



Fatwa no. 19854

Q: During the first twenty days of Ramadan, we are used to offering eleven Rak'ahs (units of Prayer) of Tarawih (special supererogatory night Prayer in Ramadan). In the last ten days, we offer ten Rak'ahs at the beginning of the night and ten Rak'ahs at the end of it, then we pray three units of Witr, so that the total becomes twenty-three Rak'ahs. A knowledge seeker claimed that differentiation in the number of Rak'ahs between the first twenty days and the last ten days is a Bid'ah (innovation in religion), and that the original ruling is complete equality in their number in all days throughout the whole month. He claimed that if we want to offer eleven Rak'ahs at the beginning of the month, we should do the same at its end. If we want to offer twenty-three Rak'ahs in the end of the month, we should do the same at the beginning. He also claimed that it is a Bid'ah to differentiate between Salah (Prayer) in the beginning and the end of the night in the last ten days, as we offer ten short Rak'ahs in the beginning of the night and call them Tarawih, and ten long Rak'ahs at the end of the night and call them Qiyam-ul-Layl (optional Night Prayer). Please advise, may Allah benefit people by your knowledge and raise your rank.

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A: Tarawih Prayer offered in Ramadan is a stressed Sunnah (supererogatory act of worship following the example of the Prophet) performed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) who led his Sahabah (Companions) in offering it for many nights, and then he discontinued it lest that it should become obligatory on them. His Sahabah did it after his death (peace be upon him), and it is still offered to the present day. As for the number of its Rak'ahs, there is no fixed authentic number. Some people claim that it is twenty-three; others claim that it is thirty-six; others claim more; and others claim less. During the era of `Umar the Sahabah used to offer twenty-three Rak'ahs in the Prophet's Mosque. The Prophet (peace be upon him) never used to offer more than eleven or thirteen Rak'ahs, whether in Ramadan or at any other time. He (peace be upon him) did not fix a certain number of Rak'ahs for the people in Tarawih and Qiyam-ul-Layl; he (peace be upon him) used to exhort them to perform Qiyam-ul-Layl, especially in Ramadan, saying, [\(Anyone who spends Laylat-ul-Qadr \(the Night of Decree\) in Qiyam, out of Iman \(Faith\) and Ihtisab \(confident anticipation of Allah's Reward\), will have their past sins forgiven.\)](#) He (peace be upon him) did not fix a certain number of Rak'ahs. This depends on the way a person offers Salah (Prayer); those who offer long Rak'ahs can offer a small number of Rak'ahs like what the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to do, while those who offer short Rak'ahs out of mercy on people can offer a large number of Rak'ahs like what the Sahabah used to do during the era of `Umar. There is nothing wrong in increasing the number of Rak'ahs in the last ten days of Ramadan in comparison to the first twenty days, and dividing them into two parts: one that is offered in the beginning of the night in the form of short Rak'ahs for Tarawih, and another that is offered in the end of the night in the form of long Rak'ahs for Tahajjud (optional late night Prayer). The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to exert himself more in worship during the last ten days of Ramadan than any other time. When the last ten days of Ramadan began, he (peace be upon him) used to gird himself for the purpose, stay up the night, devote himself to worship with abstention from conjugal intercourse, and wake his family up to seek to attain Laylat-ul-Qadr (the Night of Decree).

A person who forbids increasing the number of Rak'ahs at the end of the month than its beginning contradicts the guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Salaf (righteous predecessors). We should follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and urge the people to follow it, not spread claims that decrease their interest in devoting themselves to worship in Ramadan.

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

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Source: Fatwas of the Permanent Committee