

# The Major Ablution (Ghusl Janabat)

## Introduction

“*Janabat*” is a ritual impurity caused by the discharge of semen or by sexual intercourse; and the person on whom *ghusl janabat* becomes *wajib* is known as “*junub*”. The Qur’an says:

**“O you who believe! Do not go near prayers (*salat*) when you are... *junub* until you have washed yourselves...” (Surah an-Nisaa’, 4:43)**

**“O you who believe! When you stand up for prayers (*salat*),... if you are *junub*, then purify (yourselves).” (Surah al-Maaida, 5:6)**

## The Causes of Ghusl Janabat

There are two causes of *janabat*:

### Discharge of semen.

It does not make any difference whether this discharge is while awake or in a wet-dream, slight or profuse, intentionally or otherwise, in lawful way or unlawful (e.g., masturbation). In all these cases *ghusl janabat* becomes obligatory (*wajib*).

If a liquid comes out from a man and he does not know whether or not it is semen, then he should look for the following three signs: (1) emission with passion; (2) spurting discharge; (3) feeling relaxed after the discharge. If these signs are found together on him, then he should consider the liquid as semen, otherwise not.

If a secretion is discharged from a woman, then it is precautionary *wajib* for her to do *ghusl janabat* provided it came with sexual passion *and* she felt relaxed after it. But if the secretion comes without the sexual passion or without the feeling of relaxation after the discharge, then it is not *najis* and therefore *ghusl* is not *wajib* upon her.

## Sexual Intercourse.

It does not make any difference whether the intercourse was lawful or unlawful, and with or without discharge of semen. In Islamic laws, sexual intercourse is defined as the penetration of the glans into the vagina or anus of the woman. That is, for *ghusl janabat* to become *wajib* it is not necessary that full penetration or discharge of semen should take place. In case of sexual intercourse, *ghusl janabat* becomes *wajib* on both the man and the woman.

## Things Forbidden for a Junub

The following four acts are *haraam* for the *junub* before performing the *ghusl*.

1. *Touching the writing of the Qur'an*, the names and attributes of Allah, the names of the Prophet (S), the Imams (A.S.) and Fatimah (S.A.) (the daughter of the Prophet (S)).
2. *Reciting the verses of the Qur'an in which sajdah (prostration) is wajib*. These verses are: verse 15 of chapter 32; verse 15 of chapter 41; verse 62 of chapter 53; and verse 19 of chapter 96. It is better not to recite even a single verse from these chapters.
3. *Entering or staying in the mosque*. The Qur'an says, **"O you who believe! ... Nor (are you allowed to enter the masjid) if you are junub until you have washed yourself except passing through."** (**Surah an-Nisaa', 4:43**). Based on this verse and relevant *ahadith*, the *mujtahids* have concluded that a *junub* is totally forbidden from staying in the mosque.

Of course, as the verse says, one can pass through the mosques (by entering from one door and leaving from the other). However, this exception of passing through does not apply to the following places: the Masjidu'l-Haraam (the Sacred Mosque at Mecca) Masjidu'n-Nabi (the Mosque of the Prophet (S) at Medina), and shrines of the Imams (A.S.). A *junub* cannot even pass through them.

4. *Leaving something in or taking it out from a mosque*.

## Things Makruh (Disliked) for the Junub

1. Eating and drinking is *makruh* for a *junub* except after doing *wuzu* or gargling or rinsing the nose.
2. Reciting more than seven verses from the Qur'an. This applies to other than the four chapters with *wajib sajdah* mentioned above.
3. Touching the cover of the Qur'an.
4. Sleeping without doing *wuzu*.

## The Acts Whose Validity Depend on Ghusl Janabat

1. *Salat* (prayers) except *salatu'l-mayyit* (the prayer for a dead Muslim) which can be performed even in the state of *janabat*.
2. *Wajib tawaf* (the circumambulation of the *Ka'bah* in hajj).
3. *Fasting*. If someone knowingly remains *junub* until dawn in Ramadan, his fasting will become invalid (*batil*).

## Manner of Performing Ghusl

*Ghusl* is a ritual bath; it involves washing of the whole body. There are two methods of performing *ghusl*. One is known as *ghusl tartibi*, and the other is known as *ghusl irtimasi*.

### Ghusl Tartibi:

“*Ghusl tartibi*” means an ordinal bath, performed in three stages.

After washing away the *najasad* (e.g., semen or blood) from the body and after *niyyat*, the body has to be washed in three stages: First, head down to the neck; then the right side of the body from the shoulder down to the foot; and lastly, the left side of the body.

Each part should be washed thoroughly in such a way that the water reaches the skin. Special care should be taken while washing the head; the hair should be combed (e.g., with your fingers) so that water reaches the hair-roots. While washing the right side of the body, some part of the left side must be washed too, and also, while washing the left side of the body, some part of the right side must be washed.

### Ghusl Irtimasi:

“*Ghusl irtimasi*” means a bath involving immersion of the whole body in the water. It is needless to say that such a *ghusl* can only be done in a body of water, e.g., a pool, river, lake or sea.

After washing away the semen or blood from the body and after *niyyat*, the whole body should be completely immersed in the water all at once, not gradually. One has to make sure that the water reaches all parts of the body, including hair and the skin under it.

However, *ghusl tartibi* is preferred to *ghusl irtimasi*.

## Recommendable Acts of Ghusl

These recommendable acts are five:

1. Washing both hands up to the elbows three times before the *ghusl*.
2. Gargling three times.

3. Wiping the hands on the whole body to ensure that every part has been thoroughly washed.
4. Combing the hair with the fingers to ensure that the water reaches the hair-roots.
5. (For men only) Doing *istibra'* before *ghusl janabat*. *Istibra'*, in the present context, means "urinating." The benefit of *istibra'*: If a liquid comes out of one's penis after completing the *ghusl*, and he doubts whether it is semen or urine, then should he repeat the *ghusl* or not? If he had done *istibra'* before the *ghusl*, then he can assume that the liquid is urine he will not have to repeat the *ghusl*; he just has to do *wuzu* for his *salat*. But, on the other hand, if he had not done *istibra'* before the *ghusl*, then he has to assume that it is the remnant of semen and he will have to do the *ghusl* again.

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