225952 - The one who washes limbs more than three times when doing wudu is doing something wrong, but it does not invalidate his wudu

the question

Is doing more when doing wudu, such as washing a limb four times, disliked, or does it invalidate wudu altogether, based on the hadith which says: “Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it, it will be rejected”?

I have read the views of some scholars which say that it is disliked (makruh) only, but I wonder why does it not invalidate wudu altogether, as it is adding something to this act of worship that is not part of it? I hope that you can explain in detail the ruling on doing that, deliberately or out of ignorance or due to compulsive thoughts (waswas) or thinking that doing more in wudu means that it is most likely that it will be valid, as the water will reach all of the limb?

Summary of answer

The Sunnah when doing wudu is to wash each part three times, and doing more than three times is overstepping the limits and is transgression.
Even though washing the limbs more than three times is not allowed according to scholarly consensus, it does not invalidate wudu, because wudu has been done correctly by washing the limbs three times, and anything more than that is rejected, but it does not render it invalid.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Sunnah regarding the number of times limbs are to

be washed in wudu

The Sunnah when doing wudu is to wash each part three times, and doing more than three times is overstepping the limits and is transgression.

Abu Dawud (135), an-Nasa'i (140) and Ahmad (6684) narrated from `Amr ibn Shu`ayb, from his father, that his grandfather said: A Bedouin came to the Prophet (sa) and asked him about wudu, so he showed him how to do wudu washing each part three times. Then he said: "This is wudu; anyone who does more than this has behaved badly, overstepped the mark and done wrong."

Scholarly views regarding the ruling on washing the limb more than three times when doing wudu

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars are unanimously agreed that it is disliked to wash the limb more than three times. What is meant by washing three times is making the water reach the entire limb each of three times. However, when washing the limb if one cannot make the water reach all of it except by using two scoops of water, this is counted as washing it once, and if a person is uncertain as to whether he has washed it three times or twice, he should regard that as two and wash it a third time. This is the correct view which was stated by the majority of our companions. Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Juwayni, one of our companions, said: He should do that three times and no more than that, for fear of committing an act of innovation (bid`ah) by washing it a fourth time. The first view is the one that is in accordance with the guidelines, and washing it for a fourth time is regarded as an innovation and is disliked if he did it deliberately to make the number reach four.

End quote from *Sharh an-Nawawi `ala Muslim*, 3/109.

Ash-Shawkaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is no difference of opinion regarding the fact that washing more than three times is disliked.

Ibn al-Mubarak said: I cannot be certain that if he washes the limb more than three times when doing wudu that he will not be sinning. Ahmad and Is-haq said: No one washes the limb more than three times except a man who has a problem.

End quote from *Nayl al-Awtar*, 1/218.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The hadith indicates that it is not permissible to do more than the perfect number that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did, which was washing each limb three times when doing wudu, making sure that the water reached everywhere it is required to reach each time. It does not refer to the number of scoops; rather what is meant is how many times the limb is washed fully. So if a person scoops water twice for each time he washes the limb fully, making six scoops, he is not doing anything wrong. Rather the one who does wrong is the one who washes the entire limb, then repeats that more than three times. But if someone washes his foot, for example, with one scoop of water, but he is not able to wash all of it, so he needs a second scoop of water to complete it, then he washes it a second time, then he washes it a third time, the increase in the number of scoops of water does not matter. Rather what matters is washing the limb completely, then doing that a second time, then doing that a third time, so he should not do that more than three times. The same applies to the face and to the arms.

End quote from *Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb*, 5/46.

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

Washing the limb more than three times when doing wudu is transgressing the limits set by Allah. Allah, may He be Blessed and Exalted, says: {And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers} [al-Baqarah 2:229].

End quote from *Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb*, 7/2.

Is wudu invalidated if one washes the limbs more than three times?

Even though washing the limbs more than three times is not allowed according to scholarly consensus, it does not invalidate wudu, because wudu has been done correctly by washing the limbs three times, and anything more than that is rejected, but it does not render it invalid.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If a person washes the limbs more than three times, he has done something that is disliked, but he has not invalidated his wudu. This is our view and is the view of all the scholars. Ad-Darimi narrated in *Al-Istidhkar* that some scholars said that it is invalidated, just as doing more than is prescribed in the prayer renders it invalid, but this view is clearly mistaken.

End quote from *Al-Majmu`*, 1/440.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The more correct view, according to the Shafa`is, is that it is disliked in the sense that it is not proper.

Ad-Darimi narrated from some of them that washing the limb more than three times invalidates wudu, just as doing more than is prescribed in the prayer invalidates it, but this is a wrong analogy.

End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari*, 1/234.

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

More than one of the scholars said that if a person washes the limb more than three times, then he has done something that is disliked, but it does not invalidate his wudu according to scholarly consensus.

End quote from *Hashiyat ar-Rawd al-Murbi`*, 1/175.

With regard to the Prophet's words, "Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not part of it, it will be rejected" (narrated by al-Bukhari, 2697; Muslim, 1718),

What is rejected in this case is what is introduced, which is washing the limb for the fourth time. To explain further, washing the limb three times is Sunnah, because it is what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed us to do. But if someone does more than that and washes the limb a fourth time, then he has added something to the Sunnah, so it is something additional that is rejected. Hence washing the limb three times when doing wudu is valid, and doing it a fourth time is rejected, so it is not part of wudu as it was prescribed.

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

If someone does an act of worship for Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, in a manner that involves doing more than what was prescribed in Islamic teachings, it will not be accepted from him. An example of that is a man who does wudu washing each limb four times; the fourth time is not accepted, because it is additional to what is mentioned in the religious texts. Rather it was narrated in the hadith that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did wudu washing each limb three times, and he said: "anyone who does more than this has behaved badly, overstepped the mark and done wrong."

End quote from *Sharh al-Arba`in an-Nawawiyyah*, p. 99.

Ruling on one who washes the limb for a fourth time by mistake or because of intrusive thoughts (waswas)

Whoever washes a limb for a fourth time deliberately is the one who has done what is disliked and blameworthy. As for the one who washes it a fourth time by mistake, or because he was uncertain of the number of times he had washed the limb, or out of ignorance, there is no blame on him. We have quoted above the words of an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) which differentiate

between doing it deliberately and doing it otherwise.

As for the one who is affected by intrusive thoughts (waswas), he is more deserving of being excused, because he did that additional action due to being unable to focus and control his thoughts. But what is required of him is to ward off these intrusive thoughts as much as he can, and not give into them.

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

Undoubtedly it is the Shaytan who causes intrusive thoughts, so those who suffer intrusive thoughts obey the Shaytan and respond to his call, following his commands and turning away from following the Sunnah and path of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), to the extent that one of them will think that if he does wudu like the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did it, or he does ghusl as he did it, he will not become pure and he will still be in a state of impurity. Were it not for the fact that he may be excused for his ignorance, this would be regarded as opposing the Messenger. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to do wudu using a mudd of water, and he did ghusl using a sa` of water, but the one who is affected by intrusive thoughts (waswas) thinks that this amount is not sufficient even to wash his hands. It is also soundly narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he did wudu washing each limb once only, and he never washed any limb more than three times. Rather he said that: “anyone who does more than this has behaved badly, overstepped the mark and done wrong.”

The one who is affected by intrusive thoughts is behaving badly, overstepping the mark and doing wrong according to the testimony of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), so how can he draw close to Allah by means of an action in which he is doing wrong and transgressing His limits?

End quote from *Ighathat al-Lahfan*, 1/127.

Check the following answers for more information: 72450, 226422, 11497, 14321.

And Allah knows best.