

Number of Rak`ahs in Tarawih

First of all it is to be noted that [Tarawih prayer](#) is a Sunnah that is highly recommended. In the Hadith reported by Salman Al-Farisi (may Allah be please with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) addressed the people saying: **“O people a blessed and holy month comes to you spreading its shade on you, a month in which Allah made fasting obligatory and staying up at night in worship (i.e. performing Tarawih) as an optional act. In this month there is a single night which is better than one thousand months...”**

Sheikh Ahmad Kutty, a senior lecturer and Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states: As far as Tarawih is concerned, it is a *nafl* or a recommended prayer and there is no fixed number for it. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was asked about optional night prayer he replied: **“One should perform the night prayer two *rak`ahs*, then two *rak`ahs*, etc. And when he feels the arrival of the dawn he should close it off by offering *witr*, even if it is by praying one *rak`ah*.”**

Traditionally, Muslims have prayed 8 *rak`ahs* or 20, or 30, or 40 *rak`ahs* in various circumstances. So, as Imam Ibn Taymiyyah said, it is up to the decision of the Imam and the worshippers; if they can perform 8 *rak`ahs* while reading the same portion of the Qur'an that one would read while praying 20 *rak`ahs*, they may do so. However, if the Imam feels that the congregation cannot endure long recitation with fewer number of *rak`ahs*, he can increase the number of *rak`ahs* and reduce the portion of recitation in each *rak`ah*.

In conclusion, we can say that the Prophet's way of offering optional prayer at night through the whole year can be applied to [Tarawih Prayer](#), by virtue of analogy.