

The Manner in which the Night Prayer is performed
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Source: Qiyaam Ramadaan (pgs. 28-30)

I spoke in detail about this subject in my book **Salaat-ut-Taraaweeh** (pg. 101-115), so I felt that I should abridge that discussion here in order to make it easy for the reader and to remind him:

The First Manner: 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 `Ishaa, or they are two specific rak'aat by which one begins the Night Prayer, as has been stated previously. Then one prays two very long rak'aat (after that). Then two more rak'aat are prayed, and then another two rak'aat are prayed. Then two more rak'aat are prayed and another set of two rak'aat are prayed. Then witr is made with one rak'ah.

The Second Manner: consists of thirteen rak'aat. There are eight rak'aat within them, in which one makes tasleem after every two rak'aat. Then witr is made with five rak'aat and one does not sit nor make the tasleem except in the fifth rak'ah.

The Third Manner: consists of eleven rak'aat, in which one makes tasleem after every two rak'aat and then prays witr at the end with one rak'ah.

The Fourth Manner: consists of eleven rak'aat, in which one prays four rak'aat and makes one tasleem after the four. Then he prays another four in a similar manner and ends it with three rak'aat (for witr).

Would the Prophet ﷺ remain in the sitting position after every two rak'aat, when praying a unit of four rak'aat or a unit of three rak'aat? We do not find a clear answer for this, but remaining in the sitting position (for tashahhud) while doing a unit of three rak'aat is not legislated (in the Religion)!

The Fifth Manner: consists of eleven rak'aat, in which one prays eight rak'aat and does not sit in any of them except for the eighth rak'ah. While sitting (in the eighth rak'ah), he makes the tashahhud and sends Salaat on the Prophet ﷺ and then stands up again without making the tasleem. Then he makes witr with one rak'ah and when finished, he makes the tasleem. This consists of nine rak'aat. Then he prays two rak'aat after that while in the sitting position.

The Sixth Manner: One prays nine rak'aat, in which he does not sit except after the sixth rak'ah. Then he makes the tashahhud and sends Salaat on the Prophet ﷺ and then stands again without making the tasleem. Then he makes witr with three rak'aat and when finished, he makes the tasleem, etc. (the rest is the same as the previous manner)

These are the manners in which it is reported that the Prophet ﷺ performed the Night Prayer. It is possible to add other types of manners to it, by subtracting what one wishes from each set of rak'aat until he cuts it down to one rak'ah, acting on the previously mentioned hadeeth of Allaah's Messenger SAWS: **"So whoever wishes, then let him pray witr with five rak'aat, and whoever wishes, then let him pray witr with three rak'aat, and whoever wishes, then let him pray witr with one rak'ah."**

So if one wants, he can pray these five rak'aat or three rak'aat with one sitting and one tasleem, as is stated in the Second Manner. And if he wants, he can make tasleem after every two rak'aat, as is stated in the Third Manner, and this is preferred.

As for praying the set of five rak'aat or three rak'aat by sitting after every two rak'aat and not making the tasleem, then we did not find any authentic report that the Prophet ﷺ used to do this. The asl (foundation) is that it is permissible, but since the Prophet ﷺ forbade us from praying witr with three rak'aat indicating the reason for that by saying: **"And do not liken it to the Maghrib prayer."** [1] So then anyone that prays the witr in three rak'aat must not liken it to the Maghrib prayer. This can be done in two ways:

1. Making the tasleem between the even and odd number rak'ah (i.e. between the second and the third rak'ah). This is what is more strong and preferred.
2. One does not sit between the even and odd number (i.e. he prays three rak'aat straight with one tasleem), and Allaah knows best.

Footnotes:

[1] Reported by At-Tahawee, Ad-Daraqutnee and others. See At-Taraaweeh (pg. 99 & 110)