

Appendix II: The Major Ablution (Ghusl Janabat)

(This appendix has been adopted from Chapter Four of my *Ritual & Spiritual Purity* (1989) since it deals with the ablution related to sexual act.)

A. 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. (4:43)

O you who believe! When you stand up for prayers (salat), . . . if you are junub, then purify (yourselves). (5:6)

B. The Causes of Ghusl Janabat

There are two causes of *janabat*:

1. 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.

2. 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.

C. The Things Which are Forbidden for a Junub

There are certain things in Islam which are so sacred that a Muslim cannot come into contact with them unless he or she is ritually pure and clean. Based on this concept of sacredness, a *junub* is forbidden from coming into contact, in various ways, with two of the most sacred things in Islam: the Qur'an and the mosque.

The following four acts are haram for the junub before performing the ghusl. Two are related to the Qur'an and the other two are related to mosques.

1. Touching the writing of the Qur'an, the names and attributes of Allah, the names of the Prophet, the Imams and Fatimah (the daughter of the Prophet). This has already been explained on page 48 of this book.

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."(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 Masjidul-Haram (the Sacred Mosque at Mecca) Masjidun-Nabi (the Mosque of the Prophet at Medina), and shrines of the Imams a junub cannot even pass through them.

Jamil asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) whether or not a junub can sit in mosques? The Imam said, "No! But he may pass through all of them except the Sacred Mosque (at Mecca) and the Prophet's

Mosque (at Medina)."¹

Bakr bin Muhammad narrates that once he and his friends were going towards the house of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, when they met Abu Basir in the way. When Abu Basir came to know that they were going to visit the Imam, he joined them. As Bakr and his friends came to know later on, Abu Basir was in the state of janabat at that time.

When they entered the house of the Imam and greeted him, the Imam looked towards Abu Basir and said, "O Abu Basir! Do not you know that a junub person should not enter the houses of the prophets?"² Abu Basir himself has also narrated this incident and quotes the Imam as follows: "Do not you know that a junub should not enter the houses of the prophets and of their children..."³

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

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The following things are *makruh* (disliked) for the junub:

1. Eating and drinking is makruh for a junub except after doing wudu' 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 except after doing wudu'.

D. 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). Allah says,

"And We assigned Ibrahim and Isma'il to purify My House for the circumambulators (of the Ka'bah)..."(2: 125; 22:26)

It is not difficult to infer that if the House is to be cleaned and purified for tawaf, then the people who will be doing the tawaf must also be clean and pure. See also section H in wudu.

3. Fasting. If someone knowingly remains junub until dawn in Ramadan, his fasting will become invalid (*batil*).

E. 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*.

1. Ghusl Tartibi:

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

After washing away the najasat (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 reached 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.

2. 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.

F. Recommendable Acts of Ghusl

What has been mentioned above are the wajib acts of ghusl; here we shall explain the things which are recommendable (*mustahab, sunnat*) during the 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 wudu 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 he will have to do the ghusl again.

'Ubaydullah al-Halabi narrates that someone asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) about a man who performs ghusl and then finds some (doubtful) drops (on his penis) while he had already urinated before performing the ghusl. (That is, should he consider the drops as urine or semen?) The Imam said, "He will just have to do wudu (for his salat). But if he had not passed urine before the ghusl, then he must repeat the ghusl."⁴

This rule of *istibra'* applies only to men. Sulayman bin Khalid asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) about a man who became ritually impure because of sexual intercourse and then performed ghusl without urinating.

Then some drops came out of him. The Imam said, "He must repeat the ghusl." Sulayman: "What if similar drops come out of a woman after she has performed ghusl?" The Imam said, "She does not have to repeat the ghusl." Sulayman: "What is the difference between the two?" The Imam said, "(A woman does not have to repeat ghusl janabat) because what comes out of her is certainly from the (remnants of the) discharge of man."⁵

G. A Summary of Ghusl

This is a summary of ghusl. The recommendable acts of ghusl are in italics type-face.

1. Remove the najasat (semen, blood) from the body.
2. Niyat.
3. Wash the hands up to the elbows three times.
4. Gargle three times.
5. Wash the head down to the neck; wipe your hand on the face and neck, and comb the hair with your fingers.
6. Wash the right side of your body from the shoulders down to the feet; include some part of the left side also. While washing, wipe the body with your hand.

7. Wash the left side of your body from the shoulders down to the feet; include some part of the right side also. While washing, wipe the body with your hand.

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1. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 485.
 2. Wasa'il vol 1, p. 489.
 3. Wasa'il vol 1, p. 489–490.
 4. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 517.
 5. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 482.

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