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# Studies in Legal Hadith

By

Hiroyuki Yanagihashi

Abdest

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Gusül

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MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

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## CHAPTER 2

### Water to be Used for Ablution

#### 1 Introduction

The ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), which is performed five times a day, is the second pillar of Islam. It is incumbent on every Muslim who is sane and more than around seven years old.<sup>1</sup> Prior to prayer a Muslim is required to perform ablution. The Prophet is reported to have said, "Neither prayer without purification nor *ṣadaqa* out of purloined wealth will be accepted" (*lā tuqbalu ṣalā bi-ghayr tuḥūr wa-lā ṣadaqa min gḥulūl*).<sup>2</sup> There are two types of ablution: partial ablution (*wuḍūʾ*) and full body ablution (*ghuṣl*). Regarding the former, Q. 5:6 reads:

O believers, when you stand up to pray wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and your feet up to the ankles. If you are defiled, purify yourselves ...<sup>3</sup>

Partial ablution is prescribed to correct minor impurity (*ḥadath*, *ḥadath aṣghar*), which is caused by urine, stool, passing wind etc. Full body ablution is prescribed to correct major impurity (*ḥadath akbar*, *janāba*), which is caused by discharge of semen or vaginal fluids because of sexual intercourse, wet dream etc.<sup>4</sup> Q. 4:43 reads:

O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying or in the state of sexual impurity (*junub<sup>an</sup>*), except those passing through [a place of prayer], until you have washed [your whole body] (*ḥattā taḡhtasilū*). And if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]. Indeed, God is ever Pardoning and Forgiving.

- 1 The Prophet is reported to have said, "Tell a boy to pray when he reaches the age of seven years. When he becomes ten years old, then beat him for prayer." Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1:133, no. 494; cf. loc. cit., no. 495; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:259, no. 407; Ṣaḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, 1:102.
- 2 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:204, no. 224; cf. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1:16, no. 59; Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 1:80, no. 79; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 1:5-6, no. 1.
- 3 Translated by Arberry.
- 4 Cf. Maghen, "Close Encounters," 354.

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