

'Ammār ibn Yāsir narrated:

1

God's Messenger (peace be upon him) sent me on an errand, and I happened to be in a state of ceremonial impurity, but could not find water. I soaked myself with dust just like animals do. When I later met the Prophet I mentioned this to him.

2

He said: 'It would have been sufficient for you to do this with your hands', and he then struck the earth with his hands once, and wiped his right hand with his left hand and wiped the back of his hands and face.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 347; Muslim, 368 (Muslim's text).

### From the Qur'an

﴿If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, purify yourselves. But if you are ill, or on a journey, or if one of you has come from the toilet, or if you have been in intimate contact with women and can find no water, then have recourse to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your faces and your hands. God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but He wants to purify you, and to bestow on you the full measure of His blessings, so that you may be grateful.﴾ (5: 6)

### The Narrator

Abu al-Yaqzān 'Ammār ibn Yāsir ibn 'Āmir belonged to the 'Ans tribe, but he was *mawlā*, i.e. an ally, of the Makhzūm branch of the Quraysh and belonged to Makkah. He and both his parents were tortured by the unbelievers of Quraysh for embracing Islam. The Prophet passed by and saw them being tortured. He said to them: 'You, Yāsir's family, persevere. Heaven is your meeting place'. His mother, Sumayyah, was killed by Abu Jahl who stabbed her in her vagina with his spear. She was the first martyr in the history of Islam.

It was regarding his case that God revealed the verse that says: 'As for anyone who denies God after having accepted the faith – and this certainly does not apply to one who does it under duress, while his heart remains true to his faith, but applies to him who willingly opens his heart to unbelief: – upon all such falls God's wrath, and theirs will be a tremendous suffering'. (16: 106)

He might have migrated to Abyssinia, but this is not confirmed. However, he migrated to Madinah and took part in all military expeditions with the Prophet. He also took part in the Battle of Yamāmah against the apostates, and he suffered the loss of one ear in this battle. 'Umar appointed him Governor of Kufah, and wrote to its people that 'Ammār was one of the distinguished companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

'Ammār was killed fighting with 'Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib in the Battle of Ṣiffin in year 37 AH, 658 CE, and was buried there. The Prophet had told him: 'You will be killed by the party in the wrong.'

### Summary

'Ammār ibn Yāsir was in a state of ceremonial impurity when he was on a journey. He could not find water for his ablutions. He, therefore, needed to resort to dry ablution, i.e. *tayammum*, and he soaked himself in dust in order to be able to pray. When he went back to Madinah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained to him how to perform dry ablution, which is to strike the earth with one's hands and then wipe one's hands and face.



# Message and Meaning

*Tayammum*, or dry ablution, is a concession God, Mighty and Exalted, has granted to His servants to make things easier for them. It replaces ablution when there is no water or water cannot be used. The Prophet says: 'God loves that His concessions be exercised just as He hates His commandments to be violated'.<sup>(1)</sup> Scholars define *tayammum* stating: 'Using dust to wipe one's face and hands with the intention of having permission to pray and do other things'. It is lawful, confirmed in the Qur'an, the Sunnah and by the unanimous view of scholars. It is a special privilege God has granted to the Muslim community. This hadith states how it is performed.

1

'Ammār mentions that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent him on an errand. On his journey he had a wet dream and thus he was in a state of ceremonial impurity. He, therefore, rolled himself in dust which sticks to hands and body alike. Thus, the dust covered all his body. He did this so that he could pray, recite the Qur'an and perform other worship. When he returned, he told the Prophet (peace be upon him) so as to learn whether his action was right or not.

'Ammār did this, thinking that the dust replaces water in removing a state of ceremonial impurity. When using water, this is done by washing one's entire body. He, therefore, thought that in dry ablution, the dust should be applied to the whole body.

2

The Prophet (peace be upon him) told 'Ammār that striking his two hands on a dusty surface was sufficient. He should then wipe both his hands and face. This is what the relevant Qur'anic verse tells us: 'If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, purify yourselves. But if you are ill, or on a journey, or if one of you has come from the toilet, or if you have been in intimate contact with women and can find no water, then have recourse to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your faces and your hands. God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but He wants to purify you, and to bestow on you the full measure of His blessings, so that you may be grateful'. (5: 6)



1 Related by Ahmad, 5866.

# Implementation



What ‘Ammār did shows that a Muslim who is unaware of the ruling concerning a matter he is facing, and does not know what scholars say about it, and has no access to anyone who can give him the Islamic ruling should try his best to determine what should be done. Then when he is able to ask about the ruling, he should do so in order to learn the proper answer to his question.



The hadith shows that if a person who is qualified to exercise scholarly reasoning, i.e. *ijtihad*, applies his view, which happens to be right in some way, does not need to repeat his duty if his view is not the right one. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not order ‘Ammār to repeat his prayer although he was mistaken about the form of dry ablution. His action covered it, but in an incorrect way.



The hadith makes clear that the Islamic code is based on providing what is good and easy. It does not require what is very difficult for a person to do. In this case, it provides the concession of dry ablution and makes it easy, needing only for the person to wipe his hands and face.



