2532 - Muslim Bathroom Etiquette

the question

Have I heard correctly that your rules of modesty require men to crouch or squat to urinate? I am wondering if it would be more polite not to use the urinal in a men's room if someone who I believe is Muslim is nearby at the wash basin. I know that for women the modesty laws are a lot stricter than for most Western women, and I respect Islamic women very much for that. I also don't want to offend Muslims if there is some way I may be acting in an immodest way, unknowingly, around them. Thank you in advance for your answer and may the blessings of health and peace attend you.

Summary of answer

Muslim bathroom etiquette includes: not facing the qiblah, not touching the penis with the right hand, not removing impurity with the right hand, answering the call of nature sitting, concealing oneself from the sight of others, reciting dhikr when entering or leaving the toilet, and not urinating into stagnant water.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

First of all, we must thank you for your concern about the feelings of Muslims and your efforts to find out what may offend them so that you may avoid it. We are happy to provide you with a detailed answer to your question and more, in the hope that it may open the way to great good for you.

Among the signs of the greatness of the blessed Islamic Shari`ah is the fact that there is no good thing, major or minor, that it has not commanded us to do or pointed the way to it, and there is no bad thing, major or minor, that it has not warned us against or forbidden.

The Shari`ah is perfect and complete in all aspects, a fact which has often greatly astonished non-Muslims and earned their admiration.

At the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)), one of the polytheists said to the Prophet's Companion, Salman al-Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him),: Your Prophet has taught you everything, even how to defecate! Salman said: Yes, he forbade us to face the qiblah when urinating or defecating (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 16; he said it is a sahih hasan hadith; also reported in Sahih Muslim and elsewhere).

Islamic Shari`ah includes a number of rules and manners to be followed when answering the call of nature, including the following:

- Not to face the qiblah (direction of prayer, i.e. the Ka`bah which was built in Makkah by Ibrahim, upon whom be peace, as commanded by Allah) when urinating or defecating. This is out of respect for the Qiblah and for the symbols and rituals of Allah. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you sits down to answer the call of nature, he should not face the qiblah or turn his back towards it. (Muslim, 389)
- He should not touch his penis with his right hand when urinating, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you urinates, he should not hold his penis in his right hand or clean it with his right hand; and (when drinking), he should not breathe into the vessel. (Reported by al-Bukhari, 150)
- He should not remove impurity with his right hand; the left hand should be used for this purpose, because of the hadith quoted above, and because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you wipes himself, he should not use his right hand. (Reported by al-Bukhari, 5199)

The Prophet's wife, Hafsah (may Allah be pleased with her), reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to use his right hand for eating, drinking, making wudu, getting dressed, and giving and taking things, and he used to use his left hand for other things. (Reported by Imam Ahmad; see also Sahih al-Jami', 4912

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When any one of you cleans himself, he should not use his right hand, he should use his left hand. (Reported by Ibn Majah, 308; see also Sahih al-Jami', 322)

- The Sunnah is to answer the call of nature sitting, making oneself close to the ground, because this is more concealing, and makes it less likely that spray from one's urine will come back on one's body or clothes, making them dirty. If a person can be sure of avoiding this, then it is permissible to urinate standing up .
- A person should be concealed from the sight of others when answering the call of nature. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to prefer to go behind a rise in the ground or a garden of date palms. (Reported by Muslim, 517)

If a person is out in an open space and cannot find anything to conceal him when he needs to answer the call of nature, he should move far away from the other people around him, because al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah said: I was with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on a journey, when he felt the need to answer the call of nature, so he went far away. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 20; he said it is a sahih hasan hadith)

'Abd-Allah ibn Abi Qurad said: I went out with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to an open space, and when he needed to answer the call of nature, he moved away. (Reported by al-Nasai, 16; see also Sahih al-Jami', 4651)

- A person should not uncover his `awrah (private parts) until after he has squatted close to the ground, because this is more concealing, as Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) wanted to answer the call of nature, he would not lift his garment until he had squatted close to the ground. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 14; see also Sahih al-Jami', 4652)

If a person is in a (modern) toilet, he should not lift his garment until he has closed the door and is out of sight of other people.

With regard to this point and the one before, it is worth noting that the habit of many people in the

West and elsewhere, of urinating in a standing position in front of other people in public toilets (using urinals) is something which goes against good manners, modesty and decency, and is repulsive to anyone who possesses sound common sense and wisdom. How can anybody uncover in front of other people the `awrah (private parts) which Allah has placed between his legs to conceal it and commanded him to cover it? The idea that it should be covered is well established among all wise and decent people of all races. It is wrong in principle to build restrooms of this shameful type, where the users can see one another, thus making them worse than some kinds of animals whose habit is to conceal themselves from one another when urinating or defecating.

- It is also good manners according to Shari`ah to recite certain adhkar (supplications) when entering or leaving the toilet , which are quite appropriate to the situation and place. Our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught us that when entering the toilet, we should say: Allahumma inni a'udhi bika min al-khubthi wal-khabaith (O Allah, I seek refuge with You from male and female devils). When leaving the toilet, he should say: Ghufranak (I seek Your forgiveness).
- He should be careful to remove all impurity after answering the call of nature, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) warned against being careless in cleaning oneself after urinating : Most of the punishment of the grave will be because of urine. (Reported by Ibn Majah, 342; see also Sahih al-Jami', 1202)

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by two graves, and said: They are being punished, but they are not being punished for any major sin. One of them used not to protect himself (i.e. keep himself clean from) his urine, and the other used to walk about spreading malicious gossip. (Reported by al-Bukhari, 5592)

- Any impurity should be washed or wiped three times or an odd number of times greater than three, according to whatever is needed to cleanse it, because `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to wash his posterior three times. Ibn 'Umar said: We did this too and found it to be healing and

cleansing. (Reported by Ibn Majah, 350; see also Sahih al-Jami', 4993) Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: When anyone of you cleans himself (with stones or similar material) let him use an odd number. (Reported by Imam Ahmad; classed as hasan in Sahih al-Jami', 375)

- He should not use bones or dung to clean himself or wipe away the impurity, rather, he should use tissue, stones, and the like. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he used to carry a vessel for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to do wudu and clean himself after answering the call of nature. Whilst he was following him, he (the Prophet) asked, Who is that? He said: I am Abu Hurayrah. He said: Get me some stones I can use to clean myself, but do not bring me any bones or dung. So I brought him some stones, carrying them in the hem of my garment, and placed them by his side, then I went away. When he had finished, I came back and asked him, What is wrong with bones and dung? He said: They are the food of the jinn. (Reported by al-Bukhari, 3571)
- A person should not urinate into stagnant water, because Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade anyone to urinate into stagnant water (reported by Muslim, 423), and because this makes the water impure and harms those who use it.
- A person should not urinate by the roadside or in places where people seek shade, because this is offensive to them. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Fear the two things that bring curses. They asked, What are the two things that bring curses, O Messenger of Allah? He said: When a person relieves himself in the road where people walk or in the place where they seek shade. (Reported by Abu Dawud, 23; see also Sahih al-Jami', 110)
- One should not greet a person who is answering the call of nature , or return a greeting whilst one is answering the call of nature, out of respect to Allah by not mentioning His name in a dirty place . Jabir ibn 'Abd-Allah reported that a man passed by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) whilst he was urinating, and greeted him. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him: If you see me in this state, do not greet me, because if you do, I will not respond. (Reported by Ibn Majah, 346; see also

Sahih al-Jami', 575) The majority of scholars say that it is makruh (disliked) to speak in the restroom unnecessarily.

These are some of the rules and manners prescribed by the Shari`ah of Islam in this matter which is repeated many times a day by every person. If the Shari`ah has paid such minute attention to the details of such a mundane matter, what do you think it has to say about more important issues? Do you know of any other religion or system in the world that has brought laws like this? This is enough, by Allah, to prove its perfection and beauty, and the necessity of following it. We ask Allah to give us and you strength and to guide us all to the truth. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.

For more, please see these answers: 161383 , 198463 , 286684 , 20620 , and 21895

And Allah knows best.