45535 - Is it better to wipe over the socks or to wash the feet?

the question

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The majority of scholars, including Abu Haneefah, Maalik and al-Shaafa'i, are of the view that it is better to wash the feet. They said: that is because the basic principle is washing the feet, so that is better.

See al-Majmoo', 1/502

Imam Ahmad was of the view that wiping over the socks is better. He gave the following evidence for that:

1 – It is easier, and the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was never given the choice between two things but he chose the easier of the two, so long as it was not a sin; if it was a sin he would be the furthest removed of the people from it. Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3560) and Muslim (2327).

2 – It is a concession, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah loves concessions to be taken as He hates sin to be committed." Narrated by Ahmad, 5832; classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Irwa' al-Ghaleel, 564.

3 – Wiping over the socks involves being different from the people of bid'ah who reject it, such as the Khaarijis and Raafidis.

There are many ahaadeeth from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which

indicate that he did both: he washed his feet and he wiped over his khuffayn (leather slippers). This led some scholars to say that wiping and washing are the same. This was the view favoured by Ibn al-Mundhir (may Allah have mercy on him).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim were of the view that either may be better depending on the circumstances of his feet. If a person is wearing socks it is better to wipe over them, and if his feet are bare, it is better to wash them, and he should not put socks on in order to wipe over them.

This is indicated by the hadeeth of al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah (may Allah have mercy on him) who wanted to take off the Prophet's khuffayn in order to wash his feet. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to him: "Leave them, for I put them on pure," so he wiped over them." Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 206; Muslim, 274. This indicates that wiping is better for one who is wearing socks.

This is also indicated by the report narrated by al-Tirmidhi (96) from Safwaan ibn 'Assaal (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to tell us when we were travelling not to take off our kufoof for three days and nights, except in the case of janaabah, but if one defecated, urinated or slept (there was no need to take them off). Classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Irwa' al-Ghaleel, 104. The command to wipe indicates that it is better, but that applies to one who is wearing socks.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

Conclusion: what is better for each one is that which is suited to his circumstances. For the one whose feet are bare, it is better for him to wash them, and he should not put on socks so that he can wipe over them, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to wash his feet when they were bare, and he would wipe over them if he was wearing khufoof. End quote from al-Insaaf, 1/378

Ibn al-Qayyim said in Zaad al-Ma'aad (1/199):

He is not required to do more than is required with regard to the situation of his feet. If he is wearing khufoof, he should wipe over them and not take them off, and if his feet are bare he should wash them, and he should not put on socks so that he can wipe over them. This is the most correct opinion concerning the issue of whether wiping or washing is better. This is the view of our Shaykh (i.e., Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah). End quote.