

Cultivating young Hearts on the Fertile soils of Islam

فِقْهُ الطَّهَارَةِ

The Fiqh of Tahaarah.

Lesson 2

الطَّهَارَةُ

(Purification)

This lesson will cover الطَّهَارَةُ and its different types

The word طَّهَارَةٌ might be a new word to our Islamic and Arabic vocabulary. So before we learn about طَّهَارَةٌ, let us first learn something about the word. Is anyone wondering why we are learning about طَّهَارَةٌ before praying and other acts of worship? Well, what do we have to do when we go to the toilet? We have to **clean** ourselves from any impurities. Then what do we have to do before we pray? We have to make wudhu or ghusl before we pray. It should become obvious why we learn about طَّهَارَةٌ before learning about prayer because we have to **clean and purify** ourselves before we pray!

¹ Compiled by Abu Ameenah AbdurRahman Bennett.

Do you remember in our first lesson on **الفقه** when we said that Arabic words have two meanings: (1) a meaning in the language (dictionary meaning) and (2) a meaning in Islam. Let us see what **طَهَارَةٌ** means in the Arabic language.

The meaning of **طَهَارَةٌ** in the Arabic language

In the Language of the Arabs, the word **طَهَارَةٌ** is a noun which has the three base letters **طَهَرَ**. Let us look in the dictionary to see what these three letters mean:

طهر *ṭahara, ṭahura u (ṭuhr, طهارة ṭahāra) to be clean, pure; — ṭaharat, ṭahurat (of a woman) to be clean (as opposed to*

This could also be our first lesson in how to look up words in Arabic dictionaries. When we wish to learn the meaning of a new word in Arabic, we have to detect the base letters of the word we are searching for. We won't take the Islamic meaning of **طَهَارَةٌ** right now because it is a bit difficult to understand.

In Islam, there are two types of **طَهَارَةٌ**:

طَهَارَةٌ مَعْنَوِيَّةٌ (spiritual cleanliness) - which is the greatest type of purification and it is more important than the physical type of cleanliness. This type of purification requires that we cleanse our hearts from all acts of disobedience, such as shirk, disbelief, hypocrisy, showing off and jealousy. Allah mentions this type of **طَهَارَةٌ** when He speaks about Prophet Isa's Mother:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلِكَةُ يَمْرِيْمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَأَصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ ٤٢

And when the angels said: O Maryam, surely Allah has chosen you and **purified** you and chosen you above the women of the world.

[Al 'Imran 42]

طَهَارَةٌ حِسِّيَّةٌ (physical cleanliness) - which is an external type of cleanliness. This type of cleanliness requires that we cleanse ourselves from all physical types of filthiness. The Arabic word for **filthiness** is **نَجَاسَةٌ**. The word **نَجَاسَةٌ** refers to things such as urine and stool.² We also must purify ourselves by making wudu after we have been to the toilet; otherwise, we cannot pray!

Because we are learning about how to clean and prepare ourselves properly before we pray, it should be obvious that we are only interested in the second meaning of **طَهَارَةٌ** because the second meaning is related to physical cleanliness and purification.

Water is the basic means we use to cleanse ourselves!

Every day, we take water for granted, so much so that when we are offered it to drink we stick our noses up at it because it lacks any taste! But do you know why it lacks any taste? Because it is the purist liquid known to man! Have you ever tried to shower or wash yourself with lemonade or Coca Cola?! Water is a gift from Allah to His creatures; a gift that we cannot live without. One of the many benefits of water is that we can use it to cleanse ourselves from impurities that prevent us from praying our five daily prayers. Allah teaches us in the Qur'an

وَيُنزِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ ۝ ١١

And [He] sent down upon you from the sky, rain by which to **purify** you.
[Al Anfaal 11]

The phrase **طَهَارَةٌ حِسِّيَّةٌ** (physical cleanliness) happens in one of two ways:

طَهَارَةٌ مِنْ الْأَحْثِ (purifying oneself in preparation for acts of worship):

We all know that we cannot pray without firstly making wudhu or ghusl. So when we make wudhu, this is called purifying (**طَهَارَةٌ**) from (**مِنْ**) a ritually impure state (**الْأَحْثِ**). Sometimes this **طَهَارَةٌ** (act of purification) takes place in

² It also refers to other things but we will learn them later.

a minor ritual way (الطَهَارَةُ الصُّغْرَى) and other times in a major ritual way (الطَهَارَةُ الْكُبْرَى). Does anyone know the difference between the minor and major purifications? Here is a massive clue:



Minor ritual purity



Major ritual purity

Well, when you go to the toilet, fall asleep or pass wind, we are required to make wudhu before we pray, and this is the minor purification (الطَهَارَةُ الصُّغْرَى). Allah, the Most High, says

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ
وَأَمْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۗ

O you who believe, when you perform the prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles.

[Al Ma'idah6]

However, sometimes we are required to make ghusl (غُسْلٌ) by washing our whole bodies before we can pray, and this is the major purification (الطَهَارَةُ الْكُبْرَى). Allah says,

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۗ

If you are in a state of sexual discharge, purify yourself (bathe your whole body).

[Al Maa'idah 6]

The Prophet taught us in a very clear hadith what happens if we pray without *wudhu*:

لَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ صَلَاةَ أَحَدِكُمْ إِذَا أَحْدَثَ حَتَّى يَتَوَضَّأَ

“Allah does not accept the prayer of the one who is in a state of *hadath* (ritual impurity) until he makes *wudhu*.”³

Not only does this hadith teach us the importance of **طَهَارَةٌ** before prayer, it also teaches us about the great status of the prayer and how we have to ritually purify ourselves before we stand before Allah in prayer!

طَهَارَةٌ مِنَ النَّجَاسَةِ (purifying oneself, clothes and places of worship from physical types of filthiness):

We said above that the word **نَجَاسَةٌ** refers to things like urine, stool and other substances of a filthy nature. This type of purification requires that (a) our bodies be clean from **نَجَاسَةٌ** (b) our clothes be clean from **نَجَاسَةٌ** and (c) the place we pray in be clean from **نَجَاسَةٌ**.

It should not be hard to realise at this point that cleansing ourselves is a condition that must be fulfilled if we want our prayers to be accepted by Allah. In our future fiqh lessons, we will look at the conditions that are required to be fulfilled for our prayers and other acts of worship to be accepted by Allah.

Al-hamdulilaah, this concludes our lesson on **الطَّهَارَةُ**.

³ Al-Bukhari (86).

Questions on the types of purification

Answer the following questions by reading the text of the lesson carefully:

1. What is the Arabic word for 'purification'?
2. Why do we study purification before studying prayer?
3. What is the linguistic (dictionary meaning) of purification?
4. What do we have to do when we wish to look up an Arabic word in an Arabic or English dictionary?
5. How many types of purification are there in Islam?
6. What is the name of the first type? Give a brief explanation of the first type.
7. What is the name of the second type? Give a brief explanation of the second type.
8. What is the Arabic word for 'filthiness'?
9. Which of the two types of purification are we interested in during this lesson?
10. The first type of purification (we are interested in) happens in two ways. Can you provide a brief description of both?
11. The second type of purification is connected to three things. What are they?
12. Write in Arabic and English the hadith that speaks about *wudhu*.