

175914 - The virtue of praying four rak'ahs after 'Isha'

the question

Is this a saheeh hadith: "Whoever prays four (rak'ahs) after 'Isha', they will be equal in worth to Laylat al-Qadr"?

Detailed answer

It is proven from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that after 'Isha', when he returned to his house, he would pray four rak'ahs. That was narrated in a hadith from Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

I stayed overnight in the house of my maternal aunt Maymoonah bint al-Haarith, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was with her because it was her night. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) prayed 'Isha', then he came to his house and prayed four rak'ahs. Then he went to sleep, then he got up and said: "The little boy has gone to sleep", or similar words. Then he went and stood (to pray) and I stood on his left, but he made me stand on his right. He prayed five rak'ahs, then he prayed two rak'ahs, then he went to sleep, until I could hear him breathing deeply. Then he went out for the prayer. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (117).

In fact it is narrated in another hadith - even though it is somewhat da'eef (weak) - that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) habitually prayed four rak'ahs after 'Isha'.

It was narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) never prayed 'Isha' then entered upon me except he would pray four or six rak'ahs. Narrated by Abu Dawood (no. 1303); classed as da'eef by al-Albaani in Da'eef Abi Dawood - al-Umm (2/57).

Similar to that is a hadith narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr who said: When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) had prayed ‘Isha’, he would pray four rak’ahs, and make it odd-numbered by adding a rak’ah. Then he would go to sleep so that he could get up and pray later on in the night.

Narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad (26/34 – Mu’sasat ar-Risaalah edn). It was classed as da’eef by the commentators because its isnaad is interrupted.

The practice of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) indicates that it is prescribed to pray four rak’ahs after ‘Isha’ prayer. Therefore the scholars are unanimously agreed that it is prescribed to offer this prayer after ‘Isha’, whether there is a specific saheeh hadith concerning its virtue or not.

The Hanafi fuqaha’ are of the view that these four rak’ahs after ‘Isha’ are to be regarded as a regular Sunnah that is offered after the obligatory prayer, as it says in Fath al-Qadeer (1/441-449).

But what appears more likely to be correct – and Allah knows best – is that it is a naafil prayer that comes under the heading of qiyaam al-layl (voluntary night prayers), as Ibn Qudaamah described it in al-Mughni (2/96) as a “voluntary prayer”.

Secondly:

Concerning the virtue of the four rak’ahs after ‘Isha’ prayer there are five marfoo’ hadiths, i.e., they are attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and there are ten reports from the Sahaabah and Taabi’een that speak of their practice and their words in that regard. And there are many hadiths that were compiled by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf, in a chapter entitled Fi Arba’i Rak’aat ba’d Salaat al-‘Isha’ (Concerning Four Rak’ahs after ‘Isha’ Prayer). Al-Marwazi did likewise in his important book Qiyaam al-Layl, in a chapter entitled al-Arba’u Rak’aat ba’d al-‘Isha’ al-Aakhirah (The Four Rak’ahs after ‘Isha’), and al-Bayhaqi in as-Sunan al-Kubra, in a chapter entitled Baab man ja’ala ba’da al-‘Isha’ Arba’a Rak’aat aw Akthar (Chapter on One who prays Four or More Rak’ahs after ‘Isha’).

We will quote these hadiths and reports here, with some commentary on them.

The first hadith

It was narrated that Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever prays ‘Isha’ in congregation, and prays four rak‘ahs before he leaves the mosque, it will be equivalent to Laylat al-Qadr.”

Narrated by at-Tabaraani in al-Mu‘jam al-Kabeer (13.14/ p. 130) and in al-Mu‘jam al-Awsat (5/245). He said:

Muhammad ibn Fadl as-Saqati told us: Mahdi ibn Hafs told us: Ishaq al-Azraq told us: Abu Haneefah told us, from Muhaarib ibn Dithaar, from Ibn 'Umar.

And it was narrated via at-Tabaraani by Abu Na‘eem in Musnad Abi Haneefah (p. 223)

At-Tabaraani said: No one narrated this hadith from Ibn 'Umar except Muhaarib ibn Dithaar, and no one narrated it from Muhaarib except Abu Haneefah, and it was narrated only by Ishaq al-Azraq.

Al-'Iraqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is somewhat da'eef.

End quote from Tarh at-Tathreeb (4/162)

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Its isnaad includes a narrator who is da'eef but is not accused of lying.

End quote from Majma' az-Zawaa'id (2/40).

He also said:

It includes a narrator who was classed as da'eef in hadith.

End quote from Majma' az-Zawaa'id (2/231)

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on the remark of at-Tabaraani that "it was narrated only by Ishaq":

He is Ibn Yoosuf al-Waasiti, and he is thiqah (trustworthy). The same applies to all the men of the isnaad, apart from Abu Haneefah (may Allah have mercy on him). The imams classed him as da'eef. ... al-Haafiz al-Haythami also referred to the classification of Abu Haneefah as da'eef when he said, immediately after quoting the hadith: He is somewhat da'eef in hadith. It is as if he did not dare to mention his name openly because he feared the sectarianism of the Hanafis of his time. May Allah suffice us against the evil of sectarianism and its people! The biographies of all the narrators of this hadith are given in at-Tahdheeb apart from as-Saqati; his biography appears in Tareekh Baghdad (3/153). Al-Khateeb said: He was thiqah (trustworthy). He was also mentioned by ad-Daaraqutni who said: He is sadooq (truthful).

End quote from Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah (no. 5060).

The second hadith:

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbaas, who attributed it to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: "Whoever prays four rak'ahs after 'Isha', reciting in the first two rak'ahs 'Qul yaa ayyuha'l kaafiroon' [Soorat al-Kaafiroon] and 'Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad' [Soorat al-Ikhlaas], and reciting in the last two rak'ahs 'Tanzeel as-Sajdah' [Soorat as-Sajdah] and 'Tabaarak Alladhi bi yadihi'l-mulk (Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion)' [Soorat al-Mulk], they will be recorded for him like four rak'ahs on Laylat al-Qadr.

This was narrated by al-Marwazi in Qiyaam al-Layl (p. 92); at-Tabaraani in al-Mu'jam al-Kabeer (11/437); and al-Bayhaqi in as-Sunan al-Kubra (2/671). All of them narrated it via Sa'eed ibn Abi Maryam: 'Abdullah ibn Farrookh told me: Abu Farwah told me, from Saalim al-Aftas, from Sa'eed ibn Jubayr, from Ibn 'Abbaas in a marfoo' report [i.e., attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)].

Al-Bayhaqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated only by Ibn Farrookh al-Masri. End quote.

This is a da'eef isnaad because of Abu Farwah Yazeed ibn Sinaan ar-Rahhaawi. The critics of hadith are unanimously agreed that he is to be classed as da'eef. In fact Yahya ibn Ma'een said concerning him: He is nothing. An-Nasaa'i said: He is matrook al-hadith [i.e., his hadith is to be rejected]. Ibn 'Adiyy said: Most of his hadith is not known. See: Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (11/336).

Hence it was classed as da'eef by al-Haythami in Majma' az-Zawaa'id (2/231); and by al-Albaani in Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah (in his discussion of hadith no. 5060).

The third hadith:

It was narrated that Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“Four rak'ahs before Zuhr are equivalent (in virtue) to four like them after 'Isha', and four rak'ahs after 'Isha' are equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.”

Narrated by at-Tabaraani in al-Mu'jam al-Awsat (3/141) via Yahya ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abi'l-'Ayzaar, from Muhammad ibn Jihaadah. He said: No one narrated this hadith from Muhammad ibn Jihaadah except Yahya.

This isnaad is da'eef jiddan (very weak) because of Yahya ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abi'l-'Ayzaar. Abu Haatim said: He makes up hadith. Al-Bukhaari said: He is munkar al-hadith (his hadith is to be rejected). Ibn Ma'een said: He is an evil liar.

See: Lisaan al-Mizaan (8/464)

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Its isnaad includes Yahya ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abi'l-'Ayzaar, who is da'eef jiddan (very weak).

End quote from Majma' az-Zawaa'id (2/230)

Al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is da'eef jiddan (very weak).

End quote from Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah (no. 2739, 5058).

The fourth hadith:

It was narrated from al-Bara' ibn 'Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever prays four rak'ahs before Zuhr, it is as if he praying them as tahajjud at night; whoever prays (four rak'ahs) after 'Isha', they will be equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr. And if one Muslim meets another and takes him by the hand, and they are both sincere, they will not part until they have both been forgiven.”

Narrated by at-Tabaraani in al-Mu'jam al-Awsat (6/254). He said: Muhammad ibn 'Ali as-Saa'igh told us: Sa'eed ibn Mansoor told us: Naahid ibn Saalim al-Baahili told us: 'Ammaar Abu Haashim told us, from ar-Rabee' ibn Loot, from his paternal uncle al-Bara' ibn 'Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him).

At-Tabaraani said: No one narrated this hadith from ar-Rabee' ibn Loot except 'Ammaar Abu Haashim, and it was narrated only by Naahid ibn Saalim.

Al-Haythami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Its isnaad includes Naahid ibn Saalim al-Baahili and others. I have not found anyone who mentioned them.

End quote from Majma' az-Zawaa'id (2/221)

Al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is da'eef... I could not find any biography for Naahid ibn Saalim al-Baahili. Al-Haythami said concerning the hadith: Its isnaad includes Naahid ibn Saalim al-Baahili and others, and I have not found anyone who mentioned them. Apart from al-Baahili I do not know who he

is, unless he is the shaykh of at-Tabaraani, because he said: Muhammad ibn 'Ali as-Saa'igh told us: Sa'eed ibn Mansoor told us: Naahid ibn Saalim al-Baahili told us... But al-Haythami does not usually speak against the shaykhs of at-Tabaraani who are unknown and who are not mentioned in al-Mizaan, for example. And Allah knows best.

End quote from Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah (no. 5053).

The fifth hadith:

It was narrated that Yahya ibn Abi Katheer said:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed his companions to recite 'Alif-Laam-Meem as-Sajdah' [Soorat as-Sajdah] and 'Tabaarak Alladhi bi yadihi'l-mulk (Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion)' [Soorat al-Mulk], for each verse of them is equivalent to seventy verses of other soorahs, and whoever recites them after 'Isha', it will be for him equivalent in virtue to reciting them on Laylat al-Qadr.

This was narrated by 'Abd ar-Razzaaq in al-Musannaf (3/382) from Mu'ammarr ibn Raashid, from Yahya ibn Abi Katheer. It was narrated like this, as a mursal hadith, because Yahya ibn Abi Katheer was one of the junior Taabi'een, who died in 132 AH. It is not known from whom he narrated this hadith, and it is obvious that this is a reason to classify the hadith as da'eef.

See: Tahdheeb al-Kamaal (11/269)

Thirdly:

With regard to the reports that were narrated about the comments of the Sahaabah and Taabi'een which were similar in meaning to this hadith, they are as follows:

The first report:

It was narrated that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Whoever prays four rak'ahs after 'Isha', not separating them with a tasleem, they will be equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

This was narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (2/127). He said: Wakee' told us, from 'Abd al-Jabbaar ibn 'Abbaas, from Qays ibn Wahb, from Murrah, from 'Abdullah.

This isnaad is jayyid and intact.

The second report:

It was narrated that 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Whoever prays four rak'ahs after 'Isha', they will be equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (2/127). He said: Ibn Idrees told us, from Husayn, from Mujaahid, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr.

We say: The narrators of this isnaad are thiqaat (trustworthy), but there was a difference of opinion as to whether Mujaahid heard from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas. Al-Bardeejee said: Mujaahid narrated from Abu Hurayrah and 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr. And it was said that he did not hear from them.

See: Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (10/43).

The third report:

It was narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: Four rak'ahs after 'Isha' are equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

This was narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (2/127). He said: Muhammad ibn Fudayl told us, from al-'Ala' ibn al-Musayyab, from 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn al-Aswad, from his father, from 'Aa'ishah.

The narrators of this isnaad are thiqaat (trustworthy), but we have not come across anyone who mentioned 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn al-Aswad as being one of the shaykhs of al-'Ala' ibn al-Musayyab.

The fourth report:

It was narrated that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Whoever prays four rak'ahs after 'Isha', before leaving the mosque, they will equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

Narrated by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ash-Shaybaani – as it says in al-Athaar (1/292) – from his shaykh, Imam Abu Haneefah: al-Haarith ibn Ziyaad or Muhaarib ibn Dithaar – Muhammad was not certain – told us, from Ibn 'Umar.

This is a da'eef isnaad because of the doubt and uncertainty. We have not come across any biography for al-Haarith ibn Ziyaad, but al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was undoubtedly narrated from Muhaarib. ... As for al-Haarith ibn Ziyaad, I have not seen any mention of him among those who narrated from Ibn 'Umar.

End quote from al-Eethaar bi Ma'rifat Ruwwaat al-Aathaar (p. 57).

The fifth report:

It was narrated that Ka'b ibn Maati' – who is also known as Ka'b al-Ahbaar – said: Whoever prays four rak'ahs after 'Isha' and bows and prostrates properly in them, they will be equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

There are a number of isnaads from Ka'b, which we do not want to quote at length. They were narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah, an-Nasaa'i, ad-Daaraqutni, al-Bayhaqi and others.

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning one of its isnaads:

There is nothing wrong with this isnaad, but it is munqati' (interrupted) and is mawqoof, stopping at Ka'b – namely Ka'b al-Ahbaar. Even if the hadith was marfoo' (directly attributed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), it could not be taken as evidence, because in this case it would be mursal, so how about if it is mawqoof?

End quote from Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah (hadith no. 5053)

The sixth report:

It was narrated that Maysarah and Zaadaan said: He used to pray, of voluntary prayers, four rak'ahs before Zuhr and two rak'ahs after it, two rak'ahs after Maghrib, four rak'ahs after 'Isha', and two rak'ahs before Fajr.

This is how I found it, without mentioning the name of the Sahaabi, although what is most likely to be the case is that it was 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib. He is the one from whom Maysarah narrated it.

It was narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (2/19). He said: Abu'l-Ahwas told us, from 'Ata' ibn as-Saa'ib.

The seventh report:

It was narrated that 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn al-Aswad said: Whoever prays four rak'ahs after 'Isha', they will be equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

This was narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (2/127). He said: al-Fadl ibn Dakeen told us, from Bakeer ibn 'Aamir, from 'Abd ar-Rahmaan.

The eighth report:

It was narrated that 'Imraan ibn Khaalid al-Khuzaa'i said: I was sitting with 'Ata' when a man came to him and said: O Abu Muhammad, Tawoos is claiming that whoever prays 'Isha' then prays two rak'ahs after it, reciting in the first rak'ah Tanzeel as-Sajdah [Soorat as-Sajdah] and in the second rak'ah 'Tabaarak Alladhi bi yadihi'l-mulk (Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion)' [Soorat al-Mulk], there will be written for him (a reward) like that standing in prayer on Laylat al-Qadr. 'Ata' said: Tawoos is telling the truth; after that I never omitted to do that.

This was narrated by Abu Nu'aym in Hilyat al-Awliya' (4/6). He said: 'Umar ibn Ahmad ibn 'Umar al-Qaadi told us: 'Abdullah ibn Zaydaan told us: Ahmad ibn Haazim told us: 'Awn ibn

Salaam told us: Jaabir ibn Mansoor, the brother of Ishaq ibn Mansoor as-Salooli, told us, from 'Imraan ibn Khaalid.

The ninth report:

It was narrated that al-Qaasim ibn Abi Ayyoob said: Sa'eed ibn Jubayr used to pray four rak'ahs after 'Isha'.

This was narrated by al-Marwazi in Ta'zeem Qadr as-Salaah (1/167). He said: Yahya told us: 'Abbaad ibn al-'Awwaam told us, from Husayn, from al-Qaasim.

The tenth report:

It was narrated that Mujaahid said: Four rak'ahs after 'Isha' are equivalent (in virtue) to four like them on Laylat al-Qadr.

This was narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (2/127). He said: 'Ali told us, from al-A'mash, from Mujaahid.

Fourthly:

In conclusion, it is proven from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he used to pray four rak'ahs after 'Isha'. As for the marfoo' hadiths which speak of the virtue of doing so, they are all extremely da'eef (weak); the best and strongest of them is the hadith of Ibn 'Umar, despite the fact that it is da'eef.

With regard to the reports that were narrated from the Sahaabah and Taabi'een, they are indicative of the fact that the early generations acted in accordance with this Sunnah and that it was widespread among them. So it comes under the heading of qiyaam al-layl (voluntary prayers at night), for which there is evidence by the dozen in the Qur'an and Sunnah. However, when it comes to describing it as equivalent to prayers offered on Laylat al-Qadr, this is something that we cannot accept definitively, especially as it was narrated from Ka'b al-Ahbaar, because Ka'b was often influenced by what he knew of the Scriptures of the People of the Book. So there is the concern that the source of ascribing this virtue to

this prayer may be Ka'b al-Ahbaar, and those of the Sahaabah who took it from him only did that because of their attachment to the virtues of deeds for which they hoped for reward, and there is no harm in that..

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) was of the view that these reports may be raised to the level of being marfoo', which makes it permissible to quote them as evidence and act upon what is mentioned in them, as he (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The hadith is narrated in saheeh mawqoof reports from a number of the Sahaabah... Moreover, Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated similar hadiths from 'Aa'ishah, Ibn Mas'ood, Ka'b ibn Maati', Mujaahid and 'Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn al-Aswad in mawqoof reports, and the isnaads going back to them are all saheeh - with the exception of Ka'b. Although they are mawqoof, they come under the ruling on marfoo' reports, because the contents of the hadiths could not have been based on personal opinion, as is quite clear.

End quote from Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da'eefah (no. 5060).

And Allah knows best.