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## An Evaluation on the Issue of Anointing the Feet in Ablution in the Context of Authentic Recitations

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### **Abstract**

The main sources of Islam gave great importance to both the material and spiritual cleanliness of man. In this context, it has been stated that the fulfillment of some worships is conditional on ablution, and it has been stated that worship will not be accepted unless it is cleaned. The historical process has revealed the importance that Muslims attach to this issue. So much so that especially the fiqh literature has dealt with the issue in the finest details. However, the different ways in the pronunciation of the word "ercül" in the ablution verse have also caused some conflicts. Some viewers consider it sufficient to wipe the feet while making ablution. The majority of Islamic scholars, on the other hand, emphasize the necessity of washing the feet while making ablution. In this article, it is planned to make a detailed explanation on the subject.

**Keywords:** *Qur'an, Qira'a, Ablution, Mesh, Washing.*

## Sahih Kıraatler Bağlamında Abdestte Ayakların Meshi Meselesi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

### **Öz**

İslam'ın temel kaynakları insanın hem maddi hem de manevi temizliğine büyük bir önem vermişlerdir. Bu bağlamda bir kısım ibadetlerin yerine getirilmesi abdest şartına bağlanmış, temizlenmedikçe ibadetlerin sahih kabul edilmeyeceği bildirilmiştir. Tarihsel süreç Müslümanların bu hususa verdikleri önemi ortaya koymuştur. Öyle ki özellikle fıkıh literatürü meseleyi en ince ayrıntılarıyla ele almıştır. Bununla birlikte abdest ayetinde yer alan "ercül" kelimesinin okunuşunda yer alan farklı okumalar birtakım ihtilaflara da sebebiyet vermiştir. Bazı görüş sahipleri abdest alırken ayakların mesh edilmesini yeterli görmektedir. İslam alimlerinin büyük çoğunluğu ise abdest alırken ayakların yıkanması gerekliliği üzerinde durmaktadır. Bu makalede konuyla ilgili teferruatlı bir açıklama yapılması planlanmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Kur'an, Kıraat, Abdest, Mesh, Yıkama.*

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## Introduction

### 1.1. Lexical Meaning and Nature of Ablution

The word ablution is a Persian word, consisting of the words âb (water) and dest (hand) and used in the sense of "hand water". (Sener, 1988: 1/68-70). The word ablution is not mentioned in the Qur'an. The word "wudu", which means "beauty, cleanliness, being pure" in Arabic, is used in the sense of ablution. When wudu' is mentioned, "gasl and mesh" comes to mind as a fiqh term. While gasl is the flow of water, the word mesh means isâbe, that is, cleaning the head by touching the water (Merġinânî, 2008: 1/15). In Arabic dictionaries, on the other hand, the word 'wudû' is a noun by reading the letter "vav" and is used in the sense of making ablution. When the letter "vav" is pronounced as و (vadu'), it means water for ablution. The form of tawaddu, which is the tafa'ul form of the word, is also used in the sense of making wudu. (İbn Manzûr, 1981:1/194-195). Fîrûzâbâdî, 2013: 1/254; Râzi, 2008: 389).

The word 'wudu' is also used in the poetry of jahiliyyah. Bishr b. Ebî Hâzim (d. 598) used the word in the meaning of "beautiful and clean" in one of his poems:

كعِينِ السَّنْدُرِ أَوْجُهُهَا وَضَاءٌ      وَفِي الْأَطْعَانِ أَبْكَارٌ وَعَوْنٌ

“*The faces of the virgins and middle-aged women in the hevdecin (a covered basket for women on the camel's back) are as beautiful as the eyes of the wild animals in the cypress tree. (It shines).*” (Bişr b. Ebû Hâzim el-Esedî, 1960: 2).

In many religions before Islam, there are forms of cleaning similar to ablution before worship. In Judaism and Christianity, in ancient Egypt,

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Mesopotamia, Greek, Roman and Far Eastern religions, some types of cleansing are observed before the act of worship. It is known that some parts of human organs are washed as well as cleaning the items to be used during the ritual (Şener, 1988: 1/68-70).

The Qur'an, which is the main source of the religion of Islam, gave a special importance to material and spiritual cleanliness and presented these two types of cleaning to humanity with a holistic perspective. Because in the Qur'an it is indicated, "Allah loves those who repent a lot and those who are pure inside and out." (Bakara, 2/222). In addition, in this verse, Almighty Allah has added a new dimension to the issue by connecting a worldly issue such as cleanliness to his own love. Considering the context of the verse and the reason for its revelation; It is understood that it is also a sign of material cleanliness of the body. (İbn Âşûr, 1984: 2/368-369). Therefore, the Qur'an has pointed out all kinds of cleanliness and revealed the importance of the subject. In this sense, in one of the first verses of the Qur'an, the statement "Keep your clothes clean." (Muddessir, 74/4) is used. Again, in this verse, it is understood that there is a reference to material cleansing as well as spiritual purification. (Taberî, 2001: 23/406; Râzî, 1981: 30/191-192).

Worship, to which religion attaches great importance, is subject to cleanliness. Islam attaches great importance to cleanliness. It would be appropriate to state the following here; cleanliness, which is a must for worship in Islam, also has an important place in daily life. The importance given to cleanliness in religion has also been reflected in the fiqh books that have been copyrighted since the first periods in the

historical process. In general, the first part of these books consists of bidet. In these mentions, issues such as wudu and ghusl in preparation for worship are discussed in detail. Because coming into the presence of Allah is a matter that necessitates material and spiritual preparations. In order to place the importance of cleanliness in religion in individuals' minds, the Prophet associated wudu, which is a formal as well as an individual duty, with the hereafter, and brought it to a religious ground. In his statements, "Whether a Muslim or a believer makes wudu and washes his face, every sin he/she has committed with his eyes will come off his face with the last drop of water. When he washes his hands, the sin he committed with his hands is gone with the last drop of water. When he washes his feet, his sins are taken out by walking. In the end, that person will be purified from his sins" (Muslim, Taharet, 32; Tirmidhi, Taharet, 1) this situation is made clear. In another hadith, in which he refers to the Day of Judgment, such statements as "My brothers who will come after me will be on the Day of Judgment with their ablution organs shining. I will meet them by the kevser pool" (Müslim, Tahâret, 39) are made by Prophet Muhammad.

There is an agreement in fiqh that there are three ways to purify the whole body. These are wudu, ghusl and, in some cases, tayammum, which can replace these two (İbn Rüşd, 2006:11). Bodily impurity is divided into two parts, major and minor. On the other hand, situations that require wudu are called minimal impurity, and situations that require ghusl are called great impurity (Şener, 1988: 1/68-70). Islam, which reveals a vision of life integrated with cleanliness, has thus

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necessitated strict bonds of its followers with cleanliness. The Qur'an also states that cleaning will basically be with water, as clearly indicated in the verse: "God sends water from the sky to clean you" (Anfal, 8/11). Wudu is the necessary kind of cleaning before performing prayers such as performing namaz and circumambulating the Kaaba. According to the Hanafi madhhab, the fards of wudu are washing the face, arms, and feet in accordance with the procedure; and consisting of the head to be anointed accordingly (Merġinânî, 2008: 1/15). In addition to these four fards, Malikis accept niyyah, muwalat (continuous washing), and rubbing the organs of wudu as obligatory (İbn Rüşd, 2006:12-13). In addition to these four fards, Shafiis also consider it obligatory to comply with the intention and order in the verse (Şafi'î, 1968: 1/25). Hanbalis, on the other hand, take order and muwalat as fard in addition to the four fards (İbn Kudâme,1972: 1/125). Although there are slight differences in the four fards mentioned in the verse, it is seen that there is an alliance among the madhhabs. However, there are serious differences of opinion between the Ahl as-Sunnah and the Shia. This difference of opinion is not about whether the feet are a part of ablution; it is a matter of quality. In fact, these differences in opinion are about the common words used in the verse, prepositions, presentation, and ta'hir. In addition to all these, the main reason for the disagreements is the different recitations in terms of the word "ercül" in the verse in question.

### **1.1. Ablution Verse within the Context of Recitations**

While Nafi', Ibn Âmir, Asim's narrators Hafs, Kisâi and Yakup recite the word "ercül" in the verse as "ercülekum", Ibn Kathir, Abu Amr, Asim's other narrator Abu Bakr Shu'be, Hamza, Abu Cafer and Halef recite it as "ercülüküm" ” (Ibn Cezerî, ts.: 2/254; Dimyâtî, 1940: 198; Palevi, ts.: 50). Hasan Basrî's view on this subject is to be read as "ercülüküm". In other words, the word should be recited in line with the recitation "ercülüküm". Therefore, the meaning of the verse includes washing the feet while performing ablution. In terms of grammar, the word "ercülüküm" is the subject and the verb is "iğsilühâ", whose predicate is hidden or dropped (İbn Haleveyh, 1934: 31; Kâdî Abdulfettâh, 1402: 42). According to the recitation of Nasb, the meaning is “O you who believe! When you stand up for prayer, wash your face, hands and feet, including your elbows. Ahl as-Sunnah and Zeydiyye prefer the nasb recitation. According to Cerr's recitation, it is "O you who believe! When you stand up for prayer, wash your face and hands up to the elbows. Wipe your head and feet” (Râzî Fahreddin, 1990: 11/164; Cessâs, 1993: 2/487; İbn Kesir, 1969: 2/25). Imamiye, on the other hand, acts with the Cerr qira'ah (Tûsî, 1957: 3/452). Zahiris and Taberi also defend the view that one has the option to wash and anoint one's feet by combining both recitations (İbn Hazm, 1967: 1/78-80). Each group bases the view it defends on both philological and rational foundations. Let's see these views and the evidence they put forward.

There are two different approaches to washing the feet among the religious sects evaluated within the framework of Ahl as-Sunnah. One of them is that it is obligatory to wash the feet; the other is that a person has

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a choice between washing and anointing. However, the general judgment is that it is obligatory to wash the feet. The basic approach in this matter is to consider and evaluate two of the authentic recitations together. As it is understood from the recitations, it is seen that there are two opposite situations. Therefore, the first method to be applied is to resort to the practice of the Prophet. Ahl as-Sunnah, who prefer the nasb recitation, support their conclusions according to this recitation with many hadiths. The following is stated in a hadith: During a journey, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) lagged behind, but when he arrived, he saw that his Companions were making ablution for the prayer whose time had come and they were washing their feet with little water, like wiping. Thereupon, he said two or three times aloud, “Woe to the heels that will burn in the hell!” (Buhârî, Vudû’, 39, 40). The Prophet, who was very sensitive about material and spiritual cleanliness, showed the importance of the subject with his own practices. When a Companion asked him about wudu, he showed it himself and washed his feet three times during this time. Later, he stated that wudu would be taken like this, and anyone who added or subtracted from it would have wronged him (Ebû Dâvûd, Tahâret, 52). It is understood from these and similar hadiths and verses that it is fard to wash the feet. Because the hadiths are, in a sense, like an explanation of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet also clarifies the different meanings arising from the different recitations in this verse. Therefore, the sunnah indicates the necessity of washing up to the heels, not only wiping the feet (Şâfiî, ts.: 29; İbn Teymiyye, 1981: 21/131). The sensitive behavior of the Prophet’s

Companions about wudu has also taken its place in the hadith sources. It is understood that the issue of handing down the subject to the next generations occupied their agenda quite a lot. Because Abdu Hayr, who is one of the Tabi'uns, informed that Ali practically conveyed the issue of how to perform ablution to them and that he washed his feet three times during this time (Ebû Dâvûd, Tahâret, 51). Muhammad Abduh also states that the most important evidences on which the majority is based are the practices of the Sahaba and the hadiths that confirm them (Abduh, 1960: 6/228).

One of these different recitations (nasb) refers to washing the feet and the other (cerr) to anointing. In this case, three different interpretations emerge. Both qira'ahs are combined or one of these two qira'ats is preferred and the fard is fulfilled, or one is performed without preference. According to the first interpretation, the feet are both washed and anointed. Since preference is not mentioned in the verse and there are no signs indicating it, the second interpretation regarding choice, is also not permissible. Since there is no choice in the verse and there is no question of combining two qira'ahs, the third interpretation, namely the provision to act with one of these two recitations, is left, and almost all of the scholars state that this provision is to wash according to the nasb recitation. When a person who takes ablution washes his feet, he fulfills the fard and is not condemned for not wiping his feet. (Cessâs, 1993: 2/488).

Acting according to one of the two recitations that cause the emergence of two different meanings shows that this verse is succinct. The succinct



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verse also has to be explained within the framework of the rules specified in the methodology, and this verse declares the hadiths of the Prophet about 'washing the feet' and reveals the purpose of the commentator in the verse (Cessâs, 1993: 2/488). Ahl al-Sunnah, who preferred the nasb recitation, also sought to justify their views stemming from this recitation from a philological point of view. They argue that the word 'mesh', as it is common, means both meshing and washing (Konevî, 1987: 52). As a matter of fact, linguists state that the verb 'mesehe' in the Arabic language also means 'he took ablution' (Îsfehânî, 1967: 709-710; Kurtûbî, 1988: 6/62). Even if the word "ercül" is attributed to "ruûs", it would not be correct to interpret it only as anointing since it also means washing (Âlûsî, 1985: 6/74). According to Mekki, Abu Ubayd, who was the first to draw a pen in the field of recitation, also states that the word "mesh" means washing as well as many other meanings. They explain the benefits and wisdom of this application in the language as follows. Feet are the organs where water is most used and wasted. The word 'ercül' is attributed to 'ruûs' because Islam does not welcome waste and it indeed encourages more economical use of water (Zemahşerî, ts.: 1/326; Ebû's-suûd, ts.: 3/11). The sentence "Vemsehu bi ruûsikum" is the interlude sentence between two sentences. This is a very common usage style in the science of nahw. The insertion of a sentence that does not fit the context in the speech of eloquent and eloquent persons is to draw attention to a wit or message that is intended to be told (Âlûsî, 1985: 6/76). The main goal in

the verse is to comply with the order by not wasting water (İbnü'l-Arabî, ts.: 2/578; Âlûsî, 1985: 6/76).

Even if the word is recited as "ercüliküm", it means washing, not meshing. This is because in the Arabic language, when two words with similar meanings are found together, it is permissible to rule one of them out. There are many examples of this rule in Arabic (Kurtûbî, 1988: 6/64). The issue of washing or anointing the feet, arising from the difference in recitation in the verse, is an issue open to different interpretations in terms of both language and worship law (İbnü'l-Arabî, ts.: 2/577).

However, Ahl as-Sunnah, based on the nasb recitation and the practices of the Prophet, come to the view that the feet should be washed. The fact that the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) constantly washed his feet and did not anoint them shows that the nasb recitation is stronger than the cerr recitation, which in fact causes conflict (İbnü'l-Arabî, ts.: 2/577). Ali also read this word with nasb (Taberî, 1988: 6/127) and, according to the statement of Abdurrahman es-Sülemî, he told his sons Hasan and Hüseyin, who read this word as cerr, that they should read it with nasb. (İbn Teymiyye, 1981: 21/349). Although the word is included in kalam, it is actually a predecessor word belonging to the previous sentence (İbn Teymiyye, 1981: 21/349). It is stated that Ibn Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, Urve b. Zubayr, Ikrima, Mujahid, and Suddi also recited the word in this way (Taberî, 1988: 6/126-127; Kurtûbî, 1988: 6/62; İbn Teymiyye, 1981: 21/349).

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Ahl as-Sunnah, approaching this issue from a methodological point of view, has tried to evaluate both recitations regarding why there is a difference. From a methodological point of view, there is a contradiction arising from these two recitations. As we have just mentioned, according to the cerr recitation, the word refers to the word "ruûs". This reference also makes it necessary to anoint the feet. According to the nasb recitation, the word is refers to the word "vech". This reference also makes it necessary to wash the feet (Râzî Fahreddin, 1990: 11/164; Cessâs, 1993: 2/487; Kurtûbî, 1988: 6/62). As can be seen, in this verse, there is an apparent contradiction arising from two different recitations (Pezdevî, 1890: 3/93). Scholars correct this contradiction with the methods of gathering and tawfiq in accordance with the essence of Islam.

According to the nasb recitation, the judgement is clear. It is fard to wash both feet up to the heels (Pezdevî, 1890: 3/93). Cerr recitation is interpreted as wiping over mests in line with the hadiths narrated from the Prophet, and the contradiction in the verse is eliminated in this way (Râzî Fahreddin, 1990: 11/166; Kurtûbî, 1988: 6/62). It is because when anointing is attributed to the feet, the cerr qira'ah can be interpreted as wiping over mests. And also, it is because the skin (foot) is used instead of the thing that sticks to it and comes into contact with it. Therefore, wiping over the mests is equated with washing the feet. In other words, wiping on the mest worn on the feet means washing the feet with discretion (Buhârî, Abdûlaziz, 1890: 3/93). Imam Shafi'i states that this verse is possible for two things and states the following: "Every one who

takes wudu must wash their feet, or some of those who make wudu must wash their feet. This possibility, and the Prophet's anointing on the mests, shows that washing the feet is obligatory for those who do not wear mest." (Şâfiî, ts.: 1/50).

According to the majority of Ahl as-Sunnah, it is absolutely permissible to wipe over mests. There is no dispute about the merits (Akyüz, 1995: 1/293). It is not right to ignore an something existing (mest) and replace it with something else, and it also lacks scientific evidence and foundations. This is clearly because many Companions demonstrated that it is permissible to anoint mests, both by the words they narrated from the Prophet and by their practices (Kurtûbî, 1988: 6/63). All hadith scholars also explain that wiping over mests is at the level of tawatur and that this is fixed by the sunnah, which is the explanation of the Qur'an (Meraġi, 1974: 6/63). Cessâs also approaches the subject from a different point of view and records the following: *"The hadiths about anointing over mests were transmitted by tawatur. For this reason, Abu Yusuf stated that mutawatir hadiths and therefore the hadith of anointing mests can abrogate the Qur'an. In any case, there are no practices contrary to this hadith from the Companions. The disagreement arises from the doubt whether this hadith originated after or before the verse in question. Cerîr b. Abdullah's hadith shows that the messing occurred after the revelation of the verse. However, we have stated that the nasb qira'ah is a possible interpretation of washing the feet and the cerr qiraah is a possible interpretation of anointing the mests. If the hit of the hadith is before the verse, then this ruling is based on itself, since the*

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*verse includes the possibility of anointing the mests. If there is no such possibility, then this mutawatir hadith has allocated the verse. If the hadith is revealed after the verse, the Prophet's anointing of his shrines can be accepted both as an explanation of the purpose of the Qur'an and as an abrogation of the verse since it reaches the level of tawatur."* (Cessâs, 1993: 2/491-492).

### **Conclusion**

In many religions before Islam, there are forms of cleaning similar to ablution before worship. In Judaism and Christianity, in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greek, Roman and Far Eastern religions, some types of cleansing are observed before the act of worship. It is known that some parts of human organs are washed as well as cleaning the items to be used in the ritual. The Qur'an, which is the main source of the religion of Islam, has given a special importance to material and spiritual cleanliness, and has presented these two types of cleaning to the gathering of humanity with a holistic perspective. It has been stated that the fulfillment of some acts of worship is conditional on wudu, and that prayers will not be accepted as valid unless they are cleaned. The historical process has revealed the importance that Muslims attach to this issue. In this sense, the fiqh literature has especially dealt with the issue in the finest details. However, the different recitations in the pronunciation of the word "ercül" in the ablution verse have also caused some conflicts. Some viewers consider it sufficient to wipe the feet while making wudu. The majority of Islamic scholars, on the other hand,

emphasize the necessity of washing the feet while making wudu. As a result, the scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah, while eliminating this inconsistency in the verse, attribute the nasb recitation to washing the feet, whereas they attribute the cerr recitation to the anointing of the mests worn on the feet, based on the hadiths reaching the level of tawatur.

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