

2.1 Purity (Ṭahārah) and Impurity (Najāсах)

OBJECTIVES

WE WILL:

- Identify five of the main impure things (*najāṣāt*), and the conditions for how they transfer.
- Determine that certainty (*yaqīn*) is required for something to be considered impure (*najis*).
- Illustrate how to clean and purify common impurities with water.
- Use and apply related *ṭahārah* and *najāṣah* terms.

ṬĀHIR: ritually pure

ṬĀHĀRAH: ritual purity

NAJIS: ritually impure

NAJĀSAH: ritual impurity

‘AYN AN-NAJIS: ‘inherently impure things

YAQĪN: certainty

Cleanliness is a very important part of Islam. When we say something is clean, we generally mean that it is free from dirt. For example, if we wash a shirt that has dirt or food stains on it, we would consider it to be *physically* clean. In Islam, physical cleanliness is different from ritual purity, but they do go hand-in-hand to some extent. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur’ān:

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهِّرِينَ *And Allah loves those who purify themselves.*¹

CLEANLINESS VS. RITUAL PURITY (ṬĀHĀRAH)

The word used in the above verse is *muṭṭahhirīn*. These are the people who become ‘ritually pure’ known in Arabic as *ṭāhir*. It is important to note that there is a difference between cleanliness and ritual purity—*ṭahārah*. Some things can be both clean and ritually pure (*ṭāhir*). For example, a freshly washed shirt can be both clean and ritually pure (*ṭāhir*) if the washing conditions have been met. On the other hand, something can be ritually pure (*ṭāhir*), but it may not be clean. For example, if you have mud on your shirt, it is not clean, but it is still considered as ritually pure (*ṭāhir*). Or you may have a shirt that just came out of the washing machine and it is clean, but then you get some blood on it, so it is no longer ritually pure (*ṭāhir*).

The opposite of *ṭāhir* is *najis* which means ‘ritually impure.’ Just like the terms ‘clean’ and ‘*ṭāhir*’ differ in meaning (as explained above), so do the terms ‘dirty’ and ‘*najis*.’ A thing can be clean, but that does not make it *ṭāhir*. For example, a freshly bathed dog may be clean, but it is not *ṭāhir*, it remains *najis*.

Inshā’Allāh, in the following lessons, we will delve deeper into the principles of ritual purity (*ṭahārah*) and ritual impurity (*najāṣah*), and take an in-depth look on how to make impure (*najis*) objects pure (*ṭāhir*).

WHEN DOES SOMETHING BECOME NAJIS?

It is good to always be in a state of ritual purity—*ṭahārah* (i.e., not be *najis* in any way), but if you have to perform certain actions that require *ṭahārah*, such as the daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), then it becomes necessary to purify yourself if you or your clothes, etc. have become impure (*najis*). Therefore, we must take a look at the rules about how to make something ritually pure (*ṭāhir*) if it has become impure. First however, we have to learn how to determine if something is *najis* or has become *najis*. When it comes to *najāṣah* and *ṭahārah*, there is a golden rule that we must keep in mind (that actually makes life much easier as well). This rule is:

Everything is ritually pure (*ṭāhir*) unless you know (with certainty—*yaqīn*) that it is *najis*!

1 Noble Qur’ān, Sūrah at-Tawbah (9), Verse 108.

Yaqīn means certainty—therefore, you must be certain and sure that something has become *najis*. For instance, you saw an item become *najis* with your own eyes. Let us say as an example, you accidentally cut yourself and see the blood drip onto the floor, then you know for certain that the floor has become *najis*.

If you are not completely certain that something is *najis*, then you should consider it to be *ṭāhir*. For example, the bathroom floor might be wet, but that does not mean that it is *najis*. Or, if a baby’s pants are wet, it does not necessarily mean that they are *najis*.

‘Ayn an-Najāsah

There are certain objects that are inherently impure and cannot be purified through any means; in fact, they can even make other things impure upon contact. These objects are called ‘*ayn an-najis*, which means ‘inherently impure things.’ Something that is usually pure (*ṭāhir*), like your body, clothing, or floor, can become impure (*najis*) through contact with an ‘*ayn an-najis* thing under certain conditions.

The main objects that are ‘*ayn an-najis* that you are likely to come across are (there are other things, but we will only mention these five here):

- Pigs and products derived from pigs
- Urine
- Feces
- Blood
- Dogs



HOW IS NAJĀSAH TRANSFERRED?

When something that is impure (*najis*) comes into contact with something that is pure (*ṭāhir*), the *ṭāhir* thing becomes temporarily *najis*, which in Arabic is called *mutanajjis*, and must be purified. However, the impurity (*najāsah*) will only be transferred if either of the two things is wet or moist to the point that it will transfer its wetness to the other object. If both things are dry, then the *najāsah* will not spread. For example, if a dog rubs itself against your pants, and both the dog and your pants are dry, then your pants will not become *najis*. However, if either your pants or the dog are wet or moist to the point that wetness transfers, then that part of your pants will become *najis*. Similarly, if a dog’s hair is left on your pants and later your pants become wet for whatever reason, then they will become *najis* because of the hair.

HOW TO MAKE NAJIS OBJECTS ṬĀHIR AGAIN

So, now we know how to deem if something is *najis* or *ṭāhir*. Once we are certain that something has become *najis*, we must know how to make it *ṭāhir* once again; and in order to do this, we must use one of the purifying agents referred to in Arabic as *muṭahhirāt*.

The most common *muṭahhirāt* is water, as long as it meets the following criteria:

1. The water itself must be pure (*ṭāhir*).
2. The water must be *muṭlaq*, or pure (and unadulterated), in the meaning that it should not be mixed with something else (if it is mixed with something then it is referred to in Arabic as *muḍāf*). This means that one would use the word ‘water’ to describe it. For example, if you have a glass of water and add a packet of Kool-Aid to it, then the water is now mixed, so one would not call it water anymore. On the contrary, river water may have some dirt, rocks, or insects in it, but one would still call it water, so it would not be considered *muḍāf* or mixed. Similarly, water that may have a slight flavor, smell, or color to it, like sea water or pool water that has some chlorine, is also considered *muṭlaq*, because it is still called ‘water.’

So, how can water make something *ṭāhir*? In general, the following two things must happen:

3. The object should be washed with plain water until the water that flows off from the object being washed is also considered plain water, and not water that is mixed with *najāsah*. In other words, the smell, color, and taste of the water should no longer change as it flows off from the object being washed. For example, if a person is washing blood off of a shirt, it should be washed until the water dripping off from the shirt is no longer red or pink-colored.
4. The particles of the *najāsah* (e.g., blood, urine, etc.) should not remain on the object after it has been washed. If microscopic particles remain or some smell or color remains, like a leftover blood stain after the blood has been washed away, then this is okay and the object is still considered *ṭāhir*.

CATEGORIES OF WATER

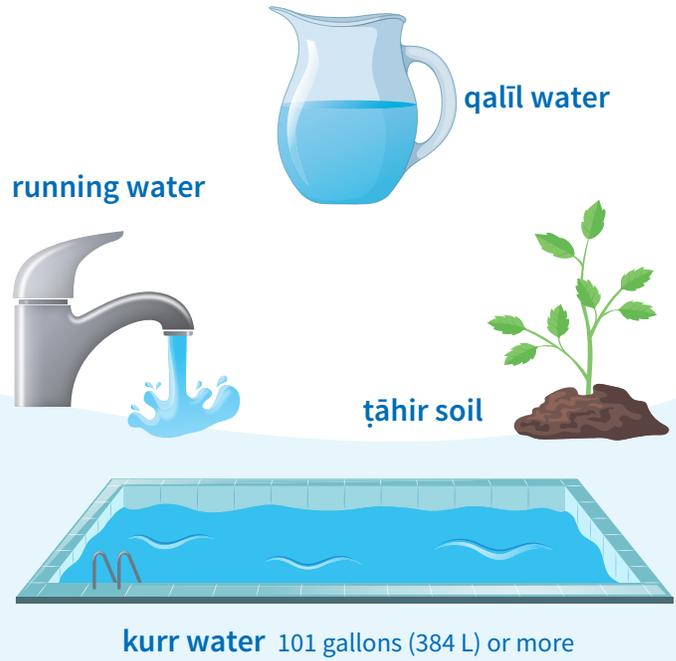
We mentioned that we usually use water to make something *ṭāhir* again. In general, it is important to remember that there are two categories of water when it comes to Islamic rulings:

QALĪL OR NON-RUNNING WATER: this is still water that is less than 384 Litres (101 US Gallons) in volume. For example:

- Water in a water bottle.
- Water in a small pot or kettle.
- Water in a jug used in the bathroom.

KURR OR RUNNING WATER: this refers to water that is running or flowing, or still water that is more than 384 Litres (101 US Gallons) in volume. For example:

- Water in a river or lake.
- Water from a tap or hose.



SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON MAKING THINGS ṬĀHIR

The following table gives more specific instructions about how to make certain *najis* objects *ṭāhir* again.

EXAMPLE OF NAJĀSAH	PROCESS FOR MAKING IT ṬĀHIR
Najis things in general	Wash it until the <i>‘ayn an-najāsah</i> is removed, and the water flowing off of the object is pure.
Body/clothes made najis by urine	<p>Running or Kurr water: Washing it once is sufficient after the <i>‘ayn an-najāsah</i> is removed.</p> <p>Non-running or Qalil water: Must be washed twice after the <i>‘ayn an-najāsah</i> is removed.</p> <p>In both cases, clothes should be squeezed after washing.</p>
Rugs/carpets made najis by urine	<p>Running or Kurr water: Washing it once is sufficient after the <i>‘ayn an-najāsah</i> is removed. Pressure should be applied to that area of the rug/carpet so it is squeezed out.</p> <p>Non-running or Qalil water: Must be washed twice after the <i>‘ayn an-najāsah</i> is removed, and then the water must be squeezed out each time.</p>
Interior of a container (e.g., pot, bowl, plate).	<p>Āyatullāh Sīstānī: Wash it three times as an obligatory precaution, whether using <i>qalil</i>, <i>kurr</i>, or running water.</p> <p>Āyatullāh Khamenei: Wash it three times if using <i>qalil</i> water, and once if using <i>kurr</i> or running water.</p>
A utensil that a dog licks or drinks from	The inside should be scrubbed with <i>ṭāhir</i> soil. Then, the soil should be taken out and the utensil should be washed three times with water.

TERMINOLOGY REVIEW

Najis	Ritually impure.
Ṭāhir	Ritually pure.
Muṭahhir	Purifying agent that can make a <i>najis</i> thing <i>ṭāhir</i> again.
Mutanajjis	When something is inherently <i>ṭāhir</i> , but becomes <i>najis</i> because of coming into contact with a <i>najis</i> thing.
Kurr water	A body of water whose volume is equivalent to a cube that is 3.5 hand spans wide, long, and deep, or about 384 Litres or 101 US Gallons.
Qalīl water	Water that is not running and is less than <i>kurr</i> .



QUR'ĀNIC CONNECTION | مَاءٌ (water)

- Arabic Root Word: م و ه m-w-h
- Root Meaning: Water
- Occurrences in the Noble Qur'ān: 63 times
- Reference: Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21), Verse 30

RULES OF EMPTYING THE BLADDER AND BOWELS

The following are the rules for making oneself *ṭāhir* after emptying the bladder or bowels:

URINE

The urinary outlet does not become pure (*ṭāhir*) with anything other than water.

Āyatullāh Sīstānī: It is sufficient to wash the area once, regardless of the volume or type of water (*kurr*, *qalīl*, or running water). However, the recommended precaution is to wash the area twice, and better yet it to wash three times.

Āyatullāh Khamenei: The obligatory precaution is to wash it twice.

FECES

If water is being used to purify oneself, then one must wash enough to ensure that no trace of feces remains. However, there is no harm if there is a slight color or smell that lingers. If washed thoroughly in the first instance, leaving behind no particles of stool, then this is sufficient.



It is not permissible to have one's front or back toward the *qiblah* while relieving oneself. Knowing the direction of the *qiblah* is therefore necessary before using the restroom.

It is obligatory (*wājib*) for a person to cover one's private parts when using the bathroom from people who are religiously mature (*bāligh*), even if they are *maḥram* to the person. It is also recommended (*mustaḥab*) to always use the restroom while sitting down.

Activity 2.1a: Ṭahārah and Najāsah Review Worksheet

MATCH the Term on the left with the correct Example on the right.

TERM	EXAMPLE
<i>Qalīl</i> water •	• A swimming pool
<i>Muṭahhir</i> •	• My pants after a dog licks them
<i>Najis</i> •	• Pure water
<i>Mutanajjis</i> •	• Blood
<i>Kurr</i> water •	• A bowl of water

Activity 2.1b: Am I Ṭāhir or Najis?

Apply the correct rule to each scenario below in order to make the *najis* thing *ṭāhir* once again.

5. Fatima is studying at her non-Muslim friend’s house and wants to pray. She is not sure if the floor of her friend’s room is *ṭāhir* or *najis*. What should she do in this situation?

6. Zahid is with his family at the shopping mall and needs to use the restroom. Since he does not have a water bottle, he uses only tissues to clean himself. Is Zahid *ṭāhir*? Why or why not?

7. While playing soccer, Ali falls on his knees, and they start to bleed, and the blood transfers onto his shorts. By the time he gets home, the blood on his shorts has become dry, and as he is trying to put his shorts in the laundry basket, they fall on the ground. Is the ground now *najis* since it came into contact with the dry shorts that had blood on them? How should Ali make his shorts *ṭāhir* again before putting them into the laundry basket?

8. Ahmad was playing soccer with his friends, and his legs and clothing became muddy. Does he have to make his clothes *ṭāhir*, or are they just dirty?

9. Hasan is at the beach swimming away, and notices that another swimmer has brought his dog into the water with him. Is the beach water now *najis*? Why or why not?
