

Method of Reciting Salat al-Layl

Salat al-Layl is 11 Rak`at in which the first 8 Rak`at are prayed in four Salat of two Rak`at each with the intention of *Salat al-Layl* (we finish each two Rak`at of Salat off with the Salam and then start the next set of Salat until we have completed 8 Rak`at). Following this, two Rak`at would be read with the intention of Salat ash-Shaf`. Once this is recited, one Rak`at with the intention of Salat al-Witr would be recited.

The time of Salat al-Layl is the last one third of the night.¹

It is a commonly held belief that the closer that the Salat al-Layl is read to the time of Salat al-Fajr, the better it is, however, in many ahadith it has been mentioned that a little bit after the middle of the night, the Prophet of Islam and the A`immah (blessings of Allah be upon all of them), performed the Salat al-Layl. The narrations that mention these are great and it is has been mentioned that this is the time when one's supplications are answered.²

However, it has also been mentioned that the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) used to recite the Salat al-Layl in three stages:

1. Four Rak`at after the middle of the night.
2. Four Rak`at in the last one-third of the night.
3. Three Rak`at near to the time of Fajr while performing a very long Ruku.³

It has been narrated that when Imam `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (peace be upon him) was on his way from Madinah to Khurasan, he first recited the Salat of Ja`far at-Tayyar and counted that Salat as a part of the Salat al-Layl.⁴

It is Mustahab that after each two Rak`at, the Tasbih of Fatima az-Zahra (blessings be upon her) is performed.⁵

In the second Rak`at of each of the two Rak`at Salat, it is Mustahab that before going into Ruku`, the

Qunut is performed. It is also Mustahab that in the Qunut, if possible, one sheds tears for the fear of Allah and for the fear of the punishment of Allah (Glory and Greatness be to Him) and if one can not cry, he should at least ‘pretend’ to cry.⁶

It is Mustahab that in the first and second Rak`at of the Salat al-Layl that after Surah al-Fatiha, Surah al-Ikhlās is recited 30 times.⁷ If one is not able to recite this, then in the first Rak`at after al-Fatiha, one should recite Surah al-Ikhlās and in the second Rak`at after Surah al-Fatiha, one should recite Surah al-Kafirun.

It is better that in the second Rak`at of the first Salat, Surah al-Muzzammil is read and in the second Rak`at of the second Salat, Surah an-Naba is read. It is Mustahab that in the first Rak`at of the third Salat, Surah Ya Sin is read, and in the second Rak`at (of the third Salat), Surah ad-Dukhan is read – alternately, one can read Surah Waqiyah in place of Ya Sin and Surah al-Muddathir in place of Surah ad-Dukhan. It is Mustahab that in the first Rak`at of the fourth Salat, Surah al-Mulk is read and in the second Rak`at of the fourth Salat, Surah al-Insan is read.⁸

It has been mentioned that Imam Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Baqir (peace be upon him) used to recite Surah al-Ikhlās in the Salat al-Shaf` and Salat al-Witr and after reciting this Surah, would say:

كَذَٰلِكَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي

“This is Allah my Lord”⁹

Recitation of Surah al-Ikhlās is counted as the recitation of one-third of the Qur`an, thus, who ever recites this Surah in the three Rak`at (Salat al-Shaf` and Salat al-Witr) is as if he has recited the entire Qur`an.¹⁰

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1. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 223; Al-Hidayah, Pg. 35
 2. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 227
 3. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 228
 4. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 231; `Uyun Al-Akhbar ar-Rida, Vol. 2, Pg. 181
 5. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 243
 6. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 272; Misbah Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 107
 7. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 232
 8. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 243
 9. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 87, Pg. 226; Furu` Al-Kafi, Vol. 3, Pg. 441
 10. Bihar Al-Anwar, Vol. 86, Pg. 226; Tahdhib, Vol. 1, Pg. 171

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