

## Witr: An Analysis

The Witr prayer is one of the most important prayers in Islam, and it is a distinctive feature of the Hanafi school of thought. In this speech, we will discuss how the Hanafi school prays the Witr prayer and the proofs and evidence supporting the view that it is a mandatory prayer that should be prayed like Maghrib, and the practice of not raising hands in dua during the Witr prayer. As well as having one set of Salam in witr.

The Hanafi school of thought considers the Witr prayer to be a mandatory prayer (wajib) for all adult Muslims who are sane and physically able to perform it. The evidence for this view is based on several ahadith, including the hadith narrated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that “ Allah has prescribed a prayer which is better for you than the red camels, and that is the prayer after the sun has set until the darkness of the night comes, and the recitation of the Quran which you do in the prayer of Witr.” Another Hadith is “Whoever misses the witr prayer due to sleep or forgetfulness should perform it when he recalls it.” [Tirmidhi]. Because of the prophetic commandment of Witr and the prophet’s habit to perform Witr until he passed away, as well as the habit and the teachings of the Salaf, we believe Witr is Wajib.

Regarding the method of performing the Witr prayer, the Hanafi school holds that it should be performed in sets of three raka'at, similar to the Maghrib prayer. This view is supported by the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who is reported to have performed Witr prayer in sets of three raka'at, and this method has been followed by the Hanafi school. It is also reported that Imam Hasan Al Basri stated that the scholars unanimously agree that Witr is done in 3 rak'ahs like Maghrib. Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood (R.A) says ” The Witr is three like the witr of the daytime, the prayer of Maghrib.” [Tahawi, Sharh Ma`ani al-Athar]. Here are some of the evidences stating that Witr should be prayed similarly to Maghrib in sets of three raka'at.

In the first two raka'at, after reciting the Surah Al-Fatiha, a portion of the Quran is recited, followed by a ruku (bowing down), and then standing up again. In the third raka'at, a similar process is followed, but instead of bowing down into ruku', a second Takbir is made and the dua for witr is recited, then a person bows down in ruku' and completes the prayer like normal. The Hanafi school of thought does not advocate the practice of raising hands in dua during the Witr prayer, which is a practice followed by some Muslims. This is based on the view that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) did not raise his hands during the Witr prayer. Instead of raising hands for dua in the third raka'at of the Witr prayer, the Hanafi school recommends

performing a second Takbir. This is based on many ahadith and evidences, some of them include: ‘Alqama reports that ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (Allah be pleased with them) said: “Should I not demonstrate the prayer of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) for you” He performed the prayer, and did not raise his hands except at the initial takbir (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1:59, Sunan al-Nasa’i 1:161, Sunan Abi Dawud 1:116).

Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (Allah be pleased with them) narrates: I performed prayer with the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace), Abu Bakr and ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with him and his father). They did not raise their hands except at the beginning of prayer (Nasb al-riya 1:526, Majma’ al-zawa’id 2:101).

Finally ‘Urwa ibn Murra states:

When I entered the masjid (mosque) of Hadramawt, I heard ‘Alqama ibn Wa’il narrate from his father that the Messenger (Allah bless him & give him peace) would raise his hands before and after the bowing posture. I mentioned this to Ibrahim al-Nakh’a (Allah have mercy on him) who responded angrily, “Is Wa’il ibn Hujr the only one to have seen the Messenger (Allah bless him & give him peace) Didn’t Ibn Mas’ud (Allah be pleased with him) and his companions also see him?” In another narration in the Muwatta it states that Ibrahim Al Nakh’i stated “If Wa’il saw him do it once, Ibn Mas’ood saw him not doing it 100 times.” (Muwatta Imam Muhammad 92).

The Hanafis favour the view that there is only one set of salams at the end of Witr. This is proven from the practice of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and major Sahabah and Tabi’in as documented below.

Famously, Ibn ‘Umar held the former view although Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani explained that what is apparent from his practice is that he would normally pray three rak’ahs of Witr with one set of salams, unless some need arose in which case he would say salam after two rak’ahs and after completing his need, add the final rak’ah to it (Fath al-Bari, quoted in I’la al-Sunan, 6:29). Al Tahawi also mentions that Umar (R.A) would pray with one set of Salam.

Al-Nasa’i, Muhammad, al-Tahawi and Ibn Abi Shaybah (Musannaf, no. 6912) transmitted with the same chain (Sa’id ibn Abi ‘Arubah from Qatadah from Zurarah ibn Abi Awfa from Sa’d ibn Hisham) that ‘A’ishah said:

كان نبي الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لا يسلم في ركعتي الوتر

“The Prophet of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would not say salam in the two rak’ahs of Witr.”

Al-Nawawi said of this hadith: “Al-Nasa’i narrated it with a hasan chain, and al-Bayhaqi narrated it in al-Sunan al-Kubra with a sahih chain.” (Sharh al-Muhadhdhab, 3:513)

Al-Hakim also narrated it and said it is authentic according to criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim and al-Dhahabi agreed.

Al-Nasa’i narrated:

عن أبي بن كعب قال: كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقرأ في الوتر بسبح اسم ربك الأعلى وفي الركعة الثانية بقل يا أيها الكافرون وفي الثالثة بقل هو الله أحد ولا يسلم إلا في آخرهن

“Yahya ibn Musa reported to us, he said: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Khalid reported to us, he said: Sa‘id ibn Abi ‘Arubah narrated to us from Qatadah from ‘Azrah from Sa‘id ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abza from his father from Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, he said: ‘The Messenger of Allah would recite in Witr sabbihisma rabbika l-a‘la, and in the second rak‘ah qul ya ayyuha l-kafirun and in the third qul huwa Llah, and he would not say salam except at the end of these (three rak‘ahs).’”

(Sunan al-Nasa’i, Qadimi Kutub Khanah, pp. 248-9)

Al-‘Iraqi said its chain is sahih and al-Nimawi said it is hasan. (Quoted in I‘la al-Sunan, 6:42).

In conclusion, the Witr prayer is a mandatory prayer in the Hanafi school of thought, and it should be performed in sets of three raka'at, similar to the Maghrib prayer. The practice of not raising hands in dua during the Witr prayer is based on the view that it is an abrogated act, and the second Takbir is recited in the third raka'at as an alternative. The Hanafi school's approach to the Witr prayer is based on the practice and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions, and it is based on the understanding of the Quran and the Sunnah.

The Hanafi school believes that following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the best way to worship Allah and to seek His pleasure. The Prophet's practice and teachings have been preserved through the hadiths, and the Hanafi scholars have carefully studied these hadiths to derive their rulings.

It is important to note that while the Hanafi school may have a different approach to the Witr prayer compared to other schools of thought, this does not mean that one approach is necessarily better than the other. Each school of thought has its own evidence and reasoning, and as long as it is based on the Quran and Sunnah, it is valid.

The Witr prayer is an important aspect of Islamic worship, and the Hanafi school of thought has its own approach to this prayer based on the Quran and Sunnah. The prayer should be performed

in sets of three raka'at, similar to the Maghrib prayer, and the practice of not raising hands in dua during the Witr prayer is based on the view that it is an abrogated act, and the second Takbir is recited in the third raka'at as an alternative. May Allah guide us all to the straight path and accept our worship. Ameen.