

9061 - Is the du'aa' of Witr obligatory, and what should a person say if he cannot memorize it?

the question

I have noticed that it takes me time to learn a certain dua or surah by heart .i know that dua -e - qunood is farz in 3 witr prayer of the isha prayer...i always used to read some other surah instead of this dua as i did not know the dua by heart but i recently found out that it is farz so i tried to learn the dua but it is taking me time...so for several days i have been doing this that when i do 3 witr , in the third rakah i read from a book which i pick up from the side table during the prayer..i still face the qiblah when i pick it up, infact i do not have to move to pick it up....i want to know if that is allowed that u read a surah or dua from a book during the prayer.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

1 - There is noting wrong with reading the du'aa' of Qunoot from a piece of paper or a booklet in Witr prayer until one is able to memorize it, after which you can stop reading it and can recite it from memory. It is also permissible to recite Qur'aan from the Mus-haf during naafil prayers for those who have not memorized a lot of Qur'aan.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz was asked about the ruling on reading Qur'aan from the Mus-haf in Taraaweeh prayer, and what the evidence is for that from the Qur'aan and Sunnah.

He replied:

There is nothing wrong with reading from the Mus-haf when praying at night during Ramadaan because that will enable the believers to hear all of the Qur'aan. And because the evidence of sharee'ah from the Qur'aan and Sunnah indicates that it is prescribed to recite Qur'aan in prayer,

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which includes both reading it from the Mus-haf and reciting it by heart. It was narrated from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that she told her freed slave Dhakwaan to lead her in praying night prayers during Ramadaan, and he used to read from the Mus-haf. This was narrated by al-Bukhaari (may Allaah have mercy on him) in his Saheeh, in a mu'allaq majzoom report.

Fataawa Islamiyyah, 2/155

2 - It is not obligatory for the du'aa' of Qunoot to be in the words narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him); rather it is permissible for the worshipper to say other words or to add to them. Even if he were to recite verses from the Qur'aan that include words of supplication, that would be sufficient. Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: Note that there is no specific du'aa' for Qunoot according to the preferred point of view. Any du'aa' that is said will serve as Qunoot, even if one recites a verse or verses from the Qur'aan that include words of supplication, this will count as Qunoot, but it is better to recite the words that were narrated in the Sunnah.

Al-Adhkaar al-Nawawiyyah, p. 50

3 - As for what the brother mentions about reciting Qur'aan instead of the du'aa' of Qunoot, there is no doubt that he should not do this, because the purpose behind Qunoot is du'aa' or supplication. Hence if these verses include words of supplication, it is permissible to recite them as Qunoot, for example, the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower"

[Aal 'Imraan 3:8]

4 - With regard to what the brother says about Qunoot being obligatory, this is not correct, because Qunoot is Sunnah. Based on this, if a worshipper omits Qunoot, his prayer is still valid.

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Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) was asked about the ruling on reciting the du'aa' of Qunoot in Witr during the nights of Ramadaan, and whether it is permissible to omit it.

He replied:

Qunoot is Sunnah in Witr and if a person omits it sometimes, there is nothing wrong with that.

And he was asked about a person who always recites Qunoot in Witr every night – was that narrated from our forebears (the salaf)?

He replied:

There is nothing wrong with that, rather it is Sunnah, because when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) taught al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) to say Qunoot in Witr, he did not tell him to omit it sometimes or to do it all the time. This indicates that either is permissible. Hence it was narrated that when Ubayy ibn Ka'b (may Allaah be pleased with him) led the Sahaabah in prayer in the Mosque of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), he used to omit Qunoot some nights; perhaps that was in order to teach the people that it is not obligatory. And Allaah is the Source of strength.

Fataawa Islamiyyah, 2/159.