

Sunnat practices of Qiyaamul-Layl and Tahajjud

1) Intention for Tahajjud: Before sleeping, one should make an intention to wake up for Tahajjud. If one is unable to awaken, then he will still receive the reward of having performed Tahajjud.

2) Method of awakening for Tahajjud

- a) Sit up and rub the eyes thrice.
- b) Make any form of zikr
- c) Recite the last eleven verses of Surah Aal-Imraan from verse: 190 till the end. At least, recite from verse:191 to verse:194, or verse:190 to verse:191. One may recite these verses while still sitting. One could also recite these verses after standing up. If possible, recite these verses while looking towards the sky. (They should not be recited if one is in the state of janaabah. al-Minhaaj, commentary of Sahih Muslim)
- d) Recite the Fourth Kalimah, and then the Third Kalimah. Thereafter, make dua, for it will certainly be accepted.
- e) Make miswaak. The miswaak could be kept at one's bedside.
- f) If one has a need, he should relieve himself. After that, he may proceed directly to perform wudhu or may lie down for a while before performing wudhu.
- g) Make a proper wudhu according to the Sunnah, without wasting any water.
- h) Apply itr (perfume) before beginning with the Tahajjud Salaah

Time of Tahajjud: According to some Ulama, Tahajjud can only be called Tahajjud if it is performed after awakening from one's sleep. However, the reward of Qiyaamul Layl (salaah of the night) will be attained by performing any nafl salaah after Isha. (Raddul Muhtaar 2/25) According to others, Tahajjud and Qiyaamul Layl refers to any nafl salaah performed after the Isha salaah. (al-Bahrur Raaiq 2/56)

For the one who is confident that he will awaken during the night, he should perform his night salaah in the latter portion of the night. As for the one who is not confident of himself, it will be best for him to perform a few rak'ats after Isha and to then perform witr, as is mentioned in Munyatul Musalli and its commentaries. (Imdaadul Muftien 2/359) If such a person happens to awaken during the last portion of the night, then he can perform more rak'ats, and he will attain greater rewards.

A few Sunnah practices of Tahajjud Salaah:

- a) Recite the duas which will be quoted hereunder after the Takbir-Tahreemah.
- b) Recite the Qira'at during salaah slowly and clearly, according to the laws of Tajwid.
- c) Make waqf - stop at the end of each verse of Surah Faatihah.
- d) Make miswaak between every two rak'ats

Number of rak'ats: a) It was the normal habit of Rasulullah ﷺ to perform 8 rak'ats of Tahajjud. He would perform 2 short rak'ats before this (to remove the effects of sleep and to develop a greater fervour for ibaadah, as well as with the intention of Tahiyatul-Wudhu). He would then perform 3 rak'ats of witr at the end of the night. He would perform another 2 rak'ats after this in the sitting position, in which he recited Surah Zilzaal and Surah Kaafiroon. However, Rasulullah ﷺ on some occasions performed 4 rak'ats, 6 rak'ats and 10 rak'ats. Two rak'ats of salaah at night are also acceptable. Rasulullah ﷺ encouraged his Ummah to perform some salaah at night, even if it is just 2 rak'ats and even if it is just for a short while.

b) It is best to perform Tahajjud in units of two rak'ats. If one wishes to perform Tahajjud in units of four rak'ats, that is also good.

Tone and extent of qira'ah: Rasulullah ﷺ would recite at an average tone, not loud and not so soft that he could not be heard. He would recite from various sections of the Qur'an, keeping the meaning in mind and actively responding to the messages of the Qur'an. He encouraged the Ummah to at least recite ten verses of the Qur'an in the night salaah.

Rasulullah ﷺ said: Whoever recites ten verses in his qiyaamul-layl (salaah of the night), he will not be written amongst the negligent ones (the ghaafileen- those who have become unmindful and forgetful of Allah and His commandments). Whoever recites 100 verses, he will be written amongst the devout worshippers (qaaniteen). Whoever recites 1000 verses, he will be written amongst those who have earned a qintaar (of reward). (Abu Dawud no.1400, Sahih Ibn Hibbaan no.2572, Sahih Ibn Khuzaimah no. 1144)

Length of ruku' and sajdah and zikr in them: One should endeavour to lengthen the ruku' and sajdah as much as one can. The ruku', sajdah, qawmah and jalsah of Rasulullah ﷺ were so lengthy that they would seem as long as the qiyaam (standing posture). According to one narration, the sajdah of Rasulullah ﷺ was so long that one would be able to recite 50 verses in that time. One may recite the normal tasbeeh during these postures. Many other forms of azkaar and du'as have also been narrated in the Ahaadith. One may recite any of those as well. We are also encouraged in the Ahaadith to make du'a (in Arabic, preferably using the du'as of the Qur'an and Ahaadith) in the sajdah posture, as it is the du'a which is most likely to be accepted.

Miscellaneous: a) Moderation: Rasulullah ﷺ encouraged one who is feeling sleepy and does not know what he/she is reciting to rather lie down, until one is fresh and energetic again.

b) Waking up others: It is Sunnah to wake up others for Tahajjud, like one's spouse and children. Rasulullah ﷺ encouraged us to awaken our spouses. He ﷺ made du'a of rahmah (mercy) for whomsoever wakes up his/her spouse. Such a couple will be forgiven and written amongst those males and females who remember Allah ﷻ in abundance.

c) Witr Salaah at the end: If one is in the habit of awakening for Tahajjud, he should perform witr right at the end, just before subh-sadiq. If one is unsure if he will awaken, then he should perform it before he goes to sleep.

d) Du'a: It is advisable to spend some time of the night in making du'a to Allah ﷻ, since there are some moments every night in which one's du'as will certainly be granted. The best time to engage in du'a at night is during the last 1/3 of the night.

e) Istighfaar: Allah ﷻ praises those who spend their night awake in worship, and engage in istighfaar (seeking forgiveness) in the last portion of the night.

f) Rest after Tahajjud at home by lying down on your right side. This will remove tiredness from you. If you happen to fall asleep, make a new wudhu.

g) Catch up if one happens to miss Tahajjud: If one happens to miss his/her daily practice of Tahajjud, perform it before the Zuhr salaah on the next day.

Duas when beginning Tahajjud Salaah

a) Abdullah ibn Abbaas ؓ narrated that Rasulallah ﷺ would begin his Tahajjud with the following (dua):

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ قَيِّمُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ مَلِكِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ وَالْحَقُّ لِقَاؤُكَ حَقٌّ وَقَوْلُكَ الْحَقُّ وَالْحَقُّ حَقٌّ وَالنَّارُ حَقٌّ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ حَقٌّ، وَمحمدٌ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ حَقٌّ وَاللَّهُمَّ لَكَ أَسْلَمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْكَ أُنَبْتُ وَبِكَ خَاصَمْتُ وَإِلَيْكَ حَاكَمْتُ أَنْتَ رَبُّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ فَأَعْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَ مَا أَخَّرْتُ وَ مَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَ مَا أَعْلَنْتُ « وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي ، أَنْتَ الْمُقَدِّمُ ، وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ ، أَنْتَ الْهَيُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ » .

O Allah, all praise belongs to You, as You are the Maintainer of the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. All praise belongs to You, as You are the Noor - Light and Illumination of the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. All praise belongs to You, as You are the Master of the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. You are The True Reality (i.e. Your existence is an undeniable reality) and Your promise is the True Reality. Our meeting with You is a reality. Your word is a reality. Jannah is a reality. Hell is a reality. The Messengers were a reality. Muhammad was a reality. The final Hour (of Qiyaamah) is a reality. O Allah, to You alone do I submit myself, in You alone do I believe, on You alone do I place my trust, towards You alone do I turn my attention, with Your help alone do I oppose (falsehood) and towards You alone do I turn for judgement. You are our Rabb, and to You alone will we return. So forgive me my past sins, my future sins, my secret sins, my open sins, and those sins of mine which You know better than me. You are the One who causes advancement and the One who causes retrogression. You are my Deity, there is none worthy of worship except You. And there is no ability (to abstain from evil) and strength (to do good) except from Allah. (Bukhari no.1069, 6950, 7004, 7060, Muslim no.1844, Abu Dawud no.771, Tirmizi no.3418 Muwatta no.502. The wording of the above du'a has been quoted from al-Jam'u baynas Saheehain of Humaidi no.1006 and Jaami'ul Usool of Ibnul Athir al-Jazari no.2212 who seem to have collected this wording from the various narrations. I could not find this wording in the above form in any specific narration)

b) Aa'ishah ؓ narrated to Abu Salamah, the son of Abdur-Rahman ibn Auf, that Rasulallah ﷺ would (sometimes) begin his Tahajjud salaah with the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ جِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَائِيلَ وَإِسْرَافِيلَ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ اهْدِنِي لِمَا اخْتُلِفَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ تَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

O Allah, The Rabb of Jibreel, Mika'eel and Israafeel, The Originator of the heavens and the earth, The Knower of the unseen and the apparent, You will certainly judge between Your servants (on the Day of Qiyaamah) regarding those matters in which they differed. O Allah, guide me by Your permission to the truth in those controversies. You are the One who guides whomsoever You will to the straight path. (Muslim no.1847, Abu Dawud no.767, Tirmizi no.3420, Ibn Majah no.1357)

c) Aa'ishah ؓ also explained to Aasim that Rasulallah ﷺ would (sometimes) begin his Tahajjud by reciting the following:

Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest) – ten times
Alhamdu Lillah (All praise belongs to Allah) – ten times
SubhaanAllah (Allah is pure) – ten times
Laa ilaaha IllAllah (There is none worthy of worship except Allah) – ten times
Astaghfirullah (I seek forgiveness from Allah) – ten times
اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي، وَارْزُقْنِي وَاهْدِنِي، وَعَافِنِي، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ ضَيْقِ الْمَقَامِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

O Allah, forgive me, guide me, sustain me and protect me. O Allah, I seek Your protection from difficult situations on the day of Qiyaamah. (Abu Dawud no.766, Nasa'i no.1616, 5550, Ibn Majah no.1356)

d) Abu Saeed Khudri ؓ has narrated that Rasulallah ﷺ would begin his Tahajjud with the following Thanaa, after which he would begin his recitation:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ مِنْ هَمَزِهِ وَنَفْخِهِ وَنَفْثِهِ

You are most pure, O Allah, and all praise is due to You. Your name is blessed. Your position is most lofty. There is none worthy of worship except You. There is none worthy of worship except Allah (thrice). Allah is the absolutely Greatest (thrice). I seek protection in Allah, the All-Hearing and All-Knowing from Shaytaan, the rejected; from his poking (promptings), his breath and his spitting. (Abu Dawud no.775, Tirmizi no.242 - This hadith is dha'eef)

Virtues of Qiyaamul-Layl and Tahajjud

The most virtuous salaah: Rasulullah ﷺ said, “The most virtuous salaah after the compulsory salaah is the salaah of the night.” (Muslim no.2812)

Rasulullah ﷺ never left it: Aa’ishah ؓ said, “Do not abandon performing salaah at night, because Rasulullah ﷺ would never leave it out. If he ﷺ was sick or lethargic, he would perform salaah in a sitting position. (Abu Dawud no.1309, Ibn Khuzaimah no.1137, Haakim no.1158)

Five amazing benefits: Rasulullah ﷺ said, “Make it your practice to perform the salaah of the night, for verily it was the practice of the pious before you, it is a means of gaining closeness to Your Rabb, an atonement of evil actions, and a barrier from sins.” (Tirmizi no.3549 from Abu Umaamah ؓ) According to one narration, one added benefit is, “and it removes sickness from the body.” (Tabaraani in al-Kabir no.6154 from Salmaan ؓ)

Become the beloved of Allah ﷻ: Rasulullah ﷺ said, “There are three people whom Allah loves, He smiles at them and He is happy with them... (The second is) A person who has an attractive wife and beautiful comfortable bedding. However, he stands up at night in salaah. Allah says, “He has forsaken his desires, and he is remembering Me. If he wished, he could have slept.” ... (Tabaraani in al-Kabir as in Majma’uz Zawaaid no.3536, Haakim no.68)

Closeness to your True Beloved: Rasulullah ﷺ said, “The closest our Rabb is to His servant is during the last portion of the night. If you have the ability to be amongst those who remember Allah during this time, then do so.” (Tirmizi no.3579, Ibn Khuzaimah no.1147, Haakim no.1162)

Crystal-clear rooms in Jannah: Rasulullah ﷺ said, “In Jannah, there are special rooms, their outside can be seen from their inside, and their inside can be seen from their outside.” Abu Maalik Ash’ari ؓ enquired, “For who is this, O Rasulullah?” Rasulullah ﷺ replied, “For the person who speaks kindly, feeds others, and spends the night standing in salaah whilst others are sleeping.” (Haakim no.270, 1200, Tabaraani in al-Kabir no.3466)

Unimaginable enjoyments in Jannah: Abdullah ibn Mas’ud ؓ said, “It is written in the Tawrah, “Allah ﷻ has prepared, for those whose sides separate from their beds, such bounties which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and the thought of which has not crossed the heart of any person. No close angel nor messenger knows it.” Then Abdullah ؓ said, “We recite it in the Qur’an, “No soul knows what bliss is in store for them.” (Haakim no.3550)

Allah ﷻ says: “Their sides remain away from their sleeping places, calling on their Sustainer with fear and longing. And they spend out of what We provided for them. So no soul knows what bliss is in store for them – a recompense for what they used to do.” (Surah as-Sajdah v.16-17)

The blessed Ahaadith of Rasulullah ﷺ on his Tahajjud

Intention for Tahajjud: Abud-Dardaa ؓ has narrated that Rasulullah ﷺ said, “Whoever goes to sleep with the intention of waking up (later) during that night to perform salaah, but is overpowered by sleep till the morning (the time of Fajr salaah), (the reward of) his noble intention (to perform Tahajjud) will be written in his book of deeds, and his sleep (which he enjoyed) would be sadaqah – a gift conferred upon him by His Rabb.” (Sunan Nasa’i no.1786, Sunan Ibn Majah no.1344, Sahih Ibn Khuzaimah no.1172-1175)

Method of awakening for Tahajjud

Rasulullah ﷺ said, “When one of you goes to sleep, Shaytan ties three knots at the back of his head. He chants the following words on each knot: ‘You have a long night, so continue sleeping.’ If he awakens and remembers Allah, one knot opens. If he performs wudhu, another knot opens. If he performs salaah, all the knots are opened. He is thus energetic and in a good mood in the morning. If not, he gets up in a bad mood, feeling lethargic.” (Bukhari no.1091, 3096, Muslim no.1855)

Abdullah ibn Abbaas ؓ narrates: I spent a night in the house of my aunt Maymoonah. Rasulullah ﷺ spoke with his wife for a while. He then went to sleep. In the last third of the night, he sat up. He looked up towards the sky and recited: *إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ* { He then stood up, performed wudhu and made miswaak. (Bukhari no.4293, 7014, Muslim no.1834)

According to one narration: Then Rasulullah ﷺ awoke. He sat up, rubbing the sleep away from his face with his hands. He then recited the last ten verses of Surah Aal-Imraan. Then, he stood up, went to a water-skin which was hanging and performed wudhu. He performed an excellent and beautiful wudhu. (Bukhari no.181,4296)

According to another narration: Nabi ﷺ stood up and went to relieve himself. He then washed his face and hands. Thereafter, he slept. (This was most probably for the purpose of istibraa -waiting for the body to expel the last drops of urine from the urinal passage) He then stood up, went to the water-skin and opened the string (which was used to seal it). He then performed wudhu which was completely balanced between the two extremes. He did not waste any water, yet he performed wudhu to perfection. (Bukhari no.5957, Muslim no.1824,1830)

According to one narration: The Nabi of Allah ﷺ stood up in the last portion of the night. He left the house. He looked to the sky and recited this verse of Surah Aal-Imraan *إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْخِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ قَبْضًا غَدَابَاتٍ* (i.e. verse 190-191). He then returned to the house, made miswaak and made wudhu. (Muslim no.619)

According to one narration: When he ﷺ woke up from his sleep, he went to his wudhu water. He picked up his miswaak and brushed his teeth. He then recited these verses ... until he neared the end of the Surah or he completed the Surah. He then made wudhu and went to his place of salaah. (Abu Dawud no.58)

Abu Hurairah ؓ narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ used to recite the last 10 verses of Surah Aal-Imraan every night. (Tabaraani in al-Awsat no.6777)

A Sahaabi says: I was once on a journey with Rasulullah ﷺ. I said to myself, ‘By Allah, I will watch Rasulullah ﷺ till Fajr, so that I can see

what he does.’ After performing Isha salaah, he lied down for a portion of the night. Then he woke up, looked to the sky and recited *إِنَّكَ لَا تُخَلِّفُ الْمِعَادَ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا* verse:191-194). He then stretched his hand towards his bedding and drew out a miswaak from it. From a water container which was by him, he poured out some water into a wooden bowl. He then brushed his teeth (and made wudhu). He then stood up and performed salaah until I felt that he had performed salaah for the same amount of time that he had slept. He then lied down until I felt that he had slept for the same amount of time that he had performed salaah. He then woke up and did and said just as he had done and said the first time. Rasulullah ﷺ did this thrice before the Fajr salaah. (Nasa’i no.1625)

Rasulullah ﷺ said: Whoever wakes up at night, says

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

and then says ‘O Allah, forgive me’ or makes any du’a, his du’a will be accepted. If he performs wudhu and performs salaah, his salaah will be accepted. (Bukhari no.1103, Abu Dawud no.5062, Tirmizi no.3414)

Nabi ﷺ possessed a container, on which he used to place his miswaak. When he would awaken at night, he would relieve himself and make istinja, make miswaak and make wudhu. He would then search for perfume in the rooms of his wives (to apply before performing Tahajjud). (Mukhtasar Qiyaamul Layl of Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi no.108 with a muttasil chain of thiqah-reliable narrators)

Time

Iyaas ibn Muawiyah Muzani ؓ narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said, “Make sure to offer salaah at night, even though it be the duration of milking one’s camel, rather even the duration of milking one’s goat. Whatever is performed after the Isha salaah is counted as from the salaah of the night.” (Tabaraani in al-Kabir no.787)

Thawbaan ؓ narrates: We were with Rasulullah ﷺ on a journey. He said, “This journey is tiring and difficult. So, when one of you makes witr, he should (first) perform 2 rak’ats. If he wakes up, (then well and good), otherwise those two rak’ats will be in his favour.” (Ibn Hibbaan no.2577, Ibn Khuzaimah no. 1106, as-Sunanul Kubra no.4604)

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates: “Rasulullah ﷺ used to sleep in the first part of the night, and wake up in the latter part and offer salaah.” (Bukhari no.1095, Muslim no.1762)

Rasulullah ﷺ said: “The most beloved salaah in the sight of Allah is the salaah of Dawud. The most beloved fast in the sight of Allah is the fast of Dawud. He used to sleep for half the night, remain in worship for one third of it, and sleep for one sixth of it. [As for his fasting], he used to fast on alternate days.” (Bukhari no.1079, 3238, Muslim no.2796, 2797)

Hajjaaj ibn Amr Maazini ؓ narrates: Nabi ﷺ used to perform Tahajjud after sleeping. He used to brush his teeth with the miswaak before commencing his Tahajjud salaah. (Tabaraani in al-Awsat no.8669 and al-Kabir no.3215) Hajjaaj ibn Amr said, “Do any of you think that, if he stands to perform salaah until the morning, he has performed Tahajjud. Tahajjud is only when one performs salaah after sleeping, then performs salaah after sleeping, then performs salaah after sleeping. That was how the salaah of Rasulullah ﷺ used to be.” (Tabaraani in al-Awsat no. 8670 and al-Kabir no.3216)

A few Sunnah practices of Tahajjud Salaah

Hafsah ؓ narrated: Rasulullah ﷺ used to recite a Surah. He used to recite it with Tarteel (slowly, clearly and correctly, stopping and pausing in the most appropriate occasions), until it would seem longer than another Surah which was even longer than it (in reality). (Muslim no.1746)

Ummu Salamah described the qira’ah of Rasulullah ﷺ in Tahajjud as qira’ah in which each letter was recited clearly and distinctly. (Nasa’i no.1021, 1628, Tirmizi no.2923)

Ummu Salamah ؓ also explained that Rasulullah ﷺ used to stop after each verse in Surah Faatihah. (Abu Dawud no.4003, Haakim no.2909, 2910, Tirmizi no. 2927)

Number of rak’ats

Aa’ishah ؓ said when asked about the salaah of Rasulullah ﷺ at night: Seven rak’ats (4+3 witr), nine rak’ats (6+3 witr) and eleven rak’ats (8+3 witr), besides the two rak’ats before the Fajr salaah. (Bukhari no.1088)

According to one narration, she said: He used to perform four and three, six and three, eight and three and ten and three. He would not perform less than seven, nor more than thirteen. This excludes the two rak’ats before the Fajr salaah. (Abu Dawud no.1364, Musnad Ahmad no.25200)

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates: Rasulullah ﷺ performed Isha salaah. He then performed eight rak’ats, and two rak’ats sitting, and two rak’ats between the azaan and the iqamah. He would never ever leave those two rak’ats out. (Bukhari no.1106)

When Aswad ibn Yazeed asked Aa’ishah ؓ about the salaah of Rasulullah ﷺ at night, she replied: He initially used to perform thirteen rak’ats at night. Then he began performing eleven rak’ats. He left out two rak’ats. When he passed away, he was in the habit of performing nine rak’ats. His last salaah at night was the witr salaah. (Abu Dawud no.1365)

In one narration, she explained that eleven rak’ats meant nine raka’ts, after which Rasulullah ﷺ would perform two rak’ats while sitting. When Rasulullah ﷺ aged and picked up a bit of weight, he would perform seven rak’ats, and then two rak’ats sitting. (Muslim no.1773, Abu Dawud no.1344,1345, Nasa’i no.1600, 1720)

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates when asked about the salaah of Rasulullah ﷺ at night by another questioner: Rasulullah ﷺ would not offer more than eleven rak’ats – neither in Ramadhan, nor in other months. He would offer four rak’ats: do not even ask about their beauty and length (i.e. they are beyond description). He would then offer four rak’ats: do not even ask about their beauty and length. He would then offer three rak’ats. I asked him: ‘O Messenger of Allâh! Do you sleep before offering the witr salaah?’ He replied: ‘O Aa’ishah! My eyes may sleep, but my heart does not sleep.’ (Bukhari no.1096, 1909, 3376, Muslim no.1757)

Abu Ayyub ؓ narrates: Rasulullah ﷺ used to make miswaak at night twice or thrice (whenever he awoke). When he would stand to perform salaah at night, he would perform four rak’ats in such a manner that he would not speak or give any instructions in between. And he would make salaam after every two rak’ats. (Ahmad no.23587, Tabaraani in al-Kabir no.4067 with a dha’eef sanad)

Abu Umaamah ؓ narrates: Rasulullah ﷺ used to then perform two rak’ats while sitting, in which he used to recite Surah Zilzaal and Surah Kaafiroon. (Ibn Hibbaan no.2640, Ibn Khuzaimah no.1104, Ahmad

no.22300, 22367. Haithami has declared the narrators of Ahmad as reliable – Majmu'uz Zawaaid no.3449)

Iyaas ibn Muawiyah Muzani ؓ narrates that Rasulullâh ﷺ said, “Make sure to offer salaah at night, even though it be the duration of milking one’s camel, rather even the duration of milking one’s goat. Whatever is performed after the Isha salaah is counted as from the salaah of the night.” (Tabaraani in al-Kabir no.787)

Rasulullah ﷺ said, “When a person goes to sleep, Shaytaan ties three knots over him (over which he casts a spell). If he awakens at night and remembers Allah, one knot opens. If he performs wudhu, two knots opens. If he performs two rak’ats of ṣalaah, all the knots are opened. So open the knots of Shaytaan, even if it has to be with just two rak’ats.” (Sahih Ibn Khuzaimah no.1132)

Ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrates that Rasulullâh ﷺ said: “The ṣalaah of the night should be offered in units of two rak’ats. If you fear the break of dawn, add one rak’at to make the witr an odd number of rak’ats.” (Bukhari no.461, 946, 948, 950, 1086, Muslim no.1782-1786)

Ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrates that Rasulullâh ﷺ used to offer the night ṣalaah in units of two rak’ats and end it by adding one rak’at to make the witr an odd number of rak’ats. (Bukhari no.950, Muslim no.1797)

According to most scholars, including Imaam Abu Yusuf ؓ and Imaam Muhammad ؓ, it is best to perform the salaah of the night in units of two, as is mentioned in this hadith. This is the relied-upon verdict (mufta bihi qawl) by the Hanafi scholars. (Nurul-Idaah pg.94) According to Imaam Abu Hanifah ؓ, it is best to perform this salaah in units of four. This difference is with regards to greater virtue. As for permissibility, all agree that a person can perform these salaahs in units of two or four.

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates: “When Rasulullâh ﷺ stood up for worship at night, he commenced with two short rak’ats of ṣalaah.” (Muslim no.1842)

Abû Hurayrah ؓ narrates that Rasulullâh ﷺ said: “When any of you stands up for worship at night, he should commence with two short rak’ats of ṣalaah.” (Muslim no.1843)

Tone and extent of qira’ah

Allah ﷻ instructs us in the Qur’an:

{ وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعْ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا }

Do not raise your voice loudly in your salaah, and do not recite silently, and seek a moderate tone between the two. (Surah Israa v.110)

Abdullah ibn Abbaas narrated: The qira’ah of Rasulullâh ﷺ was such that the people who were in the room would be able to hear him, when he was in that section. (Abu Dawud no.1329) This means that he would not raise his voice, nor would he recite so softly that no one can hear him. His qira’ah was in-between loud and soft. When he would recite in his house, his family-members who were in that room would be able to hear him, but his voice could not be heard outside that room. (Mirqaatul Mafaatih 4/313, Mir’aatul Mafaatih no.1211)

The Qira’ah of Rasulullâh ﷺ at night was such that he would sometimes raise his voice and sometimes lower it. (Abu Dawud no.1330) This means that he would raise it when alone, and lower it when someone was sleeping nearby or if the situation demanded. (Bazlul Majhud 5/573)

Abdullah ibn Abbaas ؓ narrated: I spent the night by my aunt Maymoonah ؓ. Nabi ﷺ stood up and performed thirteen rak’ats,

which included the two rak’ats before the Fajr salaah. I estimated his standing in every rak’at to be about the amount of time in which one could recite Surah Muzzammil. (Abu Dawud no.1367)

Some Surahs which could be recited in Tahajjud: Abdullah ibn Mas’ud ؓ narrated: Rasulullâh ﷺ used to recite two Surahs which had some similarity with one another (nazhaa’ir) in one rak’at: ar-Rahman and an-Najm in one rak’at, al-Qamar and al-Haaqqah in one rak’at, Wat-Toor and Waz-Zaariyaat in one rak’at, al-Waaqi’ah and Noon in one rak’at, al-Ma’arij and Wan-Naaziaat in one rak’at, al-Mutaffifeen and Abasa in one rak’at, al-Muddaththir and al-Muzzammil in one rak’at, al-Insaan (Hal Ataa) and al-Qiyaamah (Laa Uqsimu bi Yawmil Qiyaamah) in one rak’at, Amma Yatasaa’aloon and Wal-Mursalaat in one rak’at, ad-Dukhaan and Izas-Shamsu Kuwwirat in one rak’at. (Abu Dawud no.1398)

Abdullah ibn Abbaas ؓ narrated: I spent the night by my aunt Maymoonah ؓ. Nabi ﷺ stood up and performed thirteen rak’ats, which included the two rak’ats before the Fajr salaah. I estimated his standing in every rak’at to be about the amount of time in which one could recite Surah Muzzammil. (Abu Dawud no.1367)

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates that Rasulullâh ﷺ used to remain standing in ṣalaah at night till his feet would become swollen. So I asked him: “Why are you doing this when all your past and future sins have been forgiven?” He replied: “Should I not be a grateful servant?” (Bukhari no.4557, Muslim no.7304)

Length of ruku’ and sajdah and zikr in them

Huzaifah ؓ narrates that he performed salaah behind Rasulullâh ﷺ on one night. Rasulullâh ﷺ recited the entire Surah Baqarah, Nisaa and Aal-Imraan in one rak’at. He recited slowly. When he passed by a verse in which was any tasbeeh, he would recite tasbeeh. When he passed by any du’a, he would make that du’a. When he passed by any form of Ta’awwuz (du’a seeking protection in Allah from any evil), he would seek Allah’s protection. In ruku’, he continued to recite « سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ ». His ruku’ was close in length to his standing. Then he said « سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ رَبَّنَا لَكَ الْحَمْدُ ». He then stood for so long that it was close in length to his ruku’. He then made sajdah. He continued to recite « سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى ». His sajdah was close in length to his standing. (Muslim no.1850)

Baraa ؓ narrates: The ruku’, sujud, the posture when he raised his head from ruku’ (qawmah) and the posture between the two sajdahs (jalsah) were all close to an equal length. (Bukhari no.768, 759)

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates: “Rasulullâh ﷺ used to offer eleven rak’ats – that is at night – he used to remain in prostration as long as it takes one of you to recite fifty verses and then raise his head. He used to offer two rak’ats before the fajr ṣalaah. He would then lie on his right side until the caller to ṣalaah came to call him.” (Bukhari no.949, 1071)

Aa’ishah ؓ narrates: Rasulullâh ﷺ would perform eight rak’ats. He would make his qira’ah, ruku’ and sajdah equal in length. (Abu Dawud no.1349)

Aa’ishah ؓ said: It would seem to me that he is making his qira’ah, ruku’ and sajdah equal in length. (Abu Dawud no.1354 Nasa’i no.1650) Rasulullâh ﷺ said, “As for ruku’, express the greatness of your Rabb in it. As for sujud, exert yourself in du’a, for it is most likely that your du’a will be accepted. (Muslim no.1102)

Moderation

Aa'ishah رضي الله عنها narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said: "If any of you slumbers in salaah, he should lie down until his sleepiness goes away. If any of you were to offer his salaah while feeling sleepy, it is possible that instead of seeking forgiveness, he will curse himself." (Bukhari no.209, Muslim no.1871) (The sign of slumber is when a person can hear the speech of those present before him, but cannot understand its meaning)

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said: "When any of you gets up at night and gets confused in his recitation of the Qur'an (because of sleepiness) and does not know what he is saying, he should lie down." (Muslim no.1872)

Waking others for Tahajjud

Waking up one's spouse: Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said, "May Allah have mercy on the man who stands during the night to perform salaah, and also wakes up his wife. If she does not comply, then he sprinkles some water on her face. May Allah have mercy on the woman who stands during the night to perform salaah, and also wakes up her husband. If he does not comply, then she sprinkles some water on his face." (Abu Dawud no.1310, 1452, Sunan Nasa'i no.1609, Ibn Majah no.1336)

Abu Hurairah and Abu Sa'eed Khudri رضي الله عنه narrate that Rasulullah ﷺ said, "When a man awakens his wife during the night and they both perform salaah, they will be written amongst the Zaakireen and Zaakiraat-those males and females who remember Allah abundantly." (Abu Dawud no.1453, Ibn Majah no.1335)

Mulla Ali Qari رحمته الله has written that the virtue mentioned in this narration contains an indication to the commentary of an Aayah of Surah Ahzaab, wherein Allah had praised those males and females who remember Allah abundantly, and promised them that He has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward. In other words, if one wishes to be included in the register of those males and females who remember Allah abundantly, an easy method is to perform Tahajjud and awaken your spouse to perform Tahajjud with you. As a result, you will earn for yourselves forgiveness and a great reward. (Mirqaatul Mafaatih)

Abu Maalik Ash'ari رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said, "When a man wakes up at night and awakens his wife, and if she is overtaken by sleep, he sprinkles some water on her face, then they stand up (in salaah) in their home and remember Allah (Azza wa Jalla) for a portion of the night, they will be forgiven." (Tabraani in Al-Mu'jamul Kabir no.3448)

Waking up one's children: Ali رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ came to him and [his wife] Faṭimah at night and said: "Are you not going to offer salaah?" (Bukhari no.1075 & 4447, Muslim no.1854)

Ibn Jareer states, "Nabi ﷺ would have not awoken his daughter and cousin at the time which Allah ﷻ had made a time of rest for His creation, had he not known the great virtue of tahajjud salaah. However, he chose for them this virtue over their comfort and rest." (Daleelul Faaliheen)

Witr Salaah at the end

Rasulullah ﷺ said, "Make the last salaah of the night the witr salaah." (Bukhari no.953, Muslim no.1791)

Rasulullah ﷺ said, "Who fears that he will not manage to stand in worship during the latter portion of the night, he should perform witr in the earlier portion of the night. Whoever expects to stand in worship in the latter portion of the night, he should perform witr in the latter portion. That is because the salaah at the latter portion of the night is witnessed (by large groups of angels) and that is best." (Muslim no.1802, 1803)

Dua

Jaabir رضي الله عنه narrates: I heard Rasulullah ﷺ saying: "There is a certain time in the night wherein if a Muslim asks Allah for any good of this world or the Hereafter, Allah will certainly give it to him. And this occurs every night." (Muslim no.1806)

Rasulullah ﷺ said: Our Rabb (who is Most Blessed and Most High) descends to the lowest heaven (in a manner befitting of His Majesty which is beyond our comprehension, without any movement and shifting from place to place) every night when the last third of the night remains. (He does this to signify His great proximity to his servants.) He says, "Who will call unto Me, so I can respond to his call? Who will ask Me (for his needs), so that I may grant it? Who will seek forgiveness from me, so that I may forgive him." (Bukhari no.1904, Muslim no.1808)

Istighfaar at Sehri time: Allah ﷻ praises those who spend their night awake in worship, and engage in istighfaar (seeking forgiveness) in the last portion of the night: "The righteous ones will be (enjoying themselves) in gardens and fountains. Taking what their Sustainer gives them. They were doers of good before this [day]. They used to sleep only a little at night. And at dawn, they used to seek forgiveness. In their wealth there was a share for the beggar and the deprived ones." (Surah az-Zaariyaat verse:15-19)

Rest after Tahajjud

Aa'ishah رضي الله عنها narrates: At the time of Sehri, Rasulullah ﷺ was always found to be asleep when he was by me. (Bukhari no.1082, Muslim no.1765)

Aa'ishah رضي الله عنها narrates: "Rasulullah ﷺ used to offer eleven rak'ats – that is at night – he used to remain in prostration as long as it takes one of you to recite fifty verses and then raise his head. He used to offer two rak'ats before the fajr salaah. He would then lie on his right side until the caller to salaah came to call him." (Bukhari no.949, 1071)

Explanation: 'He would then lie on his right' – This was done so that the Ummah could imitate him. There were two great reasons for doing so: 1) This posture reminds one of the lying down in the grave. This will lead to concentration and devotion, which is the essence of salaah.

2) If one is extremely tired, then he could rest after the tahajjud salaah on condition that he does not fall into a deep sleep and miss Fajr. This resting should take place at home and not in the masjid. The object of this rest was to remove tiredness of ibaadah and to be able perform the Fajr salaah with fervour and enthusiasm. If one happens to fall asleep, one will be required to make a new wudhu.

Catch up if one happens to miss Tahajjud

Aa'ishah رضي الله عنها narrates: "If Rasulullah ﷺ missed out the night salaah because of illness or some other reason, he would offer twelve rak'ats during the day." (Muslim no.1777)

She also said: "When Rasulullah ﷺ performed any salaah, he would love to be punctual in performing it. If he was overtaken by sleep or was ill and was unable to perform it, then he would offer twelve rak'ats during the day." (Muslim no.1773, 1778)

Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said: "He who oversleeps and misses his worship or any part thereof (at night), and then fulfills it between the fajr and zuhr salaahs, it will be recorded in his favour as though he read it at night." (Muslim no.1779)