

## The Recommended but Voluntary Prayers (*As-Sunan Ar-Rawatib*)<sup>1</sup>

It is a desirable act for every Muslim man and woman, to maintain the performance of twelve optional *rak'ahs* while being resident. These *rak'ahs* are four *rak'ahs* of optional prayers before *Zuhr* and two after the *Zuhr* (noon) prayer, and two after the *Maghrib* (evening) prayer, and two after the *'Isha'* (night) prayer and two before the *Subh* (dawn) prayer.

Umm Habibah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saying, “**A house will be built in Al-Jannah for every Muslim who offers twelve Rak'ah of optional Salaah other than the obligatory Salaah in a day and a night (to seek the Pleasure of Allah.)**” [Transmitted by Muslim: 728].

The best practice for a Muslim regarding *As-Sunan Ar-Rawatib*, and supererogatory prayers in general is to perform them at home. Jabir reported Allah's Messenger (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as saying: “**When any one of you observes prayer in the mosque, he should reserve a part of his prayer for his house, for Allah would make the prayer as a means of betterment in his house.**” [Transmitted by Muslim: 778].

Moreover, it was reported in an agreed upon tradition on the authority of Zaid bin Thabit (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, “**O people! Perform your (voluntary) Salah (prayers) in your homes because the best Salah of a man is the one he performs at home, except the obligatory Salah.**” [Agreed upon: 6113, 781].

### **Al-Witr prayer**

It is a Sunnah practice for a Muslim to perform *Al-Witr* prayer. It is an emphatic Sunnah whose time begins after the *Isha* (night) prayer and continues until dawn, though the best time to perform it is the last part of the night for one who is sure to rise up in the night.

It is of the supererogatory acts of worship that the Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) never abandoned. He always performed it whether resident or on a journey.

The least number of *rak'ahs* for the *Witr* prayer is one *rak'ah*. The Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to observe eleven *rak'ahs* in the night according to the tradition reported by Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her) that the Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to pray eleven *rak'ahs* in the night, making them odd by a single one. [Transmitted by Muslim: 736].

The night prayer consists of pairs of *rak'ahs*. Ibn 'Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that a person asked the Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) about the night prayer. The Messenger of Allah (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, “**Prayer during the night should consist of pairs of rak'ahs, but if one of you fear morning is near, he should pray one rak'ah which will make his prayer an odd number for him.**” [Transmitted by Muslim: 749].

It is sometimes desirable for him to recite the *Qunoot* invocation after rising from the bowing position during the *Witr* prayer owing to the tradition narrated by Al-Hassan bin Ali (May Allah be pleased with both of them) where the Prophet (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught him some words he should say during the *Witr* invocation. However, he should not make it a constant practice because a majority of those who described the Prophet's prayer did not mention his act of reciting *Qunoot* invocation.

It is also a desirable act for the one who missed the night optional prayer to make up for it during the day but with even number of *rak'ahs* by observing two, four, six, eight, ten or twelve *rak'ahs* according to the practice of the Prophet (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in this regard.

<sup>(1)</sup> **As-Sunan Ar-Rawatib** implies the steady and constant supererogatory prayers that are performed after the obligatory prayers. They are two or four optional *rak'ahs* prayed at specific times of the day and night. They are twelve *rak'ahs* in all according to the sounder opinion.