

Ablution (Wudoo)

Description:

By NewMuslims.com

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Prerequisites

- How to Pray for a Recent Convert (2 Parts).

Objectives

- To understand the virtues of ablution (*wudoo*).
- In the first lesson, we discussed the basics of ablution (*wudoo*). In this lesson, we will describe how to perform ablution in a little more detail, and mention the *ahadith* from which this method is derived.

Arabic Terms

- *Nafl* - a voluntary act of worship
- *Hadith* - (plural - *ahadith*) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Wudoo* - ablution.

The Virtues of Ablution

By the ultimate grace of Allah, He commands us with certain obligations, and then also rewards us for their fulfillment. Performing ablution as well has many virtues associated with it, from forgiveness of sins to it being a mark of recognition on the Day of Judgment. The following are an example of some of the *ahadith* which mention these rewards.

(1) Messenger of Allah, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

“When a Muslim or a believer performs ablution and washes his face, every lesser sin that he committed as a result of looking washes away with water (or with the last drop of water). When he washes his hands, every sin that his hands committed washes away with water (or with the last drop of water). When he washes his feet, every sin to which he proceeded washes away with water (or with the last drop of water) until he emerges pure and sin free..” (*Muslim*)

(2) Messenger of Allah said:

“Shall I inform you (of an act) by which Allah erases sins and raises degrees? They (his Companions) said, ‘Certainly, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘Perfecting the ablution under difficult circumstances, taking many steps to the mosque, and waiting for the (next) prayer after the (last) prayer has been performed. That is *ribat* [1].’” (*Saheeh Muslim*)

(3) Messenger of Allah passed by a grave site and said:

“Peace be upon you, the abode of the believing people, and soon we as well, if Allah so wills, are about to join you. I love to see my brothers.”

They (his Companions) said: “Aren’t we your brothers, O Messenger of Allah?”

He said: “You are my Companions; our brothers are those who have not yet come into the world.”

They said: “O Messenger of Allah, how would you recognize those persons of your nation [on the Day of Judgment] who have not yet been born?”

He replied: “Suppose a man had horses with white blazes on their foreheads and legs among other horses which were all black. Tell me, would he not recognize his own horses?”

They said: “Certainly, O Messenger of Allah.”

He said: “They [those who have not come yet] will come with white faces, arms and legs owing to ablution, and I will arrive at the Cistern² before them. Some people will be driven away from my Cistern as a stray camel is driven away. I will call out: ‘Come, come.’ Then it will be said (to me): ‘These people changed [the religion by innovating in it] after you,’ and I will say: ‘Be off, be off.’” (*Saheeh Muslim*)

On the Day of Judgment, the Muslim nation will be distinguished from other nations by the body parts which they washed for ablution which will be emanating with light:

“My people will be called to presence on the Day of Judgment with bright faces, arms and legs from the traces of ablution.” (*al-Bukhari*)

The Method of Performing Ablution

Allah, the Exalted, says in the Quran:

“O you who believe! When you intend to offer the prayer, wash your faces and from your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles.” (Quran 5:6)

Prophet Muhammad also said:

“Allah does not accept any prayer performed without being in a state of purity.” (*Muslim*)

The Prophet practically taught us how to perform ablution, as he was sent to explain the revelation of the Quran. The following is a step by step guide explaining what exactly is

to be washed and how, gathered from various texts of *hadith*.

(1) You must have the intention of purifying yourself from a state of ritual impurity^[3]. This means that you should bring into your mind that you are performing this *wudoo* in order to enter a state of ritual purity. This intention is in the heart and is not to be uttered.

(2) Begin with the name of Allah, by saying '*Bismillaah*'.

(3) Then, wash your hands three times each. You should always start with the right whenever washing the body parts..

(4) Rinse your mouth three times, swirling the water around inside your mouth (gargling), and then rinse your nose three times by inhaling some water into your nostrils and blowing the water out. Use your left hand to remove the water from your nose.

(5) Wash your face three times, from the hairline to the jawbone and chin, and from ear to ear. A man should wet the hair of his beard because it is part of the face. If his beard is thin he has to wash it inside and out, and if it is thick and covers the skin, it is sufficient to wash the surface and run his wet fingers through it.

(6) Then you should wash your hands and arms up to the elbows three times, starting from the fingertips, including the nails, up to and including the elbows. It is essential to remove anything stuck to the hands before washing them, such as dough, mud, or paint, nail polish, and anything else that could prevent the water from reaching the skin.

(7) Then, with fresh water, wipe your head and ears one time, not the water left over from washing your arms. The way to wipe the head is by placing your wet hands at the front of your head and passing them over your hair/head until you reach the back of your head (the nape of your neck), then bringing them back to the place where you started. You may see some people wiping the backs of their necks as well. This is something which has found its way into the practice of Muslims from countries and should not be done, as the Prophet did not teach us to do so. Then put your index fingers in your ears and wipe the back of the ears with your thumbs. With regard to long hair, whether loose or braided, one is not to wipe its entire length, but rather pass their hands from the front of the head to its back, as described above.

(8) Then you should wash your feet three times, from the tips of the toes up to and including the ankles.

(9) You must maintain the correct order in washing the body parts, and do so in succession, not taking a long pause between each body part.

Those body parts which we mentioned to wash thrice may be washed twice or once only, but those which we mentioned to wipe once (the head and the ears) may only be wiped once and not more.

Men and women are to perform *wudoo* in the same manner. As most of you probably work, it's a good idea to learn how to wipe over the socks to save you the trouble of taking off your socks at work. It basically involves wetting the hands and passing them over the tops of the socks (the foot part and not the leg). You can learn more about this [here](#).

The evidence for the method of performing ablution is the *hadith* narrated of Ali:

“After praying the Fajr prayer, ‘Ali entered and sat in terrace, and then said to a young boy: ‘Bring me some water for ablution.’ The boy brought him a bowl of water and a basin. ‘Abd Khair said ‘We were sitting and watching him.’ He said: He held the vessel with his right hand and poured [water] into his left, and washed his hands up to the wrist. Then he [again] held the vessel with his right hand and poured [water] into his left, and washed his hands up to the wrist. He never put his hands inside the bowl until he washed both hands thrice.

Then he put his right hand in the bowl and rinsed his mouth and nose three times, expelling the water from his nose with the help of his left hand.

He washed his face thrice, his right hand to the elbow thrice, and then his left hand to the elbow thrice.

He then put his right hand into the bowl until it was immersed in the water, took it out and wiped his left hand with whatever water was on it, then he wiped his head with both hands once.

He poured water with his right hand over his right foot thrice, washing it with his left hand, and then poured water with his right hand over his left foot thrice, washing it with his left hand [as well].

Then he put his hand into the bowl, took some water up into his palm and drank it. He then said, ‘This is how the Prophet of Allah performed ablution. Whoever would like to see how he used to perform ablution, this is it.’” [Saheeh ibn Hibban]

Over time, you can learn these prayers which the Prophet himself said and also encouraged us to say after completing ablution (*wudoo*).

1. “*Ash’hadu an laa ilaha ill-Allah, wahdahu laa shareeka lah, wa ash’hadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa rasooluh.*”

“I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.”

2. “*Allahummaj’alni min at-tawwabeena waj-alni min al-mutatahhireen.*”

“O Allah, make me of those who return to You often in repentance and make me of those who remain clean and pure.”

3. “*Subhaanak Allahumma wa bihamdik, ash’hadu an laa ilaha illa ant, astaghfiruka wa atoobu ilaik.*”

“How perfect You are O Allah, and I praise You, I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except You, I seek Your forgiveness and turn in repentance to You.’

Endnotes:

[1] *Ribat* is a term that normally denotes 'guarding' the borders of the Islamic nation from enemy attack, which has great reward in Islam.

[2] The Cistern, or '*Hawd*' in Arabic: the reservoir from which the Prophet will give his followers drink whiter than milk on the Day of Judgment, after which they will never feel thirst again.

[3] This is the state one enters after having urinated, defecated, etc.

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