

Muslim bathroom etiquette

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 Moslem 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 Moslems 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.

Praise be to Allaah.

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 sharee'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. It 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 Allaah be upon him)), one of the mushrikeen (polytheists) said to (the Prophet's Companion) Salmaan al-Farsi (may Allaah be

pleased with him): Your Prophet has taught you everything, even how to defecate! Salmaan said: Yes, he forbade us to face the qiblah when urinating

or defecating (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 16; he said it is a saheeh hasan hadeeth; also reported in Saheeh Muslim and elsewhere). Islamic sharee 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 Allaah) when urinating or defecating. This is out of respect for the Qiblah and for the symbols and rituals of Allaah. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah 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. (Reported by Muslim, 389).

He should not touch his penis with his right hand when urinating, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah 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-Bukhaari, 150).

He should not remove najaasah (impurity) with his right hand; the left hand should be used for this purpose, because of the hadeeth quoted above, and because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: When any one of you wipes himself, he should not use his right hand. (Reported by

al-Bukhaari, 5199). The Prophet's wife Hafsa (may Allaah be pleased with her) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to use his right hand for eating, drinking, making wudoo, getting dressed, and giving and taking things, and he used to use his left hand for other things. (Reported by Imaam Ahmad; see also Saheeh al-Jaami, 4912). Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Maajah, 308; see also Saheeh al-Jaami, 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 Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah 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-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah said: I was with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 saheeh hasan hadeeth). Abd-Allaah ibn Abi Quraad said: I went out with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to an open space, and when he needed to answer the call of nature, he moved away. (Reported by al-Nisaa i, 16; see also Saheeh al-Jaami , 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 Allaah be pleased with him) reported: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Saheeh al-Jaami , 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 Allaah 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 Sharee ah to recite certain
 adhkaar (supplications) when entering or leaving the toilet, which are quite
 appropriate
 to the situation and place. Our Prophet
 (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)
 taught us that when entering the toilet, we should say: Allaahumma innee
 a oodhi bika min al-khubthi wa l-khabaa ith (O Allah, I seek refuge
 with You from male and female devils). When leaving the toilet, he should
 say:
 Ghufraanak (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 Allaah 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 Maajah, 342; see
 also Saheeh
 al-Jaami , 1202). Ibn Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both)
 reported that the Messenger of Allaah
 (peace and blessings of Allaah 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-Bukhaari, 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

Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with her) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Maajah, 350; see also Saheeh al-Jaami , 4993). Abu Hurayrah

(may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of

Allaah be upon him) said: When anyone of you cleans himself (with stones or similar

material) let him use an odd number. (Reported by Imaam Ahmad; classed as hasan in Saheeh al-Jaami , 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 Allaah be

pleased with him) reported that he used to carry a vessel for the Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allaah be upon him) to do wudoo 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-Bukhaari, 3571).

A person should not urinate into stagnant water, because Jaabir (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and

blessings of Allaah 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 Allaah be upon him) said: Fear the two things that bring curses. They asked, What are the two things that bring curses, O Messenger of Allaah? 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 Saheeh al-Jaami , 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 Allaah by not mentioning His name in a dirty place. [Translator's note: the Islamic greeting is

al-salaam alaykum (peace be upon you) ; one of the names of Allaah is al-Salaam (the Peace)]. Jaabir ibn Abd-Allaah reported that a man passed

by the Prophet

(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) whilst he was urinating, and greeted him. The Messenger of Allaah

(peace and blessings of Allaah 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 Maajah, 346; see also Saheeh al-Jaami , 575). The majority of scholars say that it is makrooh (disliked) to speak in the

restroom unnecessarily.

These are some of the rules and manners prescribed by the sharee'ah of Islam in this matter which is repeated many times a day by every person.

If the sharee'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 Allaah, to prove its perfection and beauty, and the necessity of following it. We ask Allaah to give us and you strength and to guide us all to the truth. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.