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Dialogue on Ghusl

I do not divulge a secret if I said that I love water. It is a subject close to my heart for it reminds me of happy memories. When I was a child, I used to play with my mother, spraying her with water. I did the same thing with my play mates. And since I know that water is a source for personal hygiene as well as for physical cleaning, this particular dialogue earned added importance.

My father said to me that ghusl is of two kinds: the first is by submerging the whole body in water, and the second is done sequentially.

- * How do you go about the first type?
- It is done by submerging the whole body in water at one go, i.e. from the summit of the head to the tips of the toes.
- * And the sequential one?
- You should first wash your head, ears and neck. The second in the order of washing must be the right hand side including the part of the neck that is connected to it and the adjoining area of the left hand side. The third in the order of washing must be the left hand side, in exactly the same manner.

However, it is permissible to wash the whole of the body at one go, i.e. without dividing it into two parts, after you have washed your head and neck.

- * Are there any conditions that should be observed when ghusl is carried out?
- All the conditions that are required for wudhu apply to ghusl, such as niyyah, the cleanliness and abundance of water, the order of parts of the body to be washed, etc. (please refer to Dialogue on Wudhu).

However, ghusl is different from wudhu in two ways.

* What are they?

- They are:
- 1. It is not necessary to start washing the parts of the body from top to bottom, as is the case in wudhu.
- 2. In ghusl, you do not need to observe the unbroken chain of washing, i.e. from start to finish without stopping. For example, you may wash your head and neck, then the rest of your body after a while, so much so that this may result in the parts that were washed becoming dry. You cannot do this when performing wudhu. There is an added bonus for ghusl of janabah, in that it makes up for wudhu.
- * And what else can it compensate for?
- It can also make up for ghusl of Juma. That is you either make one niyyah, exclusive for ghusl of janabah, or you make niyyah for both. [Indeed, as far as ghusl of Juma is concerned, you should make niyyah for it, albeit in general terms, as no other ghusl can make up for it].
- * Should a woman require to perform the three types of ghusl: Janabah, haydh, and Juma, how should she go about them?
- She can do one ghusl with the niyyah of all of them. She may, however, make niyyah for ghusl of janabah which would suffice, [except for ghusl of Juma as discussed earlier].

However, here are some more tips:

- 1. Make sure you have removed every trace of semen from your body before you embark on performing qhusl.
- 2. You should urinate to extract any traces that were left inside the tract of the penis before you do the ghusl.
- 3. You should remove all barriers, sticking to the body, that may hinder the immediate contact of water with the parts of the body, such as paint or glue. If the barriers prove difficult to remove, you should perform tayamum. And if they happen to be present in the parts of the body that you usually wash (or wipe) for wudhu, [you should carry out both the ghusl and tayamum].
- 4. If, after washing any part of your body, you become doubtful as to whether you washed it, you need not worry, i.e. there shall be no need for you to start afresh.

However, if, while you were washing the rest of your body, you grew doubtful whether you washed your head and neck properly, [you have to start again by washing the suspected unwashed part].

* You talked to me about quite a number of ghusls – haydh, nifas, istihadha, the dead, and touching a dead body. These are all compulsory types of ghusl. In the course of this discussion, you also mentioned another ghusl, i.e. that of Juma. Are there any other kinds of ghusl?

- Yes, there are other ghusls. They are, however, mustahab not wajib. Here are some of them:
- a. Ghusl of Juma. It is a strongly recommended mustahab type of ghusl. Its span of time starts from sunrise till sunset. It is advisable, though, to do it before zawal.
- b. Ghusl of Ihraam.
- c. Ghusl of the first two days of the two big feasts (eids). The time during which these ghusls should be done is from sunrise till sunset. Yet, it is advisable that they are done before the prayer of Eid.
- d. Ghusl of the eighth and ninth of Thil Hajja. It is advisable that the ghusl on the ninth should be carried out at zawal time.
- e. Ghusl recommended during the month of Ramadhan nights: The first, the seventeenth, the nineteenth, the twenty first, and the twenty third.
- f. Ghusl of Istikhara (The process of asking Allah for proper guidance in certain matters you are unable to decide on, through, for example, consulting the verses of the Holy Qur'an).
- g. Ghusl of the prayer for rainfall (Istisga').
- h. Ghusl of entering Mekkah.
- i. Ghusl of paying respect to the Holy Ka'ba.
- j. Ghusl of entering the Mosque of the Prophet.

If carried out, these kinds of ghusl can make up for wudhu. There are more. Some of these ghusls can compensate for wudhu, and some cannot. The yardstick of which ghusls can make up for wudhu and which cannot lies in the fact that since the first group of ghusls have strongly been recommended, through evidence handed down by tradition, they became mustahab. The second group of ghusls contains those ones that are not unequivocally proven to be strongly recommended to be part of the tradition, and they are carried out only with the aim of doing good deeds and earning reward (thawab).

- * My last question on the subject of ghusl is: Suppose, after janabah, I did not urinate to clear my penis from the remnants of semen, then I did ghusl of janabah. Afterwards, I noticed traces of semen that were secreted. Would the ghusl still be valid?
- No, you must do the ghusl again. This is irrespective of whether the semen was discharged without sexual desire or caressing.

You must also do the ghusl again, even if the semen was discharged in a situation different from the one just described.

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