

## Core Curriculum

### 3 Foundations of Islam - Obligatory Acts

#### 3.4 **Ritual Purity in Islamic Law: Understanding Tahāra and Najāsa**

##### INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel!

In many religions across the world, ritual purification is often required before performing a certain ritual. In Islam the state of ritual purity is called tahāra. The opposite of ritual purity is ritual impurity, called najāsa.

In this lesson, we'll look into the meaning and purpose of tahāra in Islam. We will also look into the different kinds of ritual purification and najāsa in Islamic law.

##### BODY OF TEXT

Do not stand [for prayer] within it - ever. A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves. (Chapter 9, verse 108 of the Holy Qur'an)

If a Muslim wants his or her prayer, fasting or Hajj to be valid, then he or she must be in a state of ritual purity before performing those actions. In

other words, one must be tāhir. To ritually purify oneself, one can do one of three things, perform wudū (minor ablution), ghusl (major ablution) or tayamum (purification through the use of earth or dust).

#### Examples of when you have to do wudū

Wudū is when you take water with your hands and wipe your face, wipe your forearms down to your hands, wipe the top of your head and wipe your feet. Wudū is a must if you want to pray or touch the Qur'an. If you fall asleep and wake up, you will lose your state of wudū and will have to redo it again. If you go to the bathroom and go #1 or #2, or pass wind, then you must also perform wudū if you want to pray or touch the Holy Qur'an.

#### Examples of when you have to do ghusl

If you lose your wudū, you lose your minor state of ritual purity. However, you do not necessarily enter a state of major ritual impurity if you lose it. Entering a state of major impurity is called janāba. Things which make a person enter a state of major impurity are, among other things, sexual intercourse with one's spouse or bleeding during one's monthly cycle. If a person wants to pray or fast for example, the major ablution, that is, ghusl must be performed. Ghusl consists of washing the whole of one's body. Ghusl may also be performed by submerging oneself completely under water, this is called ghusl irtimāsī in Islamic law. Once ghusl is performed, one does not need to perform wudū as ghusl automatically puts a person in a state of wudū in most cases. Ghusl is also needed if a person touches a dead body.

#### Tayamum

When performing wudū or ghusl, one must do so with ritually pure water. This means that, for example, the water cannot be discolored (or have its odor changed) with ritually impure things, such as feces.

When a person is unable to find water, or does not have enough water, or does not have ritually pure water, or if performing ghusl would take

too long and prayer time is about to be over, then a person can purify oneself with clean earth. Tayamum is done through wiping one's forehead and hands with earth or dust. Tayamum has the same effect as ghusl.

For more information on how exactly to perform wudū, ghusl and tayamum, please see the links below the screen:

<http://www.al-islam.org/articles/laws-practices-how-perform-wudhu-and-tayammum#how-perform-wudhu-and-tayammum>

<http://www.al-islam.org/islamic-marriage-syed-athar-husain-sh-rizvi/major-ablution-ghusl-janabat>

A common misunderstanding about tahāra and najāsa is equating the terms with cleanliness and dirtiness. But this is incorrect. Tahāra and najāsa refer to ritual purity and impurity, meaning that they are pure or impure within the context of religious rituals. For example, items that are najis or ritually impure include pigs, dogs, blood, semen, or feces among many other things. But this does not mean they are necessarily dirty. A pig or a dog may be given a bath and thus be considered clean in the conventional sense but still ritually impure.

Similarly, it doesn't mean that if something is tāhir is necessarily clean. For example, bird excrement may be considered tāhir, but many people would consider it dirty. Another example would be a person who comes out working in a mine. He or she will be considered very dirty in the conventional sense, but still be considered tāhir and able to perform prayer as long as he or she is still in a state of wudū.

This distinction is really important to understand because often enough, it is used as a point to attack Islam. For example, a woman who is in her menses or who just gave birth will be required at some time to perform ghusl if she wants to pray again. But some people mistakenly interpret this as a form of sexism where they think that women's biology is dirty according to Islam. They forget that men can also enter states of ritual impurity, like when they discharge semen. So these kinds of ignorant

statements should be discarded because 1) both genders have states of ritual impurity and 2) ritual impurity does not necessarily mean dirty!

Before we let you go, it's important to clarify another matter. Although ritual purity or impurity does not necessarily translate to cleanliness or dirtiness, Islam also emphasizes on cleanliness anyways. The Prophet Muhammad (s) once said: "cleanliness is half of one's religion"

For more information on how to get rid of ritual impurities, you may want to look at the following link under the screen:

<http://www.al-islam.org/ritual-and-spiritual-purity-sayyid-muhammad-rizvi/i-najasat-taharat>

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh