

36793 - Ruling on negligence in performing Witr prayer

the question

Is it permissible to omit Witr prayer? What are the consequences of omitting it?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

Witr prayer is Sunnah mu'akkadah (a confirmed sunnah) according to the majority of scholars, and some of the fuqaha' regarded it as obligatory.

The fact that it is not obligatory is indicated by the hadeeth narrated by al-Bukhaari (1891) and Muslim (11) from Talhah ibn 'Ubayd-Allaah (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: A man came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and said: "O Messenger of Allaah, what prayers has Allaah enjoined on me?" He said: "The five prayers, unless you do anything voluntarily." The version narrated by Muslim says: "Five prayers every day and night." He said: "Do I have to do anything else?" He said, "No, unless you do it voluntarily."

Al-Nawawi said:

This indicates that Witr prayer is not obligatory. End quote.

Al-Haafiz said in al-Fath:

This indicates that no prayers during the day and night are obligatory apart from the five prayers; this is contrary to the view of those who say that Witr or the two Sunnah rak'ahs of Fajr are obligatory. End quote.

However it is the most confirmed Sunnah and was enjoined by the Prophet (peace and blessings of

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Allaah be upon him) in more than one hadeeth.

Muslim (754) narrated from Abu Sa'eed (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Perform Witr before morning comes."

Abu Dawood (1416) narrated that 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "O people of the Qur'aan, pray Witr, for Allaah is One and loves that which is odd-numbered." Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

Hence we should continue to offer Witr prayer regularly, whether travelling or not, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to do. Al-Bukhaari (1000) and Muslim (700) narrated that Ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was on a journey, atop his mount, whichever direction it was facing, gesturing the motions of the night prayer, except the obligatory prayer, and he prayed Witr atop his mount."

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: Witr is not obligatory. This is the view of Maalik and al-Shaafa'i. Abu Haneefah said: it is obligatory. Then he said: Ahmad said: Whoever omits to pray Witr deliberately is a bad man, whose testimony should not be accepted. He wanted to emphasize that it is confirmed because of the ahaadeeth which say that it is enjoined and encouraged. End quote from al-Mughni, 1/827

The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked: Is Witr prayer obligatory, and will the one who prays it on some days and not on others be punished for that?

They replied:

Witr prayer is Sunnah mu'akkadah (a confirmed Sunnah) which the believer should adhere to. Whoever prays it on some days and not on others will not be blamed for that, but he should be

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advised to pray Witr regularly. It is prescribed to pray two rak'ahs during the day instead if a person misses it, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to do that, as it was narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: If sleep or sickness kept him from praying at night, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would pray twelve rak'ahs during the day. Narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) usually prayed eleven rak'ahs at night, saying the salaam after each two rak'ahs then praying one rak'ah on its own. But if sleep or sickness kept him from doing that, he would pray twelve rak'ahs during the day, as 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) stated. Based on this, if a person usually prays five rak'ahs at night but he sleeps or misses them for any other reason, it is prescribed for him to pray six rak'ahs during the day, saying salaam after each two rak'ahs. If his habit is to pray three rak'ahs, then he should pray four rak'ahs with two salaams, and if his habit is to pray seven rak'ahs, he should pray eight with the salaam after each two rak'ahs. End quote.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah, 7/172.