

## Hadith Proofs for the Hanafi Procedure of Witr

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This is a collection of hadith proofs for the Hanafi method of Witr. It is divided into five sections:

1. The first section is on the evidences for Witr consisting of three *rak'ahs*
2. The second is on the evidences for there being only one set of *salams* for Witr
3. The third is on the evidences for sitting for *tashahhud* in the second *rak'ah* of Witr
4. The fourth is on the evidences for reciting Qunut before *ruku'* of the third *rak'ah* of Witr
5. The fifth is on the evidences for saying *takbir* and raising the hands before Qunut

### Section One: Witr is Three *Rak'ahs*

#### Hadith One

Al-Bukhari and Muslim transmitted in their *Sahihs* from 'A'ishah that she said when describing the night prayer of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

يُصَلِّي أَرْبَعًا فَلَا تَسَلْ عَنْ حَسَنِهِمْ وَطَوْلِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَصَلِّي ثَلَاثًا

“He would pray four (*rak'ahs* of tahajjud), so do not ask about their beauty and their length. Then he would pray (another) four (*rak'ahs* of tahajjud), so do not ask about their beauty and their length. And then he would pray three (*rak'ahs* of Witr).” (*Fath al-Bari*, Dar al-Salam, 3:42)

#### Hadith Two

Imam Muslim transmitted in his *Sahih* from 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas from his father, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas in the description of the Prophet's night prayer:

ثم أوتر بثلاث

“Then he performed Witr with three (*rak'ahs*).” (*Fath al-Mulhim*, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 5:115-6)

Ahmad, al-Tahawi and others transmitted from Ibn 'Abbas:

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يوتر بثلاث بسبح اسم ربك الأعلى وقل يا أيها الكافرون وقل هو الله أحد

“The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would offer Witr with three (*rak'ahs*), with [the surahs] *sabbihisma rabbika l-a'la*, *qul ya ayyuha l-kafirun* and *qul huwa Llahu ahad*.”

The editors of *Musnad Ahmad* commented: “Its chain is *sahih*.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 4:457, no. 2726)

Imam al-Tahawi narrated through multiple authentic routes from Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) would offer Witr with three *rak'ahs*. Those who narrated this from Ibn 'Abbas include Kurayb, 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah, Sa'id ibn Jubayr and Yahya ibn al-Jazzar. Some of these reports from Ibn 'Abbas are also found in al-Nasa'i's *Sunan*, al-Tirmidhi's *Jami'* and Ibn Abi Shaybah's *Musannaf*.

Hence, it is established from ‘A’ishah and Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them), two of the most knowledgeable companions about the Prophet’s night-prayer, that he offered three *rak’ahs* of Witr. More narrations from them are documented below.

### **Hadith Three**

Ahmad, Abu Dawud and al-Tahawi reported that ‘Abd Allah ibn Abi Qays asked ‘A’ishah how many (*rak’ahs*) did the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) pray for Witr, and she replied:

كان يوتر بأربع وثلاث وست وثلاث وثمان وثلاث وعشر وثلاث

“He would perform Witr with four and three, six and three, eight and three and ten and three.”

The editors of *Musnad Ahmad* said: “Its chain is *sahih* according to the criterion of Muslim.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, 42:81, no. 25159)

In this narration, ‘A’ishah describes different practices of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in his night prayer. Sometimes he would offer four *rak’ahs* (of *tahajjud*), at other times six, at other times eight and at other times ten, but in all cases he would add three *rak’ahs* (of Witr). The additional three *rak’ahs* are the actual Witr prayer, while the other *rak’ahs* are of the optional night prayer. In hadith terminology, often “*witr*” is used for the sum total of the night prayer and Witr itself. This narration makes it clear that the three *rak’ahs* are distinguished from the other set of prayers.

### **Hadith Four**

Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ahmad and al-Nasa’i transmitted from Ibn ‘Umar that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

صلاة المغرب وتر النهار

“Maghrib prayer is the Witr of the day.”

Hafiz al-‘Iraqi sourced it to Ahmad in *Takhrij al-Ihya’* and said its chain is *sahih* (footnotes to *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, Dar Qurtubah, 4:466, no. 6773).

‘Allamah Badr al-Din al-‘Ayni said: “The chain is according to the criterion of the two *shaykhs* (i.e. Bukhari and Muslim).” (*Nukhab al-Afkar*, Dar al-Nawadir, 5:100)

Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani, one of the foremost students of Imam Abu Hanifah, said after narrating these words in his *Muwatta’* as a *mawquf* narration from Ibn ‘Umar: “For the one who considers Maghrib prayer the Witr of the day – as Ibn ‘Umar said – it ought to be that the Witr of the night prayer is similar to it.” (*al-Ta’liq al-Mumajjad*, Dar al-Qalam, 1:647)

### **Hadith Five**

Imam al-Tahawi narrated with his chain from ‘Uqbah ibn Muslim: “I asked ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar about Witr, and he said: ‘Do you know the Witr of the Day?’ I said: ‘Yes, Maghrib prayer.’ He said: ‘You have spoken the truth.’” (*Sharh Ma’ani al-Athar*, Maktabah Haqqaniyyah, 1:197)

Regarding the chain, ‘Allamah Badr al-Din al-‘Ayni said in his commentary of *Sharh Maani al-Athar* called *Nukhab al-Afkar*. “He transmitted it with a *sahih* Egyptian chain.” (*Nukhab al-Afkar*,5:19)

Al-Tahawi then comments: “Do you not see that when ‘Uqbah asked Ibn ‘Umar about Witr, he said, ‘Do you know the Witr of the day?’ Meaning, it is like it. And in this is what informs you that Witr was three (*rak‘ahs*) according to Ibn ‘Umar like Maghrib prayer, since he made his answer to one asking about the Witr of the night, ‘Do you know the Witr of the day, Maghrib prayer?’” (*Sharh Ma‘ani Athar*, 1:197)

This corroborates the above narration.

### **Hadith Six**

Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani narrates:

أخبرنا عبد الرحمن بن عبد الله المسعودي عن عمرو بن مرة عن أبي عبيدة قال: قال عبد الله بن مسعود: الوتر ثلاث كثلث المغرب

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Abd Allah (ibn ‘Utbah) al-Mas‘udi reported to us from ‘Amr ibn Murrah from Abu ‘Ubaydah, he said: ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud said: “Witr is three like the three of Maghrib.” (*al-Ta‘liq al-Mumajjad*, 2:15)

This is an authentic chain except that it is uncertain whether Abu ‘Ubaydah heard from his father, Ibn Mas‘ud. Nonetheless, this report has another authentic route free of any defects also narrated by Muhammad:

حدثنا أبو معاوية المكفوف عن الأعمش عن مالك بن الحارث عن عبد الرحمن بن يزيد عن عبد الله بن مسعود قال: الوتر ثلاث كصلاة المغرب

This report comes via the route of al-A‘mash from Malik ibn al-Harith from ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Yazid from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud that he said, “Witr is three like Maghrib prayer.” Al-Tahawi also narrated it via the same route through two chains, and al-‘Ayni said: “He transmitted it via two *sahih* routes.” (*Nukhab al-Afkar*, 5:107) Ibn Abi Shaybah also transmitted it via this chain in his *Musannaf* (no. 6779, 6889) as did ‘Abd al-Razzaq in his *Musannaf* (no. 4635).

### **Hadith Seven**

The above report was also narrated as a *marfu‘* hadith from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), that he said:

وتر الليل ثلاث كوتر النهار صلاة المغرب

“The Witr of the night is three, like the Witr of the day, Maghrib prayer.”

Al-Daraqutni reported it in his *Sunan* (no. 1653). All the narrators in his chain are reliable except Yahya ibn Zakariyya ibn Abi I-Hawajib who al-Daraqutni declared weak. However, Ibn Hibban included Yahya ibn Zakariyya in his *Kitab al-Thiqat* (a book on reliable narrators) which somewhat elevates his status. Nonetheless, despite the weakness of this narration it is supported by the authentic narration from the Prophet (peace be upon him) quoted previously (hadith four) and from the authentic statements of Ibn Mas‘ud and Ibn ‘Umar that compare the Maghrib prayer with Witr.

### **Hadith Eight**

Al-Tahawi and Ibn Majah narrate with their chains from ‘Amir al-Sha‘bi that he said:

سألت ابن عباس وابن عمر: كيف كان صلاة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بالليل؟ فقال: ثلاث عشرة ركعة، ثمان ويوتر بثلاث وركعتين بعد الفجر

“I asked Ibn ‘Abbas and Ibn ‘Umar: ‘How was the prayer of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) in the night?’ He said: ‘Thirteen *rak’ahs*: eight (optional) and he performed Witr with three (*rak’ahs*) and two *rak’ahs* after dawn (for the Sunnah of Fajr).”

Al-‘Ayni comments that the chain is “*sahih* according to the criterion of the two *shaykhs* (Bukhari and Muslim.” (*Nukhab al-Afkar*, 5:21)

### **Hadith Nine**

Imam Muhammad narrated in his *Muwatta’*:

أخبرنا أبو حنيفة: حدثنا أبو جعفر قال: كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يصلي ما بين صلاة العشاء إلى صلاة الصبح ثلاث عشر ركعة ثمان ركعات تطوعاً وثلاث ركعات الوتر وركعتي الفجر

“Abu Hanifah reported to us: Abu Ja‘far narrated to us, he said: The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would pray 13 *rak’ahs* between ‘Isha prayer and dawn prayer: 8 optional *rak’ahs*, three *rak’ahs* Witr and two *rak’ahs* of Fajr (Sunnah).” (*Muwatta’* no. 259)

This is an authentic *mursal* chain. A *mursal* hadith is one in which a Tabi‘i narrates directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him) without mentioning his source. Abu Ja‘far is Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn ‘Ali al-Baqir (56 – 114 H), a descendent of the Prophet (peace be upon him) whose narrations are found in all six of the famous collections of hadith. *Mursal* reports are a proof (*hujjah*) according to the majority of jurists. Evenso, it is supported by the authentic narration quoted above.

### **Hadith Ten**

Al-Tahawi narrates with his chain from Abu I-‘Aliyah:

علمنا أصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم أن الوتر مثل صلاة المغرب غير أننا نقرأ في الثالثة فهذا وتر الليل وهذا وتر النهار

“The Companions of Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) taught us that Witr is equivalent to Maghrib prayer, except that we recite in the third (*rak’ah*). Thus, this is the Witr of the night and this (i.e. Maghrib) is the Witr of the day.”

‘Allamah al-Nimawi said its isnad is *sahih* (Quoted in *I‘la al-Sunan*, 6:45).

Abu I-‘Aliyah is the agnomen of Rufay‘ ibn Mihran (d. 93). He was a very senior Tabi‘i, whose narrations can be found in all six famous collections of hadith. He was born in the lifetime of Prophet (peace be upon him) and accepted Islam in the period of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him). He heard from many senior Sahabah including ‘Umar, ‘Ali, Ibn Mas‘ud and Ubayy ibn Ka‘b.

The fact that a large group of Sahabah taught that Witr is similar to Maghrib illustrates that this was something well-known and accepted in the earliest generation of Islam. “Except that we recite in the third (*rak’ah*)” means that unlike Maghrib prayer, in the Witr prayer, the worshipper recites a portion of the Qur’an after completing Surah al-Fatihah in the third *rak’ah*.

Abu al-'Aliyah would give fatwa on what he learnt from the Sahabah, and would say: "Do (in Witr) as you do in Maghrib," as reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah in his *Musannaf* (no. 6909) with an authentic chain.

### **Hadith Eleven**

Al-Tahawi and Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated with their chains to Anas ibn Malik that he said:

الوتر ثلاث ركعات

"Witr is three *rak'ahs*."

And his student Humayd narrates that Anas "would offer Witr with three *rak'ahs*." Al-'Ayni said the chain is *sahih* (*Nukhab al-Akfar*, 5:108) Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani also said its chain is *sahih* (*al-Dirayah*, quoted in *I'la Sunan*, 6:44)

'Abd al-Razzaq reported from his teacher, Ma'mar ibn Rashid, from Thabit al-Bunani that he said:

صليت مع أنس وبت عنده قال: فرأيتَه يصلي مثنى مثنى حتى إذا كان في آخر صلاته أوتر بثلاث مثل مغرب

"I prayed with Anas and I spent the night with him, and I saw him praying two, two (*rak'ahs*) until when he was at the end of his prayer, he performed Witr with three (*rak'ahs*) like Maghrib." (*Musannaf 'Abd al-Razzaq*, no. 4636, 4662, 4663)

This is an authentic chain.

### **Hadith Twelve**

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated in his *Musannaf* (no. 6891) with an authentic chain that 'Umar buried Abu Bakr in the night and then entered the mosque and offered Witr in three *rak'ahs*. Al-Tahawi narrates more details of this incident (see section two, hadith four below).

'Abd al-Razzaq also narrates it with the same chain (no. 4639), and adds: "(Many) people from the Muslims performed Witr with him (i.e. behind him)."

This proves that a large group of Sahabah approved of the Witr that he performed.

### **Hadith Thirteen**

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated in his *Musannaf* (no. 6898):

حدثنا عباد بن العوام عن العلاء بن المسيب عن أبيه عن عائشة قالت: لا توتر بثلاث بتر، صل قبلها ركعتين أو أربعاً

'Abbad ibn al-'Awwam narrated to us from al-'Ala' ibn al-Musayyab from his father (al-Musayyab ibn Rafi') from 'A'ishah, she said: "Do not perform Witr with three (*rak'ahs*), cut-off. Pray before it [at least] two *rak'ahs* or four."

The narrators of this chain are all trustworthy, but it is uncertain whether al-Musayyab heard from 'A'ishah.

This proves that 'A'ishah regarded Witr as a three-*rak'ah* prayer, but disliked that it is “cut off” and not preceded by optional prayers. This is also the explanation of the hadith quoted by opponents of the Hanafi view which states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade making Witr resemble Maghrib and to pray five or seven or nine *rak'ahs*. The meaning of this hadith is that unlike the three *rak'ahs* of Maghrib which is not normally preceded by optional prayers, it is recommended to offer optional prayers before Witr. This does not negate that the Witr itself consists of three *rak'ahs*.

### **Hadith Fourteen**

'A'ishah said:

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يوتر بثلاث

Al-Hakim (1:305) transmitted it and said it is authentic according to the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim and al-Dhahabi agreed (footnotes to *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, 4:494).

### **Hadith Fifteen**

Ibn Abi Shaybah in his *Musannaf* (no. 6943), Ahmad, al-Tahawi and al-Nasa'i narrated with their chains from the Sahabi, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abza:

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يقرأ في وتره بسبح اسم ربك الأعلى وقل يا أيها الكافرون وقل هو الله أحد فإذا سلم قال سبحن الملك القدوس

“The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would recite in his Witr *sabbihisma rabbika l-a'la, qul ya ayyuha l-kafirun* and *qul huwa Llahu ahad*. Then when he said *salam*, he said *subhan al-malik al-quddus*.”

Muhammad 'Awwamah said “the chain of the author (i.e. Ibn Abi Shaybah) is *sahih*.” (footnote to *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, 4:485)

This hadith also indicates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not say *salam* until after the three *rak'ahs* were complete, as the Sahabah said, “then when he said *salam*...” More proofs for this will be discussed in the next section.

### **Hadith Sixteen**

Ibn Abi Shaybah also narrated with his chain from Ubayy ibn Ka'b (*Musannaf*, no 6960):

أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يوتر ببسبح اسم ربك الأعلى وقل يا أيها الكافرون وقل هو الله أحد ويقول في آخر صلاته سبحان الملك القدوس

“The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would perform Witr with *sabbihisma rabbika l-a'la, qul ya ayyuha l-kafirun* and *qul huwa Llahu ahad*, and he would say at the end of his prayer *subhan al-malik al-quddus*.”

Al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and Abu Dawud also transmitted it. Muhammad 'Awwamah said, “The hadith is authentic.” (*Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, 4:515)

'Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani narrates that it was the practice of Ubayy ibn Ka'b to offer three *rak'ahs* of Witr (*Musannaf*, no. 4661)

## Hadith Seventeen

Imam al-Bukhari narrated in his *Sahih* that al-Qasim ibn Muhammad said:

ورأينا أناسا منذ أدركنا يوترون بثلاث

“We saw people ever since we reached maturity performing Witr with three (*rak’ahs*).” (*Fath al-Bari*, 2:616)

Al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, the grandson of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), reached maturity approximately in the year 50 H. Thus, he witnessed the time of many Sahabah.

Note: The hadiths that say Witr is one *rak’ah* or five or seven or more *rak’ahs* are interpreted in light of the overwhelming evidence above which stipulate that Witr is three *rak’ahs*. By one *rak’ah* of Witr is intended one *rak’ah* that is joined to two preceding *rak’ahs*, and the reason one *rak’ah* is mentioned specifically is because it is that one *rak’ah* that renders the number of *rak’ahs* odd, and the literal meaning of “*witr*” is “odd.” When a number more than three is mentioned, the meaning of “*witr*” is the entire night prayer, and not just the three *rak’ahs* of Witr.

## Section Two: There is Only One Set of Salams at the End of Witr

A difference of opinion arose from the time of the Sahabah whether Witr consists of two sets of *salams* or or just one at the end. 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).

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.

### Hadith One

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.

## Hadith Two

Imam Ahmad narrated in his *Musnad*:

حدثنا أبو النضر حدثنا محمد يعني ابن راشد عن يزيد بن يعفر عن الحسن عن سعد بن هشام عن عائشة أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان إذا صلى العشاء دخل المنزل ثم صلى ركعتين ثم صلى بعدهما ركعتين أطول منهما ثم أوتر بثلاث لا يفصل فيهن ثم صلى ركعتين وهو جالس

“Abu al-Nadr narrated to us: Muhammad – meaning, Ibn Rashid – narrated to us: from Yazid ibn Ya‘fur from al-Hasan from Sa‘d ibn Hisham from ‘A‘ishah that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would, when he prayed ‘Isha’, enter the house and then pray two *rak‘ahs*, and then pray after them two *rak‘ahs* lengthier than them, and then he performed Witr with three (*rak‘ahs*) without creating a gap in them (i.e. in the three *rak‘ahs*), and then he prayed two (optional) *rak‘ahs* while he was sitting.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, no. 25223)

The only fault in this chain is that there is disagreement over the narrator Yazid ibn Ya‘fur, who was considered trustworthy (*thiqah*) by Ibn Hibban, and al-Daraqutni said, “he is considered.” Hence, even if there is slight weakness in this chain, it can at the very least be considered a supporting evidence to the previous narration.

## Hadith Three

Al-Nasa‘i narrated:

أخبرنا يحيى بن موسى قال: أخبرنا عبد العزيز بن خالد قال: حدثنا سعيد بن أبي عروبة عن قتادة عن عزرة عن سعيد بن عبد الرحمن بن أبي عن أبيه 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)

## Hadith Four

Al-Tahawi narrates:

حدثنا ابن أبي داود قال: ثنا يحيى بن سليمان الجعفي قال: أنا ابن وهب قال: أخبرني عمرو عن ابن هلال عن ابن السباق عن المسور بن مخرمة قال: دفنا أنا بكر ليلًا فقال: عمر إنني لم أوتر، فقام وصفقنا وراءه فصلى بنا ثلاث ركعات لم يسلم إلا في آخرهن

Ibn Abi Dawud narrated to us, he said: Yahya ibn Sulayman al-Ju‘fi narrated to us, he said: Ibn Wahb reported to us, he said: ‘Amr reported to me from Abu Hilal from Ibn al-Sabbaq from al-Miswar ibn Makhramah, he said: “We buried Abu Bakr in the night and ‘Umar said, ‘I have not performed Witr,’ so he stood and we formed rows behind him. Then he prayed with us three *rak‘ahs* and he did not say *salam* except at the end of them.”



Al-'Ayni said: "Its chain is *sahih* at the peak of authenticity." (*Nukhab al-Afkar*, 5:105) And al-Nimawi said its chain is *sahih*. (Quoted in *I'la al-Sunan*, 6:42)

The narrator, al-Miswar ibn Makhramah, was a Sahabi. 'Umar performed this Witr in the presence of a group of Sahabah.

### **Hadith Five**

Al-Tahawi and Ibn Abi Shaybah (*Musannaf*, no. 6910) narrated from Thabit (the student of Anas):

صلى بي أنس رضي الله عنه الوتر أنا عن يمينه وأم ولده خلفنا ثلاث ركعات لم يسلم إلا في آخرهن ظننت أنه يريد أن يعلمني

"Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) prayed Witr with me, me to his left and his *umm al-walad* (slave woman that bore his child) behind us, in three *rak'ahs*. He did not say *salam* except at the end of them. I thought that he wanted to teach me."

Al-'Ayni said its chain is *sahih*. (*Nukhab al-Afkar*, 5:108) Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani also said its chain is *sahih* (*al-Dirayah*, quoted in *I'la Sunan*, 6:44)

Thabit suggests that Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) put great emphasis on this form of Witr as he felt he was trying to impart to him the correct way to offer it, which indicates that this was not something based on mere opinion but most probably what he received from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and senior companions.

### **Hadith Six**

'Abd al-Razzaq narrates from Ma'mar from Qatadah from al-Hasan that he said:

كان أبي بن كعب يوتر بثلاث لا يسلم إلا في الثالثة مثل المغرب

"Ubayy ibn Kab would perform Witr with three (*rak'ahs*) and not say *salam* except in the third (*rak'ah*) just like Maghrib." (*Musannaf 'Abd al-Razzaq*, no. 4659)

Although the chain up to al-Hasan (al-Basri) is authentic, it is not established that al-Hasan al-Basri (22 – 110 H) met Ubayy ibn Kab (d. 30 H).

Note: The hadiths from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions quoted in the first section that declare Witr akin to Maghrib also prove that there is only one set of *salam*s in Witr just like Maghrib.

### **The Practice of the Fuqaha from the Tabi'in**

Al-Tahawi narrated with an authentic chain that the seven major jurists of Madinah (from the Tabi'in) all opined that Witr is three *rak'ahs* and there is no *salam* except at the end. Al-Nimawi said its chain is *hasan*. (Quoted in *I'la Sunah*, 6:46)

He also reported from Abu al-Zinad that he said:

أثبت عمر بن عبد العزيز الوتر بالمدينة بقول الفقهاء ثلاثا لا يسلم إلا في آخرهن

“Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (d. 101 H) established Witr in Madinah on the basis of the view of the jurists as three (*rak’ahs*), with no *salam* except at the end of them.”

Al-Nimawi said its chain is *sahih* (Quoted in *I’la Sunah*, 6:46).

Ibn Abi Shaybah also narrates with authentic chains that the eminent jurists from the Tabi’in, Ibrahim al-Nakhai, Sa’id ibn al-Musayyab and Makhul al-Shami would practice three *rak’ahs* of Witr with only one set of *salam*s at the end (*Musannaf*, no. 6906, 7, 8). Abu Ishaq al-Sabi’i (34 – 127 H), a Kufan Tabi’i, reported that the students of ‘Ali and Ibn Mas’ud would not say *salam* upon two *rak’ahs* of Witr (*Musannaf*, no. 6911)

Al-Tahawi concludes:

“This (method of three *rak’ahs* of Witr with only one set of *salam*s at the end) is of that which ought not be opposed since it is supported by the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace), then the practice of his companions and the views of most of them after him, and then their successors agreed upon it.” (*Sharh Ma’ani al-Athar*, Maktabah Haqqaniyyah, 1:207)

### **Section Three: The Worshipper Sits at the Second Rak’ah of Witr for Tashahhud**

According to the Hanafi view, the worshipper sits after the second *rak’ah* of Witr, and recites the *tashahhud* (*attahiyyat*) before rising up for the third *rak’ah*. The proof for this is that the Witr prayer is akin to the Maghrib prayer as taught by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his major companions – see hadith numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11 in the first section above. ‘Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-‘Uthmani said: “Drawing a comparison of it (i.e. the Witr) with Maghrib prayer conveys the obligation of sitting upon two *rak’ahs*.” (*I’la Sunan*, 6:43-4)

It is further supported by some general hadiths:

#### **Hadith One**

When describing the Prophet’s prayer, ‘A’ishah said as narrated in *Sahih Muslim*:

وكان يقول في كل ركعتين التحية

“And he would say *tahiyyah* (i.e. *tashahhud*) in every two *rak’ahs*.” (*Fath al-Mulhim*, 3:484-5)

The word *kull* is for generality, indicating there were no exceptions to this practice of sitting upon every two *rak’ahs* to say *tashahhud*.

#### **Hadith Two**

Ahmad transmitted from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

... إذا قعدتم في كل ركعتين فقولوا التحيات لله والصلوات والطيبات

“When you sit in every two *rak’ahs* then say *attahiyyatu lillahi wassalawatu wattayyibat...*” (Musnad Ahmad, no. 4160)

The editors of *Musnad Ahmad* said: “Its chain is *sahih* according to the criterion of Muslim.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, 7:227)

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “when you sit in every two *rak’ahs*,” demonstrating that this occurs in every two *rak’ahs* without exception.

Note: The hadiths that state the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not sit in the *rak’ahs* of Witr are interpreted in light of the above evidence. They are interpreted to mean he would not sit with a lengthy sitting that is followed by speech and other activity except after the final *rak’ah* of Witr, not that he would not sit at all (see *I’la al-Sunan*, 6:53-4).

## **Section Four: Qunut is Recited in Witr Before Ruku’ of the Third Rak’ah**

### **Hadith One**

Imam al-Bukhari narrated in his *Sahih* from ‘Asim:

سألت أنس بن مالك عن القنوت فقال قد كان القنوت قلت قبل الركوع أو بعده قال قبله قال فإن فلانا أخبرني عنك أنك قلت بعد الركوع فقال... كذب إنما قننت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بعد الركوع شهرا

“I asked Anas ibn Malik about the Qunut and he said: ‘Indeed, there was Qunut.’ I said: ‘Before *ruku’* or after it?’ He said: ‘Before it.’ He said: ‘Someone reported to me from you that you said after *ruku’*.’ He said: ‘He erred. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) only performed Qunut after *ruku’* for a month.’” (*Fath al-Bari*, 2:631)

There are two types of Qunut, one which is recited when a calamity (*nazilah*) befalls the Muslims usually in the Fajr prayer, and another in the final *rak’ah* of Witr. The favoured interpretation of this narration of Anas is that the first uncommon type of Qunut would be recited after *ruku’* while the common Qunut of Witr would be recited before *ruku’*.

### **Hadith Two**

Al-Nasa’i narrated:

أخبرنا علي بن ميمون قال: حدثنا مخلد بن يزيد عن سفیان عن زبيد عن سعيد بن عبد الرحمن بن أبزي عن أبيه عن أبي بن كعب أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يوتر بثلاث ركعات، كان يقرأ في الأولى بسبح اسم ربك الأعلى وفي الثانية بقل يا أيها الكافرون وفي الثالثة بقل هو الله أحد ويقننت قبل الركوع، فإذا فرغ قال عند فراغه: سبحان الملك القدوس

‘Ali ibn Maymun reported to us, he said: Makhlad ibn Yazid narrated to us from Sufyan from Zubayd from Sa’id ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abza from his father from Ubayy ibn Ka’b that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would perform Witr with threerak’ahs, and he would recite in the first (*rak’ah*) *sabbihisma rabbika l-a’la*, and in the second *qul ya ayyuha l-kafirun* and in the third *qul huwa Llahu ahad*, and he would recite Qunut before *ruku’*. When he finished, he said upon completion, *subhanal malik al-quddus*. (*Sunan al-Nasa’i*, Qadimi Kutub Khanah, p. 248)

The hadith was authenticated by Abu 'Ali ibn al-Sakan, al-'Uqayli and al-'Ayni (as quoted in *I'la al-Sunan*, 6:70-1)

The word *kana* (he would) used in the hadith indicates perpetuity.

Note: Imam Muhammad narrates with his chain in *Kitab al-Hujjah* (1:201) from Ibn 'Abbas almost the exact same description quoted here, although there is some weakness in his chain.

### **Hadith Three**

Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali said:

... علمني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كلمات أقولهن في قنوت الوتر

“The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) taught me words that I say in the Qunut of Witr...”

It was narrated by Ahmad, Ibn Majah, al-Nasa'i, al-Hakim and Ibn Abi Shaybah. Al-Nawawi said it has a *sahih* chain (*Khulasat al-Ahkam*, no. 1499) This proves that one is to always say the Qunut in Witr.

### **Hadith Four**

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani said:

وروى ابن أبي شيبة بإسناد حسن عن علقمة أن ابن مسعود وأصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كانوا يفتنون في الوتر قبل الركوع

“Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated (*Musannaf*, no. 6983) with a *hasan* chain from 'Alqamah that Ibn Mas'ud and the companions of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would do Qunut in Witr before *ruku'*.” (*al-Dirayah*, Dar al-Ma'rifah, p. 194)

'Alqamah ibn Qays al-Nakha'i (d. ca. 60) was a very senior Tabi'i who was born in the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) but accepted Islam after his death. He narrated from senior companions including 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Salman and Abu l-Darda', although his primary teacher was 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud. He became so experienced and adept in knowledge that even the Sahabah would seek knowledge from him and ask him questions! Hence, his testimony that the Sahabah would recite Qunut in Witr before *ruku'* is strong evidence of the prevalence of this practice in the earliest generation of Islam.

### **Hadith Five**

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrates in *Musannaf* (no. 6972) with an authentic chain:

أن عمر قنت في الوتر قبل الركوع

“That 'Umar did Qunut in Witr before *ruku'*.”

### **Hadith Six**

Muhammad narrated in his *Kitab al-Athar*:

أنا أبو حنيفة عن حماد عن إبراهيم أن ابن مسعود كان يقنت السنة كلها في الوتر قبل الركوع

“Abu Hanifah reported to us from Hammad (ibn Abi Sulayman) from Ibrahim (al-Nakha'i) that Ibn Mas'ud would perform Qunut the entire year in Witr before *ruku'*.” (Quoted in *I'la Sunan*6:85)

This is an authentic narration. Although Ibrahim al-Nakha'i did not meet Ibn Mas'ud, his narrations from him are authentic as he clarified that when he does not mention his source to Ibn Mas'ud in any particular narration, it is because he received it from multiple reliable sources.

Note: The famous du'a of Qunut, “*Allahumma inna nasta'inuka wa nastaghfiruka...*,” was taught by Ibn Mas'ud for the Qunut of Witr as narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in his *Musannaf* (no. 6965) with an authentic chain. This du'a was also narrated from 'Umar, 'Ali and 'Uthman as also recorded in the *Musannaf* of Ibn Abi Shaybah.

## **Section Five: The Worshipper Says *Takbir* and Raises his Hands before the Qunut**

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated in his *Musannaf* (no. 7021) from al-Aswad that 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud would when he completed the recitation in the third *rak'ah* of Witr, say *takbir* and then recite Qunut, and when he completed the Qunut, he said *takbir* and bowed.

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrates in his *Musannaf* (no. 7027, 7028) that 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud would raise his hands upon reciting Qunut. Al-Bukhari narrates in his *Juz' Raf al-Yadayn*:

حدثنا عبد الرحيم المحاربي: حدثنا زائدة عن ليث عن عبد الرحمن بن الأسود عن أبيه عن عبد الله أنه كان يقرأ في آخر ركعة من الوتر قل هو الله أحد ثم يرفع يديه ويقنت قبل الركعة

'Abd al-Rahim al-Muharibi narrated to us: Za'idah narrated to us from Layth (ibn Abi Sulaym) from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Aswad from his father from 'Abd Allah that he would recite in the last *rakah* of Witr *qul huwallahu ahad* and then raise his hands and recite Qunut before *ruku'*. (*Juz' Raf' al-Yadayn*, no 163)

Imam al-Bukhari suggests the narration is authentic. However, the narrator Layth ibn Abi Sulaym is present in the chain about whom the scholars have mixed opinions.

It is also reported from 'Umar and 'Ali that they would say *takbir* before starting the Qunut (*I'la Sunan*, 6:85-6).

Imam Muhammad narrated:

أنا أبو حنيفة عن حماد عن إبراهيم أن القنوت في الوتر واجب في رمضان وغيره قبل الركوع وإذا أردت أن تقنت فكبر وإذا أردت أن تركع فكبر أيضا

“Abu Hanifah reported to us from Hammad (ibn Abi Sulayman) from Ibrahim (al-Nakha'i) that the Qunut in Witr is obligatory in Ramadan and outside of it before *ruku'*, and when you wish to recite Qunut, say *takbir* and when you wish to bow, say *takbir* also.” (*Kitab al-Hujjah*, 1:200)

Ibrahim al-Nakha'i was the foremost jurist of Iraq in his time. He was born in approximately the year 40 H and died in 96 H. His narrations of hadith are found in all six famous collections of hadith, and he was the most learned of the jurisprudential school of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud. Hence, the rulings issued by him are given great weight in the Hanafi madhhab.

**Note:**

The purpose of collecting the above evidences was not to discredit the view of any other madhhab, but to show that the view of the Hanafi madhhab with respect to Witr (which has been the subject of abuse and attack) is well-supported by authentic hadiths and the practice of the early generations.