193034 - Must Women Repeat the Prayer if their Feet Unintentionally Uncovered?

the question

I heard a Fatwa of Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) in which he said that if a woman prays with her feet uncovered, she has to repeat the prayer. My question is: what is the ruling on the prayers that I offered before coming to know of the ruling? What must I do now – should I repeat them? If I do not know how many there were, what should I do?

Summary of answer

If a woman prayed with her feet uncovered, unaware of the ruling, then she is not required to make up those prayers due to her lack of knowledge about the matter.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Ruling on Covering Feet in Prayer: A Scholarly Debate

The scholars (may Allah have mercy on them) differed concerning the ruling on whether a woman has to cover her feet whilst praying. The majority of scholars are of the view that it is obligatory for a woman to cover her feet whilst praying.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was inclined towards this view. In the answer to question no. 1046, we quoted his words (may Allah have mercy on him). Please see the question referred to for more information.

The other view is that this is not obligatory; this is the view of the Hanafis and was the view favoured by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him). Ibn `Uthaymin (may

Allah have mercy on him) was also inclined towards this view.

It says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah (7/86): With regard to the feet, they are `Awrah according to the Malikis and Shafi`is, apart from Al-Muzani. This is also the view of the Hanbalis and of some of the Hanafis.

The most widely-held view among the Hanafis is that the feet are not `Awrah. This is also the view of Al-Muzani among the Shafi`is and of Shaykh Taqi Ad-Din ibn Taymiyah among the Hanbalis. (End quote)

The majority quoted as evidence for the view that it is obligatory to cover them the report narrated by Abu Dawud (640) from Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her), that she asked the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): Can a woman pray wearing a chemise and headcover and no Izar (waist-wrapper)? He said: “If the chemise is long enough to cover the tops of her feet (then that is fine).”

Al-Khattabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: This report supports the validity of the view of those scholars who did not regard it as permissible for a woman to pray if any part of her body is uncovered. Do you not see that he said: “If the chemise is long enough to cover the tops of her feet (then that is fine).”? Thus he made it a condition of her prayer being valid that no part of her body should be visible. (End quote from Ma`alim As-Sunan, 1/159)

Those who held the second view quoted as evidence the fact that the feet are part of the woman’s body that is usually visible when she is at home, yet despite that there is no proven Hadith to suggest that it is obligatory to cover the feet.

They responded to the Hadith of Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) by noting that it is Mawquf (a narration attributed to a Companion).

Abu Dawud said in his Sunan, after quoting the Hadith: This Hadith was narrated by Malik ibn Anas, Bakr ibn Mudar, Hafs ibn Ghiyath, Isma`il ibn Ja`far, Ibn Abi Dhi’b and Ibn Ishaq from Muhammad ibn Zayd, from his mother, from Umm Salamah, and none of them mentioned the

Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). They only attributed it to Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her). (End quote)

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Ash-Sharh Al-Mumti` (2/161): Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was of the view that the entire body of a free woman is `Awrah apart from that which appears of it in her own home, which is the face, hands and feet. He said: At the time of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, women used to wear chemises at home, and not every woman had two garments. Hence if any menstrual blood got on to her garment, she would wash it and pray in it, therefore the feet and hands are not `Awrah in prayer and are not `Awrah in the sense that they should be covered in the presence of non-Mahrams.

As there is no definitive evidence concerning this matter, I follow the view of Shaykh Al-Islam concerning this issue, and I say that this is what appears to be the correct view if we do not state that in definitive terms, because even if a woman has a garment that comes down to the floor, when she prostrates the soles of her feet will be visible. (End quote)

What to Do if Prayers Were Performed While Unaware of This Ruling?

If a woman prayed for some time without covering her feet , and she was unaware of the ruling, then she does not have to make up those past prayers, because she is excused due to having been ignorant of the ruling. But she should make up the prayer that is currently due, if the time for it has not ended.

Shaykh Muhammad Shams Al-Haqq Al-`Adhimabadi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Malik ibn Anas said: If a woman prayed with her hair showing or the tops of her feet uncovered, she should repeat the prayer if the time for it has not yet ended. (End quote from `Awn Al-Ma`bud Sharh Sunan Abu Dawud, 2/242)

Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) issued two fatwas, one with the

members of the Standing Committee, of which he was the head (may Allah have mercy on him), and a fatwa of his own that was from the Fatawa Nur `ala Ad-Darb collection. Both fatwas say that if the woman was unaware of the ruling, then she does not have to make up the prayers.

It says in Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da'imah, (vol. 2; 5/143): I heard on a religious show that it is prohibited for a woman to pray with her feet uncovered; what is the ruling?

They replied:

The woman is required to cover all of her body when praying , including the feet, which must be covered. As for the face, it should be left uncovered if there are no non-Mahram men nearby. If she offered some prayers in the past in which her feet were uncovered, then she is pardoned, in sha Allah, due to having been ignorant of the ruling. And Allah is the source of strength. (End quote)

Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to her making up past prayers, that is because she failed to meet one of the conditions of prayer. If she offered several prayers in which she did not cover her feet, then she must make them up. But if she was unaware of the Shar`i ruling, then perhaps Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will forgive her for what is past and she does not have to make them up. It was narrated in an authentic report from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that when he saw a man praying too quickly, as if he was pecking the ground, he said to him: "Go back and pray, for you have not prayed…" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

So the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed him to repeat that prayer that was currently due, but he did not instruct him to repeat previous prayers, because he had been ignorant of the correct manner of praying, although what appears to be the case is that he had been praying in this manner in the past, but because he had been ignorant, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) excused him for those past occasions but he instructed him to repeat the prayer that was currently due. This indicates that if someone is ignorant of one of the obligatory parts of the prayer, then he is alerted to it before the time for a prayer ends, then

he should repeat the prayer that is currently due, but as for his past prayers, they are still acceptable, because of his ignorance.

This is what is indicated by this Hadith, because the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not instruct this man who prayed badly to repeat all his past prayers, because of his ignorance and because of the hardship that would be caused by that. The same applies to the woman who offered many prayers before learning that it is obligatory to cover the feet; she does not have to repeat them, in sha Allah, according to the correct view, because she is excused due to her ignorance. But in the future she must always remember to cover her feet and the rest of her body, apart from the face and hands, because they are not `Awrah when praying, according to the scholars. But if she does cover her hands, so as to avoid a matter concerning which some of the scholars differed, that is good. (End quote from Fatawa Nur `ala Ad-Darb by Ibn Baz)

To sum up: covering the feet when praying, for women, is a matter concerning which the scholars differed, but to be on the safe side a woman should not leave her feet uncovered when praying, so as to avoid a matter concerning which the scholars differed. But with regard to past prayers, she does not have to make them up, because she is excused for not having been aware of the ruling.

And Allah knows best.