New inquiries (istifta') | NOVEMBER 2018 - 11 /Nov/ 2018

Employing Rosewater in the Making of Ablution

Q.1| From the perspective of Islamic canon, would it be better to use rosewater, instead of plain water, in making wudu?

A. Rosewater is a muzaf liquid(1) and therefore cannot be employed in the making of ablution.

Supererogatory Fasting without a Host's Consent

Q.2| If a host does not consent to his guest's supererogatory fasting, would the guest be eligible for the rewards specified for the supererogatory fasting should he reluctantly desist from fasting on account of his host's lack of consent?

A. A guest's supererogatory fasting is deemed objectionable should his host withhold his consent or forbid him from fasting. Should the guest fast and the host invite him to eat, it would be canonically preferable for the guest to accept the offer of a brother in faith. Eating in response to an invitation offered by a brother in faith, though breaking one's fast, does not deprive one of the rewards of fasting. (Again, this is only when the fasting in question is supererogatory, not obligatory.)

Accepting a Gift from a Usurer

Q.3| A person who I know engages in usury offered me some money as an eid gift. What am I supposed to do with this money?

A. If you are not certain that the money given to you was impermissibly acquired, it is permissible for you to use it as you please.

Closing the Eyes during Canonic Prayers

Q.4| Is it permissible to close the eyes during the prayer to enhance concentration and focus?

A. There is no canonic proscription against closing the eyes while performing the canonic prayers, although it is best avoided, except in the bowing posture (ruku').

Puss from Blisters

Q.5| Is the puss that develops in blisters a canonically impure substance?

A. If it does not contain blood, it is not canonically impure.

Turtle Urine

Q.6| What is the canonic status of the urine, feces, and semen of an animal like turtle?

A. The urine, excrement, and semen of animals such as turtles that cannot be characterized as having gushing blood (2) is canonically pure.

Making Up for a Missed "Prayer of Signs"

Q.7| Unbeknown to me, there was a lunar eclipse a month ago in the region where I live. Only recently did I learn of the lunar eclipse. Do I need to prayer the Prayer of Signs with the intention of performing the original prayer (ada') or as a belated substitute for a prayer that I missed in its due time (qaza')?

A. If it was a full, rather than partial, lunar eclipse, you must perform the prayer with the intention of making up for a missed prayer. If, however, the eclipse was partial, you have no obligation.

Doubting the Validity of a Marriage Contract

Q.8| If a man and a woman get married by reciting the formula of matrimony (sighat al-nikah) on their own and then after a while doubt the correctness of their Arabic pronunciations, what is the status of their marriage?

A. As a matter of mandatory caution, the formula of matrimony must be recited in correct Arabic. If one who is aware of this precept comes to retroactively doubt the validity of the marriage contract on account of being uncertain as to whether the Arabic formula was pronounced correctly, the marriage contract is deemed valid.

Breaking a Supererogatory Prayer

Q.9| If my mother or father calls me while I'm engaged in a supererogatory canonic prayer, is it obligatory that I break the prayer to respond to them?

A. If not answering their call does not bother them, it is not obligatory that you break your supererogatory prayer to respond to

them.

Recitation of Verses of the Qur'an in Supererogatory Prayers

Q.10| In supererogatory prayers, can we recite a few verses, instead of one whole chapter (surah), following the recitation of Surat al-Fatihah (the first chapter of the Qur'an whose recitation is invariably obligatory in all canonic prayers)?

A. It is permissible.

Doubting the Extent of the Area Exposed to Impurity

Q.11| What are we supposed to do if we are certain that something has become canonically impure (najis) but are uncertain as to the precise area that has been exposed to impurity?(3)

A. In order to make something pure, all the parts and areas that may possibly be impure must be purified. Yet, if something that bears moisture comes into contact with those parts and areas that are possibly—not certainly—impure, prior to the process of purification, it does not become impure.(4)

1. The term muzaf (for which we would be hard pressed to find a fitting English equivalent) is used to describe any water or liquid to which it would be incorrect to refer plainly as "water." Rosewater and grape juice are muzaf liquids. The designation muzaf is the opposite of mutlaq, which signifies plain water. Tap water, for instance, is plain water. Natural water is generally described as "plain water" (mutlaq) so long as it is not mixed to such an extent with a foreign substance that it would no longer be correct to refer to it plainly as "water."

2. Gushing blood (khoon jahandeh in Farsi and dam mafsukh in Arabic) typically describes the blood type of warm-blooded animals. Specifically, it denotes how blood gushes forth with characteristic intensity when a major blood vessel of an animal ruptures. The blood of such warm-blooded animals as wolves, sheep, and cows is described as gushing. The blood of such cold-blooded animals as snakes and turtles as well as insects (if it is correct to call the vital fluid inside such insects blood) is designated as non-gushing.

3. I know, for instance, that a rug has become impure, but I do not know the exact spot or the extent of the spot that has been subjected to impurity.

4. Whereas if something bearing moisture comes into contact with those parts and areas that are certainly impure, prior to the process of purification, it becomes impure.