

II. Wudu

A. Introduction

Wudu and *ghusl* both are ritual ablutions; the former is a minor ablution while the latter is a major ablution. In Islamic laws, the *wudu* is considered a ritual act of worship which is done with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah.

The act of *wudu* consists of washing the face and the fore-arms, and wiping the head and the feet. These six parts of human body –face, both fore-arms, head and both feet are known as “the organs of *wudu*”.

Wudu by itself is always a recommendable act in Islamic rituals, but it becomes obligatory in certain circumstances. One of such circumstances is the daily ritual prayers; and therefore it is important for every Muslim to know the method of *wudu* and its rules.

The Qur'an says:

“O you who believe! When you stand up for ritual prayer (sala), wash your face and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe a part of your head and your feet up to ankles.” (5:6)

B. Manner of performing Wudu

The manner of performing *wudu* as explained below is based on the Qur'an and the authentic *sunnah* of the holy Prophet as narrated by his *Ahlu 'l-bayt* and his most reliable companions. The relevant verse of the Qur'an and the *ahadith* will be discussed in section J.

Wudu is done in the following four stages :

1. Washing the face

After doing the *niyyat* [Intention], pour water over the face from the top. Then using the right hand, wipe the face from the top to bottom, in such a way that the water reaches all parts vertically from the hairline

to chin, and every place horizontally within the reach *of* the span *of* the hand from the middle-finger to the thumb.

It is not obligatory to wash the parts which do not come within the middle-finger and the thumb; however, there is no harm in including those parts to ensure that all the necessary parts have been washed.

It is not obligatory to wash the inside *of* the eyes, the lips, the mouth, the nose, and the eyelids. *If* one has beard or mustache, it is enough to wash the hair which are apparent; it is not necessary to make the water reach the inside of the hair or to the skin. However, if the hair are so sparse that they do not hide the skin, then one should make the water reach the skin.

Bald person or those with receding hair-line should wash their face as *if* the hair were growing normally. If someone's face is larger, or smaller, than normal, then he should wash the part which comes within his middle finger and the thumb.

2. Washing the fore-arms

Pour water over the right fore-arm from the elbow to the finger-tips; and using the left hand, wipe the water over the arm to ensure that all the necessary parts are washed. Then do the same with the left fore-arm. The washing must be done from the elbows to the finger-tips and not vice versa.

The water should be poured from a little above the elbow to ensure that the whole fore-arm is covered. It is necessary to wash the fore-arms in such a way that the water penetrates the hair, if any, and reaches the skin.

The right fore-arm should be washed before the left.

3. Wiping of the head

Wiping of the head means to wipe a wet finger of the right hand from the crown of the head to the hair-line. Wiping of the head can be performed on any part of the quarter of the head which is over the fore-head.

The act of wiping can be done with one finger only, but it is recommended to use three fingers together. The water must reach the root of the hair. However, if the hair are so short that they cannot be combed then it is enough to wipe the hair.

While wiping the head, your hand should not touch your fore-head; otherwise, the water of the fore-head will mix with the wetness of your hand, and this will render the act of wiping the right foot invalid. Why? Because the act of wiping must be done with the wetness of the hands only.

4. Wiping of the feet

Again using the wetness of the hands, wipe the right foot with the right hand, and then the left foot with the left hand.

In wiping the feet, place the palm or the fingers of the hand on the finger-tips of the foot and then wipe to the base of the ankle. One can even wipe from the base of the ankle to the finger-tips. In wiping the feet, your palms should wipe your feet; it is not enough to move your feet against your palms.

C. Some general rules

The face and the fore-arms: Enough care should be taken so that all the necessary parts are washed; the *wudu* will become invalid if any part (even though it be equal to a pin-point) is left out.

The wiping of the head and the feet: As mentioned earlier, the wiping must be done with the wetness of the palms, i. e., after washing both the fore-arms, one is not permitted to wet his hands with another 'new' water. Likewise, the wiping will become invalid if the wetness of the palms is mixed with the water from other organs of *wudu*.

What if the palms become dry before one can wipe the head or the feet? In such a case, the palms can be made wet by the water from beard, mustache, eye-brows or the other organs of *wudu*. What if the weather is so hot that one's face and hands become dry immediately? In such a case, one should do *tayammum* instead of *wudu*.

If it is not possible to wipe the head or feet with the palms due to injury, etc., then the following organs may be used (in order of preference): the upper part of the hands and the inner part of the fore-arm.

Before starting the *wudu*, make sure that the front part of your head and the top side of your feet are dry; otherwise your *wudu* will not correct because the water on your head or feet is 'new' water. However, slight wetness or dampness can do no harm to your *wudu* unless it is so much that the wetness of palms, while wiping the head or feet, is immediately mixed with it.

D. Recommendable acts of Wudu

What you read above was concerning the obligatory (*wajib*) acts of *wudu*. Now we shall describe the acts which are recommendable (*mustahab*, *sunnat*) during the *wudu*.

1. Washing the hands two time before washing the face.
2. Gargling three times before washing the face.
3. Rinsing the nose three times before washing the face.

4. While washing the face and the fore-arms, it is recommended to wash each part twice before proceeding to the next stage of the *wudu*. One should realize that washing these organs of *wudu* once is obligatory, while washing them twice is recommendable; but to wash them for the third time is forbidden (*haram*). Determining the first or the second washing depends on the intention of the individual himself. And so, it is possible that a person may pour water on his right fore-arm five times and wipe his left hand on it twice, and still count this washing as the first one.

5. It is recommended for men to start washing their fore-arms from the apparent side of the arms, and for the women to start washing their fore-arms from the inner side.

6. Reciting the following du'as as taught by Imam 'Ali (a.s.) at various stages of the *wudu*:

● at the beginning of the *wudu*:

Bis mil-lahi wa bil-lahi; wal hamdu lil-lahil lazi ja `alal ma'a tahilran wa lam yaj`alhu najisa. = [I am doing this *wudu*] in the name of Allah and for the sake of Allah; all praise be to Allah who made the water pure and did not make it impure.

● at the time of the washing the hands two times before washing the face:

Allahummaj `alni minat tawwabiyna, waj `alni minal mutatah-hiriyn. = O Allah place me among those who ask for forgiveness and among those who are pure.

● at the time of gargling:

Allahumma laqqini hujjaty yawma alqaka, wat liq lisani bi zikrik. = O Allah teach me the correct answer for the day I shall meet You and open my tongue for Your praise.

● at the time of rinsing the nose.

Allahumma la tuharrim `alayya riyhal jannah, waj `alni mim man yashummu riyhaha wa rawhaha wa tiybaha. = O Allah! Do not deprive me from the smell of the Paradise, and place me among those who will sniff its smell, its refreshments and perfume.

● at the time of washing the face:

Allahumma bayyiz wajhiy yawma tusawwidul wujuh; wa la tusawwid wajhiy yawma tubayyizul wujuh. = O Allah ! Brighten my face on the day You will disgrace the faces; and do not disgrace my face on the day You will brighten the faces.

● at the time of the washing the right fore-arm:

Allahumma `atiniy kitabi bi yaminiy, wal khulda fil jinani bi yasariy, wa hasibniy hisaban yasira. = O Allah! Place my scroll of deeds in my right hand and (the certificate of) permanency in the Paradise on my left; and do the reckoning of my account leniently.

● at the time of washing the left fore-arm:

Allahumma la tu `tiniy kitabiy bi shimaliy, wa la min wara'i zahriy, wa la taj'alha maghluqatan ila `unuqiy;

wa a `uzu bika min muqatta `atin niyran. = O Allah! Do not place my scroll of deeds in my left hand nor on my back; and do not make it strap around my neck. And I seek refuge with You from the fierce fire.

- at the time of the wiping the head

Allahumma ghash–shiniy bi rahmatika wa barakatika wa `afwika. = O Allah! Cover me with Your mercy, Your blessings and Your pardon.

- at the time of the wiping the feet:

Allahumma thab–bitniy `alas sirati yawma tuzillu fiyhil aqdam; waj `al sa`iy fi ma urziyka `anniy; ya zul jalali wal ikram. = O Allah, keep me steadfast on my path on the day when the feet shall slip; and make my efforts (in the way) that will please you –O the Master of power and honor. 131

E. A summary of Wudu

The following is a summary of the *wudu*. The recommendable acts of *wudu* are in italics.

1. Making the intention (*niyyat*) in one's mind.
2. *Washing the hands two times*
3. *Gargling three times*
4. *Rinsing the nose three times.*
5. *Washing the face first time and then the second time.*
6. *Washing the right fore–arm the first time and then the second time.*
7. *Washing the left fore–arm the first time and then the second time.*
8. *Wiping the head with one finger or with three fingers together.*
9. *Wiping the right foot with the right hand.*
10. *Wiping the left foot with the left hand.*

F. The conditions for the validity of Wudu

The performance of *wudu* depends on certain conditions which are known in Islamic laws as “the conditions for the validity of *wudu*”. These conditions are ten in number: three are related to the water, three to the person; and four to the act of *wudu* itself.

i. The Water

1. The water must be *mutlaq*. “*Mutlaq*” means pure or unmixed; in the present context, it refers to the liquid which is normally considered by people as water. (It does not have to be pure chemically.) The opposite of *mutlaq* is “*muzaf*” which refers to the water which is not considered pure by the people, e. g., orange juice.
2. The water must be *tahir* (ritually clean, not *najis*).
3. The water must be *mubah* (lawful), that is, you must be its owner or you must have the permission to use it.

The *wudu* performed with mixed, *najis* or non-*mubah* water is invalid even if it was done unknowingly. Likewise it is difficult to approve the validity of the *wudu* performed with the water which was in an utensil made of gold or silver.

ii. The Person

4. *Niyyat* : *Niyyat* means intention As *wudu* is an act of ritual worship (*‘ibadat*), it is necessary to perform it with *niyyat*. *Niyyat*, in this context, means that one must have the intention to do the *wudu* in obedience to the command of Allah. Sincerity is an essential condition for *niyyat*; one should do *wudu* only for seeking the pleasure of Allah and in obedience to His command. If someone performs *wudu* for any other purpose, e.g., making himself cool in summer, then his *wudu* is invalid.

In *niyyat*, it is not necessary to utter the words; the mere intention of doing the *wudu* in obedience to the command of Allah is enough; nor is it necessary to mention that the *wudu* is *wajib* or *mustahab*.

5. The organs of *wudu* must be ritually clean (*tahir*) before washing or wiping them.

Besides the ritual cleanliness (*raharat*) of the organs of *wudu*, they must also be exposed. In other words, there should be nothing on them which might prevent the water from reaching the skin. Special care should be taken by women in case the lipstick, nail-polish, kohl, and eye shadow are such that the water does not reach the skin. If the dirt under the long nails is not more than normal, then it will not harm the *wudu*.

6. Use of the water should not be harmful to the person who wants to do *wudu*. If the person fears that he will become ill or his illness will be prolonged by the use of cold water or warm water in *wudu*, then he should do *tayammum*.

iii. The Acts of Wudu:

7. The place where *wudu* is being performed must be *mubdh* (lawful).

8. In normal situation, it is *wajib* for one to perform *wudu* by himself, without the help of others. However, help in the preliminaries such as fetching the water, pouring out the water, is allowed.

In case of disability because of illness, etc., someone else may help; but in such a case, it is necessary for both, the helper and the helped, to do the *niyyat*.

9. Correct Order (*tartib*): Every act in performing the *wudu* must be done in the prescribed order: first the washing of the face, then of the right fore–arm, and then of the left fore–arm, followed by the wiping of the head, then of the right foot, and lastly of the left foot.

10. Continuity (*muwalat*): The acts of *wudu* must follow each other so that, in normal weather, when each part is commenced the previous parts are still wet.

G. The Nawaqiz of Wudu

After having done the *wudu* once, for how long can a person be considered to be in the state of ritual purity? Is a Muslim required to do a separate *wudu* for each of his prayers, or is one *wudu* sufficient for the whole day? Once a person has done *wudu*, he can consider himself in the state of ritual purity until one of the *nawaqiz* takes place. *Nawaqiz* (pl. of *naqiz*) means those things which end the effectiveness of *wudu* and make it null and void (*batil*).

The *nawaqiz* of *wudu* are ten. Six are related to the discharges which take place from the sexual organs, and four are related to the factors which cause temporary or permanent disability of the mind.

i. The Discharges:

(a) *Common between man and women:*

1. Urine (and semen).
2. Stool.
3. Farting.

(b) *In women only:*

4. Menstruation.
5. Irregular bleeding.
6. Post–natal bleeding.

ii. The Mental Disability Factors:

7. Sound sleep (in which one cannot hear anything).
8. Drunkenness (from alcohol or drugs, etc.).
9. Unconsciousness.
10. Insanity.

These *nawaqiz* have been deduced from the following *ahadith* of the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (may peace be upon them): Zurarah bin A'yun quotes from the fifth or sixth Imam as follows: "Nothing invalidates the *wudu* except what comes out of both sides [of the sexual organs] or sleep." 232

In another *hadith*, Zurarah asked both the fifth and the sixth Imams, "What invalidates the *wudu*?" They answered, "Whatever comes out from both of your lower organs like stool, urine, semen or wind; or the sleep which prevents the functioning of the mind..." 333

The first *six nawaqiz* (i. e., the discharges from the sexual organs) can easily be deduced from these two narrations. Analyzing the last sentence of the second *hadith* ("or sleep which prevents the functioning of the mind") proves that the sleep has been counted as one of the *nawaqiz* because it prevents the functioning of the mind. This gives a criterion in the hands of the *mujtahids* to extend the list to include the other three things, i.e., insanity, unconsciousness and drunkenness. The *hadith* has just mentioned sleeping because it is the most obvious and common factor that causes 'disability' of the mind, of course, temporarily.

It is needless to say that other than the ten things mentioned above, nothing invalidates the *wudu*. Some Muslims think that if a person touches his wife or his own private parts, his *wudu* becomes invalid. This is not correct. The Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt*, who are the most reliable source for the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the best guides of the Qur'an, have clearly explained that nothing else affects the *wudu* in any way.

H. When does the wudu become wajib?

As mentioned earlier, performing the *wudu* is always a recommendable deed, but it becomes obligatory (*wajib*) in certain circumstances. There are five circumstances under which *wudu* becomes obligatory; and whenever a Muslim finds himself in any one these circumstances, he must do *wudu*.

The five circumstances are as follows:-

1. *For obligatory prayers, e.g., the five daily prayers.*

Wudu is not *wajib* for *sunnat* (recommended) prayers; but as the prayers whether obligatory or recommended are invalid without *wudu*, so we have to pray the *sunnat* prayers also with *wudu*. In other words, if you do not do *wudu* for the *sunnat* prayer you will not have sinned—although your prayer will be incorrect. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said, "There can be no prayer except with ritual ablution (i. e. *wudu*)." 434

Salatu 'l-mayyit (the ritual prayer said for the dead person before the burial) is an exception to this rule; this obligatory prayer can be performed even if one is in a state of ritual impurity.

2. *For the wajib circumambulation (tawaf) of the Ka`bah in hajj.* 'Ali bin Ja`far asked his father (the sixth Imam) about a person who was doing the *tawaf* and then remembered that he had not done *wudu*. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "He should stop the *tawaf* and not count (whatever he had done as valid). 535

3. *For touching the writings of the Qur'an.* The Qur'an is not just a book, it is the revelation of God, it is the word of God, and therefore it is sacred. Its sacredness demands that before you touch the writing of the Qur'an, you must ritually purify yourself. Allah says,

"None shall touch it except the purified ones." (56:79)

On basis of the extrinsic meaning of this verse and the *ahadith*, the *mujtahids* have reached the opinion that it is forbidden to touch the writings of the Qur'an without being in the state of *wudu*.

However, this law of the *shari`ah* should not become an excuse for not reading the Qur'an. There is no harm in reading the Qur'an without doing *wudu* provided one does not touch the writing of the holy book, i.e., just hold the cover or the border of the page. Once Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) told his son Isma'il to read the Qur'an. Isma'il said, "I am not in the state of *wudu*." The Imam said, "Do not touch the writing, just hold the paper and then read the book." 636

Likewise, there is no harm in touching the translations of the Qur'an, because the translations do not qualify as the word of God. Neither is it wajib to prevent the children from touching the writings of the Qur'an unless such an act is considered a disrespect to the Sacred Book—and this differs according to the culture and the society¹ in which the Muslims live.

4. *For touching the names and the attributes of Allah.*

It is forbidden to touch the names and the attributes of Allah, in any script, without being in the state of ritual purity (*wudu*).

By looking at the sacredness which the Prophets, the Imams of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* and also Fatimah (the daughter of the Prophet) have acquired due to their being chosen by Allah, our *mujtahids* have recommended that the names of these holy persons also should not be touched without *wudu*.

5. *For making promise, oath and vow* to stay in the state of ritual purity (i.e., in *wudu*) for a certain period of time. If a person makes such a promise or vow, then he must fulfill it when his conditions have materialized. For example, someone says, "If I pass my exams, I will stay with *wudu* for a whole day." So if this person passes his exams, then he must stay with *wudu* for one full day.

I. Wudu'u'l-Jabirah (Wudu On A Bandage)

Jabirah literally means a splint, but in the present context, it means the material or the medicine used for bandaging a wound, etc. *Wudu' u 'l jabirah* means the *wudu* which is done on the bandage that has been fixed on the organs of *wudu*.

Before writing about *wudu' u 'l jabirah*, it is necessary to mention the following two points:

(1) If it is possible to wash the wound by taking off the bandage, then one has to perform *wudu* as normally. If it is not possible to take off the bandage, then it will suffice to completely wipe the hand on the bandage.

(2) If someone has a wound which is not bandaged, and there is no harm in washing it, then he should do *wudu* normally; but if it is not possible to wash the wound, then the person has to wash only around the wound as normally. However, in the latter case, it is better to wipe the hand on the wound and then place a piece of cloth on it and wipe the hand over it.

It is needless to say that *wudu' u 'l jabirah* is relevant only in the case where the use of water is not harmful for the person. If the use of water is harmful, then one should do *tayammum*.

Wudu' u 'l jabirah can be done only in the following cases:

1. If the bandage is on a wound in which the skin is cut or torn. So *wudu' u 'l-jabirah* cannot be done on a bandage that has been fixed only for pain or swelling – in such a case, one has either to do *wudu* as normally if possible or to do *tayammum*.
2. If it is a splint for keeping a fractured limb in a proper position.
3. If the bandage or the splint does not completely conceal any one of the organs of *wudu*. So if the bandage or the splint is completely concealing any one of the organs of *wudu*, then the following procedure should be followed:
 - (a) if it is concealing a foot or both feet, then the person should do *tayammum*;
 - (b) if it is concealing a fore–arm or face, then the person should precautionarily do both *wudu' u l jabirah* and *tayammum*.

The same applies to a case where all the organs of *wudu* are covered with bandage.

J. Wudu in the Qur'an & the Sunnah

As mentioned earlier, *wudu* is an act consisting of two stages (i) washing the face and hands; and (ii) wiping a part of the head and feet. This is clearly evident from the verse No. 6 of the suratu '1-Ma'idah:

“O you who believe! When you stand up for prayer, (i) wash your face and hands up to the elbows, (ii) and wipe a part of your head and your feet up to the ankles.” (5:6)

In this verse, two imperative forms have been used: (i) *ʿfaghsilu*” which means “wash!”; and (ii) *wamsuhu*” which means “wipe!”. It is obvious that the first imperative form (“wash!”) refers to the two objects which are “your face” (*wujuhukum*) and “your hands” (*aydiyakum*); while the second imperative form refers to a two objects which are “a part of your head” (*byʿ ruʿusikum*) and “your feet” (*arjulakum*).

The word "face" means the front portion of the head, comprising in man the surface between top of the forehead and the bottom of the chin, and extending from ear to ear. In its legal definition, as explained in the *ahadith* of the Imams of Ahluʿ1-bayt, it covers the surface of the face vertically from the hair-line to the bottom of the chin, and horizontally the parts which come within the reach of the span of the hand from the middle-finger to the thumb. 737

The word “hand” means the organ especially adapted for grasping, and comprising the upper limb between the shoulder and the finger-tips. So we see that from the linguistic point of view, the word “*yad*” is common between arm, fore-arm and hands.

When a word is commonly used in more than one meaning, it becomes necessary for the speaker to provide an associate (or a context) to specify the meaning. And thus we see the words “*ila ʿ1-marafiq* up to the elbow” in the verse; these words were necessary to specify the part of the “hands” which is to be included in *wuduʿ*.

Now we come to one of the main differences among the Shiʿahs and the Sunnis in the manner of performing *wuduʿ*. The Sunnis wash their fore-arm from the fingertips up to the elbows, and the Shiʿahs wash their fore-arm from the elbows to the finger-tips. As mentioned above the words “up to the elbows” do not tell us to wash from the finger-tips to the elbow or vice versa; these words are there just to specify the part of the “hands” which is to be included in *wuduʿ*.

Then how should we wash our fore-arm—from the elbow or from the finger-tips? The answer of this problem is provided by the *sunnah*. One of the responsibilities of the Prophet was to explain the details of, and practically demonstrate how to follow, the laws explained in the Qurʿan. And, indeed, the most authentic way of learning the Prophet's method of performing *wuduʿ* is through the *ahadith* of the Imams of *Ahlu ʿ1-bayt* (the family of the Prophet). Zurarah bin Aʿyun narrates the following *hadith*:

“Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said, ‘Shouldn't I describe to you the *wuduʿ* of the Messenger of Allah?’ We said, ‘Yes.’ When the water was brought, the Imam washed his hands, then he uncovered his fore-arms. He dipped his right hand in the vesselthen scooped it full with water and poured it on his fore-head He let the water drop on to the end of his beard and then he passed his hand on his face and fore-head once.

“Then he dipped his left hand (in the vessel), filled it up (with water), poured it on his right elbow and then passed his palm on the fore-arm until the water dripped to the finger-tips. Then he fully scooped

(the water) with his right hand, pour it on his left elbow and then passed his palm on the fore–arm until the water dripped to the finger–tips.

“Then he wiped the front part of his head and the apparent side of his feet by the wetness of his left and right hands.” 838

In another *hadith* Imam Muhammad al–Baqir (a.s.) narrates the same manner of performing *wudu'* which An'im l–minin 'Ali had demonstrated when a person inquired about the Prophet's manner of performing *wudu'*. 939

The imperative “*wamsahu* = wipe” means to directly wipe the hands, etc, on something. When a word like “*wamsahu*” is used alone in a transitive form it denotes comprehensiveness and totality of the act; e.g. “” would mean “wipe all of your head.” But whenever this verb is followed by the letter “*ba*” it denotes partiality e.g “” would mean “wipe a *part* of your head.” In the verse mentioned above “” has been used with the letter “*ba*” and thus the correct translation would be “wipe a part of your head”.

Here again we come across another difference between the Shi'ahs and the Sunnis. The Sunnis wipe all of their head whereas the Shi'ahs wipe only a part of their heads.

Which part of the head is to be wiped in *wudu*? The Qur'an is silent on this; the *sunnah* has explained it. Many *ahadith* from the Imams of *Ahlu 'l–bayt* have explained that “a part of the head” is “the front part”. 1040

The word “*arjulakum*” means “feet, leg”. To specify its meaning, it was necessary to add the words “*ila 'l–ka `bayn* up to the ankles”. The word “*ar–julakum*” is connected to “*bi ru'usikum* a part of your heads” by the coordinate conjunction “*wa = and*”. And thus the sentence would mean “wipe a part of your feet.”

Here again we come to two more differences among the Sunnis and the Shi`ahs. The Sunnis *wash* their *whole* feet in *wudu* whereas the Shi`ahs *wipe* only the *apparent side* of their feet up to the ankles. As far as the Qur'an and the *ahadith* of the *Ahlu 'l–bayt* are concerned, “wiping a part of your feet” is the only correct interpretation of the verse of *wudu*. And this interpretation has also been accepted by the famous Sunni scholar Imam Fakhru'd Din ar–Razi in his *Tafsir al–Kabir*. 1141

The only basis for the Sunnis' point of view about “washing the feet” are some `ahadith' recorded in their books of tradition. These adadith cannot be accepted because:

Firstly, they are contrary to the injunction of the Qur'an. And the Prophet has said, “If a *hadith* is narrated to you from me, then put it before the Book of Allah. If it is according to the Book of Allah, then accept it; otherwise reject it.” 1242

Secondly, they are against the *sunnah* of the Prophet as explained by the Imam of the *Ahlu 'l–bayt* who have been accepted as reliable by all the Muslims. Even some companions of the Prophet have clearly stated that it is wrong to ascribe the “washing of the feet” to the Prophet. For example, the famous

companion Abdullah ibn `Abbas said, “Allah has enjoined two washings and two wipings (in *wudu*). Don't you see that when Allah mentions the *tayammum*, He places two wipings in place of two washings (of face and hands) and leaves out the wipings (of head and feet).” 1343

Thirdly, the *ahadith* of the Sunnis in this matter are contradictory. Some *ahadith* mention “the washing of the feet” like those of Humran quoted by Imam al-Bukhari 14 and of Ibn `Asim quoted by Imam Muslim. While some other *ahadith* say that the Prophet “wiped his feet” like that of `Ibad bin Tamim which says that “I saw the Prophet performing the *wudu*, and he wiped his feet.” This last *hadith* has been recorded by *Ta'rikh* of al-Bukhari, *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Sunan* of Ibn Abi Shaybah, and *Mu'jamu '1-Kabir* of at-Tabarani; and all of its narrators are considered trustworthy. 15 And it is an accepted rule of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (*usulu' 1-fiqh*) that if there are contradictory *ahadith*, then those which conform to the Qur'an are to be accepted and the others are to be rejected.

Thus, we can conclude that the correct manner of performing the *wudu*, according to the Qur'an and the authentic sunnah of the Prophet, is the manner which has been explained by the Imams of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* .

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1. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 282-3.
 2. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 177
 3. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 177
 4. Wasa'il, vol. 1, pp. 256, 483.
 5. Ibid, vol. 5, p. 444
 6. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 269.
 7. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 283-6 sections 17-19 of the chapter on wudu.
 8. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 272
 9. Ibid.
 10. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 289.
 11. ar-Razi, Tafsir al-Kabir, vol. 3, p. 370.
 12. Ibid, p. 371.
 13. Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanzu '1-'Ummal, vol. 5, p. 103 (hadith no. 2213). Also see Musnad Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 108.
 14. al-Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 1 (Beirut, Darul Arabia, n.d.) p. 113.
 15. al-'Asqalani, al-'Isabah, vol. 1, p. 193; see also his Tahdhib at-Tahdhib.

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