, it will be counted as if he prayed the whole night."

Ash-Shawkaani *rahimahullaah* said in *Nayl al-Awtaar*, 3/62: An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: The scholars are agreed that it is *mustahabb* to pray *at-taraaweeh*, but they differed as to whether it is better to pray it alone at home or in congregation in the mosque. Ash-Shafi'i and most of his companions, and Abu Hanifa, Ahmad, some of the *fuqahaa' al-madhab al-Maaliki* and others said that it is better to pray it in congregation as 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and *as-sahaabah* (RAA) did and as the Muslims continued to do, because this is one of the manifest rituals.

So praying it in congregation in the mosque is better, but if a person prays it on his own at home, or in congregation with his family, that is permissible.

An-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said in *al-Majmuu'*, 3/526: *At-taraaweeh* prayer is *sunnah* according to scholarly consensus... it is permissible to pray it alone or in congregation, but which is better? There are two well-known points of view concerning this; the correct view according to the consensus of *as-sahaabah* is that it is better to pray it in congregation.

And Allah knows best.

(Fatwaa no. 38922)

Is praying at-taraaweeh in congregation in Ramadan a bid'ah (innovation)?

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

The view that *at-taraaweeh* prayer is a *bid'ah* is not valid. Rather we should ask whether it was one of the *Sunan* of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (*RAA*), because it was not done at the time of the Prophet (*SAAS*) but it was done in 'Umar's time, or was it one of the *Sunan* of the Prophet (*SAAS*)?

Some people claim that it was one of the *Sunan* of 'Umar (*RAA*), and they base that on the fact that 'Umar (*RAA*) "commanded Ubay ibn Ka'b and Tamiim ad-Daari to lead the people in praying eleven *rak'aat*." He went out the same night and saw the people praying, and he said, "What a good innovation this is." This indicates that it had not previously been prescribed...

But this opinion is *da'iif* (weak), and those who say this are ignoring the reports proven in *as-Sahiihayn* and elsewhere, that the Prophet (*SAAS*) "led his companions in praying for three nights, and on the third or fourth night he did not lead them, and he said: *'I am afraid that it may be made obligatory upon you.'*" This was narrated by al-Bukhari. According to a version narrated by Muslim, *"But I was afraid that prayer at night may be made obligatory upon you, and you would not be able to do it."* So it is proven that *at-taraaweeh* is part of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*SAAS*). The Prophet (*SAAS*) referred to the reason why he did not persist in it, which was the fear that it might become obligatory; he did not say that it is not prescribed. This fear no longer applied following the death of the Messenger (*SAAS*), because when he (*SAAS*) died, the revelation ceased and there was no longer any concern that it might become obligatory. Once the fear that it might become obligatory was no longer present, because the revelation had ceased, then the reason for not doing it was also removed, and so it was restored to its position of being *Sunnah*.

See *ash-Sharh al-Mumti'* by ibn 'Utheimeen, vol. 4, p. 78.

It was narrated in *as-Sahiihayn* from 'Aisha (*RAA*) that Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) would forgo doing something that he liked to do lest the people do it and it will become obligatory upon them.

An-Nawawi *rahimahullah* said: This shows how kind and compassionate he (*SAAS*) was towards his *ummah*.

So there is no basis for saying that *at-taraaweeh* prayer is not part of the *Sunnah* of Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*), rather it is part of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*SAAS*), but he forsook it for fear that it may be made obligatory upon his *ummah*. When he died, this concern no longer applied. Abu Bakr (*RAA*) was distracted by the wars against the apostates and his reign was short, lasting only two years. When the reign of 'Umar (*RAA*) came and the Muslims became secure and victorious, he commanded the people to gather together for *at-taraaweeh* prayers in Ramadan, as they used to gather with the Prophet (*SAAS*). All that 'Umar (*RAA*) did was to go back to that *sunnah* and revive it.

And Allah is the Source of strength.

(*Fatwaa* no. 21740)

Imam ibn 'Abd al-Barr *rahimahullaah* said: This indicates that praying *al-qiyaam* in Ramadan is one of the *Sunan* of the Prophet (*SAAS*) and is recommended and encouraged. It was not introduced by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (*RAA*), rather he revived something that Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) loved and approved of. Nothing stopped him (*SAAS*) from doing it regularly except the fear that it might be made obligatory upon his *ummah*. He (*SAAS*) was kind and compassionate towards his *ummah*. When 'Umar (*RAA*) knew that from Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) and he knew that the obligatory duties would not be increased or decreased after his (Prophet's) death, he revived this practice and enjoined it upon the people. That happened in 14 AH, and that is something which Allah preserved for 'Umar exclusively and favoured him with. (*At-Tamheed*, 8/108, 109)

Staying up on laylat al-qadr and the ruling on celebrating it

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

Firstly: Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) used to strive hard in worship during the last ten nights of Ramadan more than he did at other times, praying and reading the Koran. Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from 'Aisha (*RAA*) that when the last ten days of Ramadan began, the Prophet (*SAAS*) would stay up at night, wake his family and tie his lower garment tight. According to Ahmad and Muslim he would strive hard in worship during the last ten nights of Ramadan more than he did at other times.

Secondly: The Prophet (*SAAS*) urged us to spend the night of *laylat al-qadr* in prayer out of faith and in the hope of reward. It was narrated from Abu Huraira (*RAA*) that the Prophet (*SAAS*) said: "*Whoever prays at night during laylat al-qadr out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.*" This was narrated by the group apart from ibn Maajah. This *hadiith* indicates that it is prescribed to stay up and spend this night in prayer.

Thirdly: One of the best supplications that can be recited on *laylat al-qadr* is that which the Prophet (*SAAS*) taught 'Aisha (*RAA*). It was narrated by at-Tirmidhi, who classed it as *sahiih*, that 'Aisha said: I said: "O Allah's Messenger, if I know which night is *laylat al-qadr*, what should I say?" He (*SAAS*) said: "*Say: Allaahumma Innaka 'afuwvun tuhibbu al-'afwa fa'fu 'anni (O Allah, You are All-Forgiving and You love forgiveness, so forgive me).*"

Fourthly: With regard to singling out one night of Ramadan and regarding that as *laylat al-qadr*, this requires evidence. But the odd-numbered nights during the last ten nights are more likely than others, and the night of the twenty-seventh is more likely to be *laylat al-qadr*, because of the *ahaadiith* which indicate that.

Fifthly: With regard to *al-bida'* (innovations), they are not permissible either in Ramadan or at other times. It was proven that Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) said: "*Whoever innovates anything in this matter of ours [Islam] that is not part of it will have it rejected.*" (Agreed upon)

And he (*SAAS*) said: "*Whoever does any action that is not part of this matter of ours will have it rejected.*"

With regard to the celebrations that are held on some nights of Ramadan, we know of no basis for that. **The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad and the worst of matters are those which are innovated.**

And Allah is the Source of strength. May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions. (*Fataawaa al-Lajnah ad-Daa'imah*, 10/413)

(*Fatwaa* no. 48965)

Amusements to misguide people from their religion

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

What the believer should do is to make the most of special occasions and worship his Lord a great deal at those times. One of the greatest of these occasions is the month of Ramadan.

How great are the acts of worship that a Muslim does in Ramadan, which bring a great reward.

Ramadan is the month of fasting, praying at night, reading the Koran, remembering Allah (*adh-dhikr*), making *ad-du'aa'*, performing *'umrah*, offering *al-iftaar* (a meal to break the fast after the sun sets) to those who are fasting, giving charity, and being kind and generous to the needy. It is the month of *al-i'tikaaf* (seclusion in a mosque for the purpose of worshipping Allah only) and turning away from this world and turning to Allah, and striving in worship.

The virtues of Ramadan are too many to name, and too well-known to need to be mentioned here.

Every night in Ramadan Allah has those whom He ransoms from the Fire. In it the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are shut, and the devils are chained up. There are many means of forgiveness in this month, such as fasting, *qiyaam al-layl* and spending *laylat al-qadr* in prayer. The one who is truly deprived is the one who is deprived of the goodness of this month, and the one who is truly a loser is the one who has not been forgiven by the end of this month.

If a person is not forgiven in Ramadan, when will he be forgiven?!

If he does not turn to Allah in Ramadan, when will he turn to Him?!

Hence the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*May his nose be rubbed in the dust, a man for whom Ramadan comes and then goes before he is forgiven.*" (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, 3545; classed as *sahiih* by al-Albaani in *Sahiih at-Tirmidhi*.)

If a person does not make the most of his time and fill it with worship of Allah in this month, when will he do that?!

In Ramadan the Muslim moves from one act of worship to another, from prayer to reading Koran to reciting *at-tasbeeh* (saying "*subhaanallaah*") and *at-tahleel* (saying "*laa ilaaha illa Allah*"), from offering *al-iftaar* to those who are fasting to praying *qiyaam al-layl* and *at-tahajjud* to repentance and praying for forgiveness in the moments before dawn...

When can a believer find time to waste in this blessed month? **By Allah, if time could be bought the wise man would spend all he has to buy it. Time is a person's life and will certainly come to an end.** Some people spend their lives obeying Allah and some spend their lives obeying the Satan and their own whims and desires. The Prophet (SAAS) indeed spoke the truth when he said: *"Every person is striving for himself and selling his soul, so he will ransom himself or doom himself."* (Narrated by Muslim, 223)

What this means is that every person is striving; some of them strive for the sake of Allah by worshipping and obeying Him, so they save themselves from punishment, and some strive for the Satan by following their own whims and desires, so they are doomed. This was the view of an-Nawawi.

The least that can be said concerning these games (such as the Ramadan soccer league) with regard to this month is that they are a waste of time. There is nothing more precious to a person than his time for it is his life.

Moreover, why should Ramadan be singled out for these games? Why not do them in *Sha'baan* or *Rajab* or *Shawwaal*?

Why is Ramadan singled out for soap operas and other programming offered by TV channels, so that for many people Ramadan has become a month of soccer, TV shows and staying up late etc?

These people are negligent of the reason why Allah enjoined fasting in the month of Ramadan, which is so that people may attain *at-taqwaa* (piety) as Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"O you who believe! Observing as-saum* (the fasting) *is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become al-muttaqoon* (the pious)."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 2:183)

What do they know about *at-taqwaa*, which means obeying Allah and refraining from that which Allah has forbidden?

The believer should be wise and firm with himself, he should not follow his whims and desires lest he regret it at the time when regret will be to no avail.

May his nose be rubbed in the dust, the man who wastes his time in Ramadan with idle leisure and nights spent doing things other than worshipping Allah, until Ramadan ends and he has only increased in sin and being far away from Allah.

We ask Allah to set the affairs of the Muslims straight and to bring them back to their religion. May He cause us to live until Ramadan comes and help us to obey Him and worship Him properly, and accept our worship from us, for He is Ever Near and Ever Responsive.

(*Fatwaa* no. 50112)

Ways to help oneself to pray al-qiyaam

All praises and thanks are due to Allah.

There are many things that one can do to help oneself pray *qiyaam al-layl*, among which are the following:

1 – Being sincere towards Allah, as He has commanded us to be sincere in our deeds towards Him and none other. He tells us (interpretation of the meaning): **"And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone** (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him)..." (*Al-Qur'aan* 98:5)

The more sincere a person is towards Allah, the more he will be guided and helped to obey Allah and draw closer to Him. Ubay ibn Ka'b (*RAA*) reported that the Prophet (*SAAS*) said: *"Give glad tidings to this ummah of splendour, religion, high rank, victory and prevalence on earth. Whoever does the deeds of the Hereafter to gain some worldly benefit, will have no share of the Hereafter."* (Reported by Ahmad. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 2825)

Mutarrif ibn 'Abdullah ibn ash-Shakheer said: "The goodness of a deed is related to the goodness of the heart, and the goodness of the heart is related to the goodness of the intention." Ibn al-Qayyim *rahimahullaah* said: "The degree to which a person is helped and aided by Allah depends on the degree of his intention, drive, aim and hopes. **Help from Allah comes to people in proportion to their drive, intention, hopes and fears, and failure comes to them in like manner.**"

Therefore *as-salaf* (the righteous predecessors) were very keen to conceal their acts of worship such as *qiyaam al-layl*. A man asked Tamiim ibn Aws ad-Daari *rahimahullaah*, 'How do you pray at night?' He got very angry and said, 'By Allah, one *rak'ah* that I pray in secret in the small hours of the night is more beloved to me than praying the whole night long and then telling people about it.' Ayyub as-Sakhtiyaani *rahimahullaah* used to spend the entire night in prayer, then when dawn approached, he would go back to bed and lie down, and when dawn came, he would raise his voice as if he had just woken up.

2 – The person who wants to pray *qiyaam al-layl* should realize that Allah is calling him to *al-qiyaam*. When the servant realizes that his Master, Who has no need of people's worship, is calling him to do this, he will respond. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"O you wrapped in garments** [i.e. Prophet Muhammad (*SAAS*)! **Stand** (to pray) **all night, except a little – half of it, – or a little less than that, or a little more. And recite the Koran** (aloud) **in a slow** (pleasant tone and) **style.**" (*Al-Qur'aan* 73:1-4)

Sa'd ibn Hishaam ibn 'Aamir said to 'Aisha (*RAA*): "Tell me about how Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) prayed *al-qiyaam*." She said: "Have you not read *Yaa ayyuh-al-muzzammil* (**O you wrapped in garments!**) (*suurat al-Muzzammil*, no. 73)?" He said, "Of course." She said: "Allah, may He be exalted and glorified, made *al-qiyaam* obligatory at the beginning of this chapter of the Koran, so the Prophet (*SAAS*) and his companions prayed *al-qiyaam* for a year, and Allah withheld the end of this chapter for twelve months, until He revealed something at the end of this chapter to make things easier, so *qiyaam al-layl* became voluntary after it had been obligatory." (Reported by Muslim)

3 – Knowing the virtues of *qiyaam al-layl*. Whoever knows the virtues of this act of worship will be keen to talk to Allah, may He be exalted, and to stand before Him at that time. Among the reports that describe the virtues of this act of worship is the *hadiith* of Abu Huraira (*RAA*), in which the Prophet (*SAAS*) said: *"The best of prayers after the prescribed prayers is prayer in the depths of the night, and the best of fasting after the month of Ramadan is fasting the month of Allah, Muharram."* (Reported by Muslim)

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*The most beloved of prayer to Allah is the prayer of Dawud, and the most beloved of fasts to Allah is the fast of Dawud. He used to sleep for half of the night, then get up and pray for a third of the night, then sleep for a sixth of the night, and he used to fast every other day.*" (Agreed upon)

'Amr ibn 'Absah (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*The closest that the Lord is to His servant is in the later part of the night, so if you can be one of those who remember Allah at that time, then do so.*" (Reported by at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasaa'ee)

According to a *hadiith* narrated by ibn Mas'ud (RAA), the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Our Lord admires two men: a man who leaves his mattress and cover, and slips away from his wife and loved one, to go and pray. Allah says, 'O My angels, look at My servant. He has left his mattress and cover and slipped away from his loved one and wife to pray, out of hope for what is with Me and out of fear of what is with Me.'*" (Reported by Ahmad. It is a *hasan* report. *Sahiih at-Targheeb*, 258)

Qiyaam al-layl expels forgetfulness from the heart, as is stated in the *hadiith* narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas (RAA), in which the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Whoever prays al-qiyaam reciting ten verses will not be recorded as one of the negligent. Whoever prays al-qiyaam reciting one hundred verses will be recorded as one of the devout. Whoever prays al-qiyaam reciting one thousand verses will be recorded as one of al-muqantereen (those who pile up good deeds).*" (Reported by Abu Dawud and ibn Hibban. It is a *hasan* report. *Sahiih at-Targheeb*, 635)

Yahya ibn Mu'adh *rahimahullaah* said: "The medicine of the heart is five things: reading the Koran and pondering the meaning, having an empty stomach, praying at night (*qiyaam al-layl*), beseeching Allah in the time just before dawn, and keeping company with righteous people."

4 – Studying how *as-salaf* and righteous people practised *qiyaam al-layl* and adhered to it. *As-salaf* used to enjoy *qiyaam al-layl* and rejoice greatly in doing it. 'Abdullah ibn Wahb *rahimahullaah* said: "Every type of pleasure is enjoyed only once, except for acts of worship, which are enjoyed three times: when you do it, when you remember it, and when you are given the reward for it."

Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir *rahimahullaah* said: "There is nothing left of the joys of this life except three: *qiyaam al-layl*, meeting one's brothers in faith, and praying in congregation."

Thaabit al-Banaani *rahimahullaah* said: "There is nothing I enjoy more than *qiyaam al-layl*."

Yazeed ar-Riqaashi *rahimahullaah* said: "A lot of *at-tahajjud* brings delight to the worshippers, and a lot of thirst (i.e., fasting), brings joy when they meet Allah."

Mukhallad ibn Hussain *rahimahullaah* said: "I never woke up at night except I saw Ibrahim ibn Adham remembering Allah and praying, and this made me depressed, so I consoled myself with this verse (interpretation of the meaning): "***...That is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He is pleased with. And Allah is the Owner of Grace abounding.***" (*Al-Qur'aan* 57:21)"

Abu 'Aasem an-Nabeel *rahimahullaah* said: "Abu Hanifa used to be called al-Watad (pole or pillar) because he prayed so much."

Al-Qaasim ibn Ma'een *rahimahullaah* said: "Abu Hanifa spent an entire night in *al-qiyaam* reciting this verse (interpretation of the meaning): "***Nay, but the Hour is their appointed time*** (for their full recompense), ***and the Hour will be more grievous and more bitter.***" (*Al-Qur'aan* 54:46), repeating it and weeping, beseeching Allah until morning came."

Ibrahim ibn Shammaas *rahimahullaah* said: "I used to see Ahmad ibn Hanbal staying up at night to pray when he was a young man."

Abu Bakr al-Marwadhi *rahimahullaah* said: "I was with Imam Ahmad for nearly four months in the army, and he never stopped praying *al-qiyaam* at night or reading the Koran during the day, and I never knew when he completed the Koran, because he kept that secret."

Imam al-Bukhari *rahimahullaah* used to get up to pray *at-tahajjud* at night in the time just before dawn, and he would read between a half and a third of the Koran, and complete it in the time just before dawn every third night.

Al-'allaamah ibn 'Abd al-Haadi *rahimahullaah* said, describing *qiyaam* of Sheikh-ul-Islam ibn Taymiyah *rahimahullaah*: "At night he would keep away from people, and spend that time only with his Lord, beseeching Him continually and reciting the Koran, repeating different kinds of acts of worship by night and by day. When he began to pray, his body would start to tremble, leaning to the left and right."

Ibn Rajab *rahimahullaah* said concerning his sheikh Imam ibn al-Qayyim *rahimahullaah*: "He was a man of worship, *at-tahajjud* and lengthy prayers. I have never seen his equal in worship and knowledge of the Koran, *hadiith* and principles of faith."

Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar *rahimahullaah* said, describing his sheikh al-Haafidh al-'Iraaqi *rahimahullaah*: "I stayed with him, and I never saw him forsake *qiyaam al-layl*: it was like a habit for him."

5 – Sleeping on one's right side. The Prophet (SAAS) taught his *ummah* to sleep on their right sides, as is reported in the *hadiith* of Abu Huraira (RAA), who said that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*When any one of you goes to bed, let him clear his bed by hitting it with his garment, for he does not know what may have come onto it. Then let him lie down on his right side, then let him say, 'Bismika Rabbi wada'tu janbi wa bika arfa'uh. In amsakta nafsi farhamhaa, wa in arsaltahaa fahfadhhaa bimaa tahfadhu bihi 'ibaadaka as-saaliheen (In Your Name, my Lord, I lay myself down and I get up again. If You take my soul, then have mercy on it, and if You send it back to me, then protect it with that with which You protect Your righteous servants).'*" (Agreed upon)

Al-Baraa' ibn 'Aazib (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*When you want to go to bed, perform ablution (al-wudoo') as for prayer, then lie down on your right side.*" (Agreed upon)

Hafsa (RAA) said: "When the Prophet (SAAS) went to bed, he would put his right hand under his right cheek." (Reported by at-Tabaraani, *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 4523)...

6 – Sleeping in a state of *at-tahaarah* (purity). We have already quoted the *hadiith* of al-Baraa' ibn 'Aazib (RAA), in which the Prophet (SAAS) said, "When you want to go to bed, perform ablution (*al-wudoo'*) as for prayer..." (Agreed upon)

Mu'adh ibn Jabal (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "There is no Muslim who goes to sleep remembering Allah and in a state of purity, and when he turns over he asks Allah for good in this world and the next, but it will be given to him." (Reported by Abu Dawud and Ahmad. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 5754)

Ibn 'Abbaas (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "Purify these bodies and Allah will purify you, for there is no servant who goes to sleep in a state of purity but an angel spends the night with him, and every time he turns over, [the angel] says, 'O Allah, forgive Your servant, for he went to bed in a state of purity.'" (Reported by at-Tabaraani. Al-Mundhiri said its *isnaad* is *jayyid* (good). *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 3831)

7 – Going to sleep early. Sleeping straight after *al-'ishaa'* is the advice of the Prophet (SAAS), and a good and healthy habit. One of the *ahaadiith* that describe its virtues was narrated by Abu Barzah al-Aslami (RAA) who said that the Prophet (SAAS) used to prefer to delay *al-'ishaa'*, and he did not like to sleep before it or talk after it. (Reported by al-Bukhari)

Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar reported that al-Qaadee 'Iyaad said, concerning the phrase "he did not like to sleep before it": "Because that could lead to one praying it too late, or delaying it until after the preferred time, and talking after it could lead to one sleeping before *al-fajr* and missing it, or missing *qiyaam al-layl*."

Ibn Raafi' *rahimahullaah* said: " 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (RAA) used to wave his stick at the people when darkness fell, and would say, 'Get up and go, may Allah help you to pray *qiyaam al-layl*!'"

Another matter that has to do with sleep is choosing a suitable bed, not one that is excessively luxurious or soft, because that makes a person sleep too much and become negligent, and causes laziness and carelessness. 'Aisha (RAA) said: "The pillow of the Prophet (SAAS) on which he slept at night was made of leather stuffed with palm fibres." (Reported by Abu Dawud and Ahmad. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 4714)

Ibn 'Abbaas (RAA) reported that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab entered upon Allah's Messenger (SAAS) when he was lying on a mat of palm fibres that had left marks on his side. 'Umar said, "O Allah's Messenger, why do you not get something more comfortable than this?" He (SAAS) said: "What do I have to do with this world? My relationship with this world is like that of a traveller on a hot summer's day, who seeks shade under a tree for an hour, then moves on." (Reported by Ahmad and al-Haakim. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 5545)

'Ali ibn Bakkaar *rahimahullaah* used to have a slave-woman who would spread out his bed for him, and he would touch it with his hand and say: "By Allah, you are good, and by Allah you are cool, but by Allah I will not rest on you tonight." Then he would get up and pray *al-qiyaam* until *al-fajr*.

Also, one should not sleep too much or too deeply. Ibrahim ibn Adham *rahimahullaah* said: "If you are sleeping at night, and running about during the day, and always committing sin, how can you earn the pleasure of the One Who is directing your affairs?"

8 – Having the habit of reciting *al-adhkaar* (plural of *adh-dhikr*, meaning remembrance of Allah) prescribed by *sharee'ah* before going to sleep, because these *adhkaar* are like a fortress which protects a person from the Satan, by the permission of Allah, and helps him to get up for *al-qiyaam*. Among these *adhkaar* is that mentioned in the *hadiith* of Abu Huraira (RAA), who said that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*When any one of you goes to bed, let him clear his bed by hitting it with his garment, for he does not know what may have come onto it. Then let him lie down on his right side, then let him say, 'Bismika Rabbi wada'tu janbi wa bika arfa'uh. In amsakta nafsi farhamhaa, wa in arsaltahaa fahfadhhaa bimaa tahfadhu bihi 'ibaadaka as-saaliheen (In Your Name, my Lord, I lay myself down and I get up again. If You take my soul, then have mercy on it, and if You send it back to me, then protect it with that with which You protect Your righteous servants).'*" (Agreed upon)

'Aisha (RAA) reported that when the Prophet (SAAS) went to bed each night, he would put his palms together, blow in them, and recite *qul Huwa Allaahu Ahad (suurat al-Ikhlaas, no. 112)*, *qul a'uudhu bi Rabbi al-falaq (suurat al-Falaq, no. 113)* and *qul a'uudhu bi Rabbi an-naas (suurat an-Naas, no. 114)*, then he would wipe as much of his body as he could with his hands, starting with his head and face, and the front of his body, doing this three times. (Agreed upon)

Ibn Mas'ud (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Whoever recites the last two verses of suurat al-Baqarah, this will take care of him.*" (Agreed upon)

Anas ibn Malik (RAA) reported that when the Prophet (SAAS) went to bed, he would say: "*Al-hamdulillaah illadhi at'amanaa wa saqaanaa wa kafaanaa, fakam mimman laa kaafeya lahu wa laa mu'weya lah (All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who has fed us and given us to drink, and Who has given us enough, for how many are there who have no-one to suffice them or give them refuge).*" (Reported by Muslim)

According to the *hadiith* of Abu Huraira (RAA) in which he tells the story of how he captured Satan, Satan said to him: "When you go to bed, recite *aayat al-Kursi, "Allah! Laa ilaaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), *al-Hayy-ul-Qayyum* (the Ever-Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists)..." (*Al-Qur'aan 2:255 – interpretation of the meaning*) until the end of it, because it will bring Allah's protection for you, and no devil will approach you until morning comes." Abu Huraira (RAA) mentioned this to the Prophet (SAAS), and he (SAAS) said, "*He spoke the truth even though he is a liar.*" (Agreed upon)

'Ali ibn Abi Talib (RAA) reported that when the Prophet's daughter Fatima (RAA) came to him and asked him for a servant, he (SAAS) said to her and (her husband) 'Ali: "*Shall I not teach you something that will be better for you than a servant? When you go to bed, say 'subhaanallaah' thirty-three times, 'al-hamdulillaah' thirty-three times, and 'Allaahu akbar' thirty-four times. This is better for you than a servant.*" (Agreed upon)

Anas ibn Malik (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Recite 'qul yaa ayyuh-al-kaafiroon' (suurat al-Kaafiroon, no. 109) when you go to sleep, for it is a renunciation of shirk.*" (Reported by al-Baihaquee. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 1172)

Hafsa (RAA) reported that when the Prophet (SAAS) went to bed, he would put his right hand under his right cheek and say: "*Rabbi qinee 'adhaabaka yawma tab'athu 'ibaadak (My Lord, save me from Your punishment on the Day when You resurrect Your slaves).*" (Reported by Abu Dawud, *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 4532)

Al-Baraa' ibn 'Aazib (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "When you want to go to bed, perform ablution (*al-wudoo'*) as for prayer, then lie down on your right side, then say: '*Allaahumma aslamtu nafsi Ilayk, wa wajahtu wajhi Ilayk, wa fawwadtu amri Ilayk, wa alja'tu dhahri Ilayk, raghbatan wa rahbatan Ilayk, laa malja'a wa laa manjaa Minka illa Ilayk. Aamantu bi kitaabik alladhi anzalt, wa bi nabiiyyik alladhi arsalt (O Allah, I submit myself to You, I turn my face to You, I delegate my affairs to You and I rely totally on You, out of fear and hope of You. There is no refuge or sanctuary from You except in You. I believe in Your Book which You have revealed and in Your Prophet whom You have sent).*' Then if you die, you will have died on *al-fitrah* (with a true faith i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone), so make these the last words you speak." (Agreed upon)

Similarly, the Muslim should have the habit of reciting *al-adhkaar* prescribed by *sharee'ah* when waking up, such as that reported by Abu Huraira (RAA), who said that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "When any one of you wakes up, he should say: '*Al-hamdulillaah illadhi radda 'alayya roohi, wa 'aafaani fi jasadi wa adhina li bidhikrih (All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who has restored my soul, given health to my body, and allowed me to remember Him).*'" (Reported by at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasaa'ee, *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 326)

'Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "Whoever turns over at night and says: '*Laa ilaaha illa Allaahu wahdahu laa shareeka lah, lahulmulku wa lahulhamdu wa Huwa 'alaa kulli shay'in qadiir. Al-hamdulillaah, subhaanallaah, wa laa illaaha illa Allah, wa Allaahu akbar, wa laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah (There is no god but Allah Alone, with no partner or associate. His is the Dominion and the Praise, and He is Able to do all things. All praises and thanks are due to Allah, You are far from all imperfection. There is no god except Allah, Allah is Most Great and there is no strength and no power except in Allah),*' then says: '*Allaahumma ghfir li (O Allah, forgive me),*' or some other *du'aa'*, it will be answered, and if he performs *al-wudoo'* and then prays, his prayer will be accepted." (Reported by al-Bukhari)

Imam ibn Battaal *rahimahullaah* said: "Allah has promised through His Prophet (SAAS) that whoever wakes up from his sleep pronouncing words of *at-tauhiid*, submitting to His sovereignty, recognizing His blessings by praising Him, exalting Him above that which does not befit Him by glorifying Him (saying '*subhaanallaah*'), submitting to Him by magnifying Him (saying '*Allaahu akbar*') and admitting one's utter dependence upon His help, then if he makes *ad-du'aa'* it will be answered, and if he prays his prayer will be accepted. Everyone who hears this *hadiith* should apply it and make the most of it, and make his intention sincerely for his Lord, may He be glorified and exalted."

Al-Baraa' ibn 'Aazib (RAA) said: "When the Prophet (SAAS) woke up, he would say: '*Al-hamdulillaah illadhi ahyanaa ba'da maa amaataanaa wa Ilayhi an-nushuur (All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who has brought us back to life after having caused us to die, and unto Him is the resurrection).*'" (Reported by Muslim)

Ibn 'Abbaas (RAA) reported that when the Prophet (SAAS) woke up he would wipe the sleep from his face with his hand, then look at the sky and recite the final eleven verses of *suurat Aali 'Imraan*: "***Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth...***" (*Al-Qur'aan* 3:190 – interpretation of the meaning) (Reported by Muslim)

Imam an-Nawawi *rahimahullaah* said: "This indicates that it is *mustahabb* to wipe away the traces of sleep from one's face, and to recite these verses when getting up from sleep."

9 – Being keen to take a nap or siesta during the day, whether before *adh-dhohr* or after. Anas (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: *"Take a nap, for the devils do not take naps."* (Reported by at-Tabaraani. *As-Sahiihah*, 2647)

Ishaq ibn 'Abdullah *rahimahullaah* said: "Taking a nap is one of the deeds of good people. It revitalizes the heart and helps one to pray *qiyaam al-layl*."

Al-Hasan al-Basree *rahimahullaah* passed by a group of people in the marketplace in the middle of the day, and heard the racket they were making. He said, "Do these people take a nap?" It was said to him, "No." He said, "I think their nights must be bad."

10 – Avoiding eating or drinking too much. Eating and drinking too much are two of the main obstacles that prevent people from praying *qiyaam al-layl*. Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'd Yakrib (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: *"Man fills no vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to have a few mouthfuls to give him the strength he needs. If he has to fill his stomach, then let him leave one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for air."* (Reported by at-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 5674)

Abu Juhayfah (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said to a man who burped in his presence: *"Stop your burping, for the people who eat the most in this life will be the hungriest on the Day of Resurrection."* (Reported by al-Haakim. *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 1190)

Sufyan ath-Thawree *rahimahullaah* said: "You should eat little, so that you will be able to pray *qiyaam al-layl*."

Ma'qal ibn Habeeb *rahimahullaah* saw some people eating a lot and said, "I do not think that our companions want to pray *qiyaam al-layl*."

Wahb ibn Munbih *rahimahullaah* said: "There is no son of Adam dearer to his devil than the one who eats and sleeps a lot."

11 – Striving against oneself to pray *qiyaam al-layl*. This is one of the best means of helping oneself to pray *al-qiyaam*, because human nature is inclined towards wrongdoing, so the one who follows his own inclinations will be led to doom and destruction. Allah has commanded us to strive against our own selves, as He says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"And strive hard in Allah's Cause as you ought to strive*** (with sincerity and with all your efforts that His Name should be superior)...*"* (*Al-Qur'aan* 22:78)

Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"As for those who strive hard in*** (Our Cause), ***We will surely guide them to Our Paths*** (ways of Islamic religion that leads to the pleasure of Allah). ***And verily, Allah is with al-muhsinuun*** (good-doers).*"* (*Al-Qur'aan* 29:69)

Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend*** (in charity in Allah's Cause) ***out of what We have bestowed on them."*** (*Al-Qur'aan* 32:16)

Fadaalah ibn 'Ubayd (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Al-mujaahid is the one who strives against his own self for the sake of Allah.*" (Reported by at-Tirmidhi and ibn Hibban. *As-Sahihah*, 549)

According to the *hadiith* of 'Uqbah ibn 'Aamir (RAA), the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*When a man from my ummah gets up to pray at night, striving against his own self to get up and purify himself, there are knots on him. When he washes his hands while performing al-wudoo', one knot is undone. When he washes his face, another knot is undone. When he wipes his head another knot is undone. When he washes his feet, another knot is undone. Then Allah says to those who are veiled (in the Unseen): 'Look at this servant of Mine, he is striving against his own self and asking of Me. Whatever My servant asks of Me shall be his.'*" (Reported by Ahmad and ibn Hibban. *Sahih at-Targheeb*, 627)

Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir *rahimahullaah* said: "I struggled against my own self for forty years until it became right."

Thaabit al-Banaani *rahimahullaah* said: "I struggled for twenty years to make myself pray *qiyaam al-layl*, and I enjoyed it (*qiyaam al-layl*) for twenty years."

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azeed *rahimahullaah* said: "The best of deeds are those which we force ourselves to do."

'Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak *rahimahullaah* said: "The souls of righteous people in the past used to push them to do good deeds, but our souls do not do what we want them to do except by force, so we have to force them."

Qutaadah *rahimahullaah* said: "O son of Adam, if you do not want to do any good except when you have the energy for it, then your nature is more inclined towards boredom and laziness. The true believer is the one who pushes himself."

12 – Avoiding sin. If the Muslim wants to be one of those who earn the honour of speaking to Allah in the depths of the night, let him beware of sin, for the one who is contaminated with the stain of sin will not be helped to pray *qiyaam al-layl*. A man said to Ibrahim ibn Adham *rahimahullaah*, "I cannot pray *qiyaam al-layl*, so tell me the cure for this." He said, "Do not commit sin during the day, and He will help you to stand before Him at night, for your standing before Him at night is one of the greatest honours, and the sinner does not deserve that honour."

A man said to al-Hasan al-Basree *rahimahullaah*: "O Abu Sa'id, I sleep in good health, and I love to pray *qiyaam al-layl*, and I prepare water with which to purify myself, so why can I not get up?" Al-Hasan said: "Your sins are restricting you." He said, "The servant who commits a sin will be denied the opportunity to pray *al-qiyaam* at night and to fast during the day."

Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyaad *rahimahullaah* said: "If you cannot pray *al-qiyaam* at night, or fast during the day, know that you are indeed deprived and restricted, chained by your sins."

13 – Checking oneself and rebuking oneself for not praying *qiyaam al-layl*. Checking oneself is one of the signs of the righteous and truthful. Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "**O you who believe! Fear**

Allah and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for the morrow, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what you do. (Al-Qur'aan 59:18)

Imam ibn al-Qayyim *rahimahullaah* said: "If the slave is responsible and accountable for everything, even his hearing, sight and innermost thoughts, as Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning), ***"...Verily, the hearing, and the sight, and the heart of each of those ones will be questioned*** (by Allah)." (Al-Qur'aan 17:36), then he should check on himself before he is brought to account."

Qiyaam al-layl is an act of worship that connects the heart to Allah, may He be exalted, and enables it to overcome the temptations of life and to strive against one's own self, at the time when voices are stilled, eyes are closed in sleep, and sleepers are tossing and turning in their beds. Therefore *qiyaam al-layl* is one of the measures of sincere determination and one of the qualities of those who have great ambitions. Allah has praised them and distinguished them from others in the Koran, where He says (interpretation of the meaning): ***"Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing*** (in prayer) ***during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord*** (like one who disbelieves)? ***Say: 'Are those who know equal to those who know not?' It is only men of understanding who will remember*** (i.e. get a lesson from Allah's signs and verses)." (Al-Qur'aan 39:9)

Qiyaam al-layl is "*sunnah mu'akkadah*", which the Prophet (SAAS) urged us to do when he said, *"You should pray qiyaam al-layl, for it is the habit of the righteous people who came before you, and it will bring you closer to your Lord, expiate for bad deeds, prevent sin, and expel disease from the body."* (Reported by at-Tirmidhi and Ahmad)

According to a *hadiith*, the Prophet (SAAS) said: *"The best of prayers after the prescribed prayers is qiyaam al-layl."* The Prophet (SAAS) always had the habit of praying *qiyaam al-layl*, and never gave it up, whether he was travelling or staying at home. Even though he, among all the sons of Adam, would be the one to have all his past and future sins forgiven, he prayed *qiyaam al-layl* until his feet became swollen, and when he was asked about that, he (SAAS) said, *"Should I not be a grateful servant?"* (Agreed upon)

This is how the noble *salaf* were, may Allah have mercy upon them. Abu ad-Darda' (RAA) said: *"Pray two rak'aat in the darkness of the night for the darkness of the grave."* Ahmad ibn Harb *rahimahullaah* said: *"I am astonished at people who know that the delights of Paradise lie above them and the horrors of Hell lie beneath them. How can they sleep in between them?"*

When 'Umar ibn Dharr *rahimahullaah* saw that night had come, he would say: *"Night has come, and night has dignity, and Allah is most deserving of reverence."*

For this reason, al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyyaad *rahimahullaah* said: *"I met some people who feel ashamed before Allah to sleep for too long in the depths of the night. Such a person may be resting on his side, and when he moves, he says to himself, 'This is not your right. Get up and take your share of the Hereafter.'"*

Al-Hasan *rahimahullaah* said: *"We do not know of any deed more difficult than the struggle to stay up at night or to spend money."* It was said to him, *"Why do al-mutahajjidiin* (those who pray *at-tahajjud* at night) have the

most beautiful faces?" He said, "Because they spend time alone with the Most Merciful, so He adorns them with some of His light."

The women of *as-salaf* also used to strive to pray *qiyaam al-layl* with energy and determination. Where are the women of our own age when it comes to such great deeds? 'Urwah ibn az-Zubair *rahimahullaah* said: "I came to 'Aisha (RAA) one day to greet her, and I found her praying and reciting the verse (interpretation of the meaning): **"So Allah has been gracious to us, and has saved us from the torment of the Fire."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 52:27), repeating it and weeping. I waited for her, but I got bored of waiting, so I went to the market for some things I needed, then I came back to 'Aisha, and she was still praying and reciting this verse and weeping."

Anas ibn Malik (RAA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Jibreel said to me, 'Go back to Hafsa, for she fasts a lot and prays a lot at night (qiyaam al-layl).'*" (Reported by al-Haakim, *Sahiih al-Jaami'*, 4227)

Mu'aadhah al-'Adawiyyah *rahimahallaah*, one of the righteous followers (*at-taabi'aat*) spent her wedding night, along with her husband Selah ibn Ashyam *rahimahullaah*, praying until *al-fajr*. When her husband and son were killed in the land of jihad, she would spend the whole night in prayer, worshipping and beseeching Allah, and she would sleep during the day. If she felt sleepy whilst she was praying at night, she would tell herself: "O soul, there is plenty of sleep ahead of you."

When Habeebah al-'Adawiyyah *rahimahallaah* prayed *al-'ishaa'*, she would stand on the roof of her house, wearing her chemise and *khimaar* (i.e., covered in proper Islamic dress), then she would say, "O my God, the stars have come out, people have gone to sleep, and kings have closed their doors, but Your door is open. Every lover is alone with his lover, but here I am standing before You." Then she would start to pray and talk to her Lord until the time just before dawn. When the time just before dawn came, she would say, "O Allah, this night is ending, the day is coming, and I wish I knew whether you have accepted this night (of worship) from me, so that I could congratulate myself, or if it has been rejected, so that I might console myself."

'Amrah, the wife of Habeeb al-'Ajami *rahimahumallaah*, prayed *qiyaam al-layl* one night whilst her husband was asleep. When the time just before dawn came, and her husband was still asleep, she woke him up and said to him, "Get up, my master, for the night has gone, the day has come and ahead of you lies a long road with little provision, and a small group of righteous people have gone before us, and we are still here."

We ask Allah to help us to remember Him, to thank Him and to worship Him properly. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.

(*Fatwaa* no. 3749)

Conclusion

The night prayer is recommended and not obligatory. The person may pray the amount of *rak'aat* which he desires, thirteen being the maximum. There are different manners of performing it. One of the manners consists of thirteen *rak'aat*, which is commenced with two short *rak'aat*. According to the most correct opinion, these are the two *rak'aat* of *sunnah* prayer offered after *al-'ishaa'*, or they are two specific *rak'aat* by which one

begins the night prayer. 'Aisha (RAA) said: "Allah's Messenger (SAAS) used to start his prayer with two short *rak'aat* if he were to stand in the night for prayer." (Muslim)

Abu Huraira (RAA) narrated that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*If anyone of you stands in the night for prayer, let him start his prayer with two short rak'aat.*" (Muslim)

Then it is to be performed in sets of two *rak'aat* and ended with one *rak'ah* of *al-al-witr*. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (RAA) narrated that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Night prayer is offered as two rak'aat followed by two rak'aat and so on, and if you want to finish it, pray only one rak'ah which will be al-witr for all the previous rak'aat.*" (Al-Bukhari)

One may also make supplication of *al-qunuut* in *al-witr* if he likes. For the person who does not memorize much of the Koran (*al-Mushaf*) he may recite many short chapters in one *rak'ah* or he may read looking in the Koran too.

The imam should pay attention to the weak such as the elderly and others in *at-taraweeh* prayers during the month of Ramadan as well as in all obligatory prayers throughout the year. "The Prophet (SAAS) said: "*Whoever among you leads the people in prayer, let him make it brief, because among them are the weak, the young and those who have things they need to do.*" So the imam should pay attention to the congregation and be kind to them in the night prayers in Ramadan and in the last ten days. The people are not all the same; people vary. So he should pay attention to their situations and encourage them to come and attend the prayers. When he makes them too long he makes it difficult for them and puts them off attending. So he should pay attention to that which will encourage them to attend and make them want to come and pray, even if that is by making it short and not lengthy. A prayer in which people are able to focus and feel at ease, even if it is short, is better than a prayer in which they do not focus properly and get bored." [*Majmuu' Fataawaa* Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz *rahimahullaah* (11/336)]

Whoever gets himself accustomed to offering *qiyaam al-layl*, should beware of leaving it, for Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said to 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (RAA): "*O 'Abdullah! Do not be like so and so who used to pray at night and then stopped doing it.*" (Al-Bukhari)

Finally, whoever finds it difficult to offer *qiyaam al-layl*, should not deny himself from the favour of supplication during the last third of the night, instead he has to engage himself in making *adh-dhikr* and *ad-du'aa*'. Abu Huraira (RAA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (SAAS) said: "*Every night when it is the last third of the night, our Lord, the Superior, the Blessed, descends to the nearest heaven and says: Is there anyone to invoke Me that I may respond to his invocation? Is there anyone to ask Me so that I may grant him his request? Is there anyone asking My forgiveness so that I may forgive him?*" (Al-Bukhari)

Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "***Verily, al-muttaqoon*** (the pious) ***will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs*** (in the Paradise), ***taking joy in the things which their Lord has given them. Verily, they were before this muhsinuun*** (good-doers). ***They used to sleep but little by night*** [invoking their Lord (Allah) and praying, with fear and hope]. ***And in the hours before dawn, they were*** (found) ***asking*** (Allah) ***for forgiveness.***" (*Al-Qur'aan* 51:15-18)

May Allah help us to do all that which He loves and which pleases Him.

References

- 1) *Al-fataawaa* were taken from: www.islam-qa.com
- 2) The night prayer in Ramadan by Imam Muhammad Nasir ad-Din al-Albaani
- 3) *Minhaj al-Muslim* by Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jaza'iry
- 4) *Fiqh-us-Sunnah* by Sayyid Sabiq

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Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"...Help you one another in al-birr and at-taqwaa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 5:2)

Allah, the Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): **"By al-'asr (the time). Verily, man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience."** (*Al-Qur'aan* 103)

On the authority of Abu Huraira (*RAA*) who reported that Allah's Messenger (*SAAS*) said: *"If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect, and if anyone invites others to follow error, the sin, will be equivalent to that of the people who follow him (in sinfulness) without their sins being diminished in any respect."* (*Muslim*)

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (*RAA*) narrated that the Prophet (*SAAS*) said: *"Convey (my teachings) to the people even if it were a single sentence, and tell others the stories of the children of Israel (which have been taught to you), for it is not sinful to do so. And whoever tells a lie on me intentionally, will surely take his place in the (Hell) Fire."* (*Al-Bukhari*)

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