

315016 - He forgot the order in which limbs are to be washed when doing wudu

the question

If I washed one limb before another by mistake when doing wudu, and I finished my prayer, and I realized for sure the following day that I made a mistake, what must I do?

Summary of answer

What is required when doing wudu is to wash the limbs in the order that was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Based on that, whoever does these actions in the wrong order deliberately, his wudu is not valid. With regard to washing the right before the left when washing the hands and feet, that is not obligatory, because they are like one limb. The same applies to rinsing the mouth and nose whilst washing the face; it is not obligatory to pay attention to the order when doing them.

Detailed answer

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Ruling on the order in which limbs are to be washed when doing wudu

What is required when doing wudu is to wash the limbs in the order that was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), which is in accordance with the verse in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles}[Al-Ma'idah

5:6].

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Purifying the limbs in the right order is the fifth obligation of wudu. The evidence for that is the verse):

{O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles}[Al-Ma'idah 5:6].

The pertinent evidence in the verse is the fact that the part that is to be wiped is mentioned between other parts that are to be washed, and we do not know of any reason for that except that these actions should be done in this order, otherwise the parts to be washed would be mentioned one after another. Because this phrase is the result of a conditional phrase (jawab ash-shart), this indicates that these actions are to be done in the same order as mentioned in this phrase.

Because Allah mentioned these actions in this order, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "I start with that with which Allah started."

The evidence from the Sunnah is the fact that all of those who described the wudu of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) only mentioned that he did the actions in the order that Allah mentions. (*Ash-Sharh al-Mumti`*, 1/189-190).

Ruling on one who does the actions of wudu in the wrong order:

Based on that, whoever does these actions in the wrong order deliberately, his wudu is not valid.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Someone made a mistake in the order of wudu; for example, he wiped over his head before washing his hands, and he did so knowingly. Is the prayer he offered after doing this wudu valid?

He replied:

His prayer is not valid, because this wudu was not valid, as he wiped his head before washing his hands, and Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles}[Al-Ma'idah 5:6].

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did wudu washing his limbs in the right order. So if someone does his wudu in a different order, then he has done something that is not in accordance with the command of Allah and His Messenger, and it is soundly narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: "Whoever does an action that is not in accordance with this matter of ours, it is rejected." So if wudu is rejected, that means that it is not valid, and if he prays after doing this wudu, he has prayed with a wudu that is not valid, so his prayer will not be accepted, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah does not accept any prayer without purification (wudu)." (*Liqa' al-Bab al-Maftuh*, 1/27).

In this scenario, he must repeat the wudu and the prayer.

The scholars differed regarding one who does these actions in the wrong order by mistake or because he forgot.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) favoured the view that the order in which the limbs are to be washed when doing wudu is waived when there is a valid excuse, such as ignorance and forgetting.

Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said, when discussing the difference of scholarly opinion regarding the ruling on the order in which the limbs are to be washed when doing wudu and whether or not it is waived if one forgets:

The one who forgets is to be excused in all cases, unlike the one who does it deliberately. This is the third scholarly view, and it says that there is a difference between the one who deliberately

does the actions of wudu in the wrong order and the one who is excused because of forgetfulness or ignorance. This is the view that is most likely to be correct, and it is supported by the words of the Sahabah and the majority of scholars, and it is in accordance with the principle of the madhhab of Ahmad. (*Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 21/409).

This is a strong view; based on that, you do not have to repeat that prayer.

But if you repeat it in order to be on the safe side, that is good.

Ruling on the order between right and left when washing the hands and feet

With regard to washing the right before the left when washing the hands and feet, that is not obligatory, because they are like one limb.

Ibn al-Mundhir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

They are unanimously agreed that there is no requirement to repeat the prayer for one who starts by washing the left before the right. We narrated from `Ali ibn Abi Talib and Ibn Mas`ud that they said: Do not worry about which of your hands you start with. (*Al-Awsat*, 1/387).

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is not obligatory to start with the right before the left, and I do not know of any difference of opinion regarding that, because they are both referred to in the Book of Allah by one word. Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {your forearms [aydikum]} and {your feet [arjulakum]}.

The jurists regard the two hands as one limb and the two feet as one limb, and it is not obligatory to pay attention to the order with regard to one limb. This is indicated by the words of `Ali and Ibn Mas`ud. (*Al-Mughni*, 1/191).

The same applies to rinsing the mouth and nose whilst washing the face; it is not obligatory to pay attention to the order when doing them.

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is not obligatory to pay attention to the order when rinsing the mouth and nose and washing the rest of face, because they are part of it, but what is preferred is to start with the mouth and nose before washing the face, because everyone who described the wudu of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stated that he began with them, except in some rare reports. (*Al-Mughni*, 1/171).

For more information, please see answers no. [11497](#), [14321](#), [198604](#) and [153791](#).

And Allah knows best.