13618 - Ruling on doing tayammum when water is available

the question

What is the ruling on doing tayammum when there is water available?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about one who does tayammum when there is water available. He said: This is a great evil for which he must be rebuked, because doing wudu for prayer is one of the conditions of prayer being valid, when water is available. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! When you intend to offer As-Salah (the prayer), wash your faces and your hands (forearms) up to the elbows, rub (by passing wet hands over) your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. If you are in a state of Janaaba (i.e. after a sexual discharge), purify yourselves (bathe your whole body). But if you are ill or on a journey, or any of you comes after answering the call of nature, or you have been in contact with women (i.e. sexual intercourse), and you find no water, then perform Tayammum with clean earth and rub therewith your faces and hands” [al-Maa’idah 5:6]

In al-Saheehayn it is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that he said: “The prayer of any one of you will not be accepted if he has broken wind, until he does wudu.” Allah has permitted tayammum, which takes the place of wudu, when water is unavailable, or when one is unable to use it because of sickness, etc, because of the aayah quoted above, and because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Approach not As-Salah (the prayer) when you are in a drunken state until you know (the meaning) of what you utter, nor when you are in a state of Janaaba (i.e. in a state of

sexual impurity and have not yet taken a bath), except when travelling on the road (without enough water, or just passing through a mosque), till you wash your whole body. And if you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes after answering the call of nature, or you have been in contact with women (by sexual relations) and you find no water, perform Tayammum with clean earth and rub therewith your faces and hands (Tayammum). Truly, Allah is Ever Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving" [al-Nisa' 4:43]

It was narrated that 'Imraan ibn Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "We were with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on a journey. He led the people in prayer, and there was one man who kept away. He said, 'What kept you from praying?' He said, 'I have become impure (janaabah) and there is no water.' He said, 'You should perform tayammum with clean earth, and that is sufficient for you.'" (Agreed upon).

Hence we know that doing tayammum for prayer is not permissible when water is available and one is able to use it. Rather it is obligatory for the Muslim to use water for wudu and for doing ghusl from janaabah (major impurity following sexual activity, wet dream, etc) no matter where he is, so long as he is able to use it. He has no excuse for not doing so and for doing tayammum instead. In that case his prayer will be incorrect, because he has omitted one of the conditions of prayer, which is purifying oneself with water when one is able to do so.

Many of the Bedouin – may Allah guide them – and others who go for trips use tayammum, when there is a lot of water available and it is easy to access it. This is undoubtedly serious carelessness and an abhorrent action which is not permissible because it goes against the shar'i evidence. Rather the Muslim is excused for doing tayammum if water is far away or he has only a small amount of water which he needs to keep himself and his family, and livestock alive, and the source of water is too far away. Every Muslim, wherever he is, has to fear Allah in all his affairs; he has to adhere to His commands, which include doing wudu with water when one is able to. He must also beware of that which Allah has forbidden, which includes doing tayammum when water is available and he is able to use it. I ask Allah to give us and all the Muslims understanding of His religion and to make us all steadfast in adhering to it. May He grant us protection from the evil of

our own souls and from our evil deeds, for He is Most Generous, Most Kind. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad, and his family and companions.