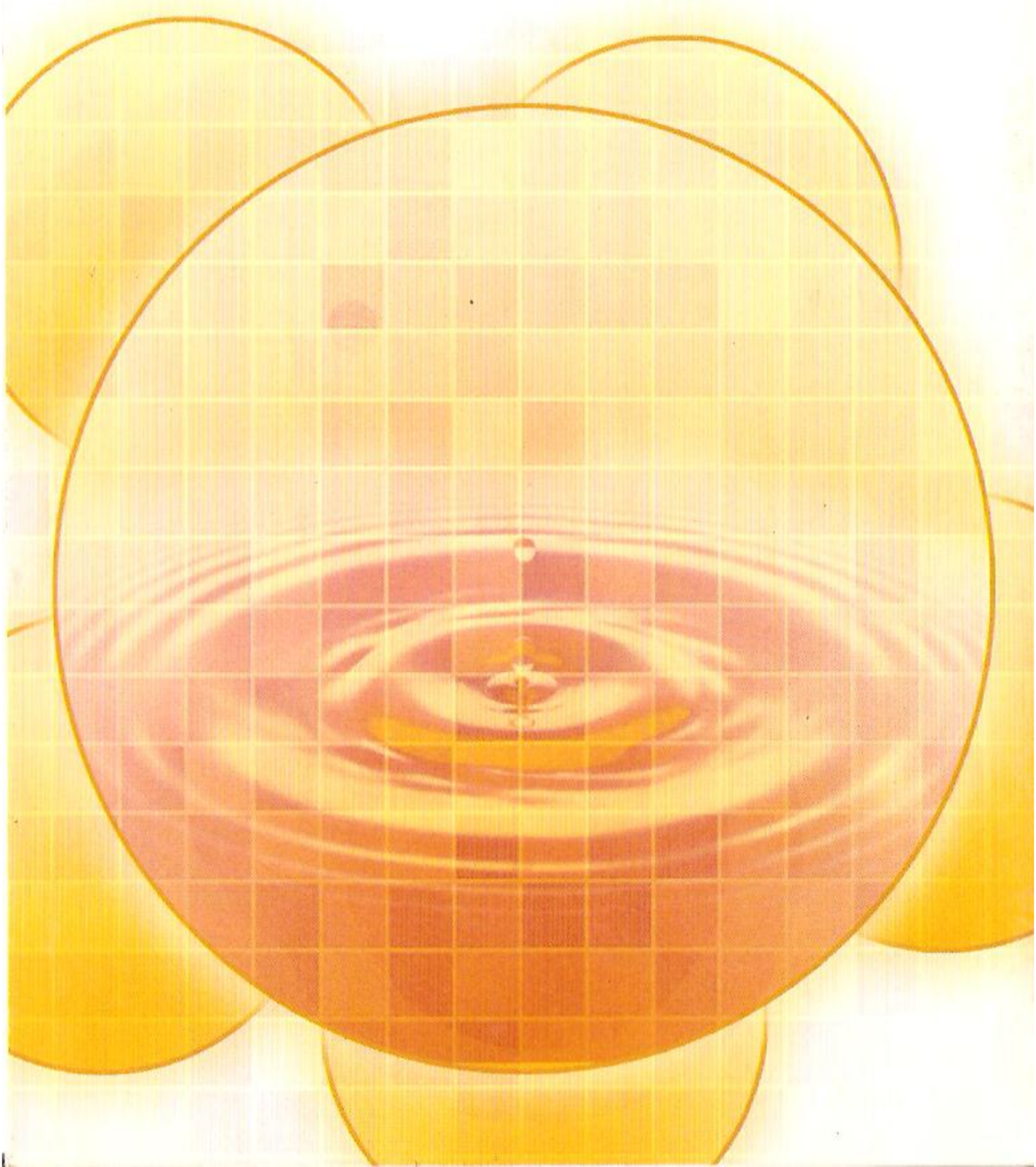
A BRIEF GUIDE TO RITUAL BATHING (GHUSL)



In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his Companions and his followers.

This leaflet is about the rules of *Ghusl* (ritual bath or major ablution) in general, and focusing in particular on the *Ghusl* following major ritual impurity due to sexual activity, menstruation or post-natal bleeding. It also contains *Fatwas* (legal opinions) on the subject by His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed Bin Hamed Al-Khalili, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman.

1- Definition of *Ghusl* (ritual bath or major ablution)

In its religious sense, *Ghusl* is wetting the entire body with water with the intention of purifying oneself of major ritual impurity.

2- Types of *Ghusl*

a) - Obligatory bath

1- After sexual activity involving sexual intercourse or semen emission (a state known as *Janabah*).
2- At the end of menstruation (*Haidh*).
3- At the end of post-natal bleeding (*Nifass*).
4- For a dead Muslim.
5- For a non-Muslim on his/her conversion (reversion) to Islam.
6- For one who is certain of presence of impurity (*Najas*) on him/her but does

not know where exactly on their body it is.

b) - Traditional (recommended) bath

1- For Friday congregation.
2- For the two Islamic Feasts (*Eids*).
3- For *Ihram* i.e. entering on pilgrimage.
4- For entering the Holy City of Mecca.
5- For the Halt (*Wuquf*) at Arafah by a pilgrim (the ninth day of Dhul Hijjah).
6- For a person who has ritually washed a dead Muslim.

3- When is ritual bathing obligatory?

1- After emission of semen whether the person is awake or asleep (wet dream).
2- After sexual intercourse whether lawful or unlawful, even without ejaculation.
3- On recovery from menstruation or post-natal bleeding.
4- When a non-Muslim converts (reverts) to Islam.
5- When a Muslim dies.

4- Compulsory things in ritual bathing

1- Intention (*Niyah*).
2- Application of water thoroughly to the entire body.
3- Rubbing the surface of the body with the hand while applying water.
4- Rinsing the mouth and the nose.
5- Succession of the actions.

5- Traditional things in ritual bathing

1- Performing *Wudu* (minor ablution i.e. ablution for prayer) before it.

2- Beginning with the upper parts of the body before the lower parts.
3- Beginning with the right parts of the body before the left parts.

6- What is forbidden in the state of major ritual impurity (be it *Janabah* or *Haidh* or *Nifass*)

1- Praying.
2- Performing *Tawaf* (circling the *Ka'bah* - Allah's sacred house in Mecca).
3- Touching the Noble Qur'an.
4- Reciting the Noble Qur'an.
5- Entering Mosques.
6- *I'tikaf* (going into spiritual retreat, which is done in a mosque).
7- Fasting.
8- *Sujud Al-Tilawah* (prostration performed upon recitation of/hearing certain verses in the Qur'an).

NB:

1. Praying and fasting are not permissible for the woman during her menstrual period or post-natal bleeding; and when she recovers she has to make up for only the fasting and not the prayers.
2. It is also impermissible for her during those periods to have sexual intercourse until she recovers.

7- Manner of ritual bathing

In taking a ritual bath the following sequence is recommended:

1- Urination: Prior to starting a ritual bath, the man is required to pass urine in order to get rid of any semen left in the urethra. The woman is supposed to use her finger to wash out any semen left outside her womb.
2- Intention (*Niyah*): This does not have to be uttered; having the intention in the heart is sufficient. The man shall intend to purify himself from *Janabah*. The woman shall intend to purify herself from *Haidh* or *Nifass* or *Janabah*, as the case may be. Moreover, a woman may intend with a single bath to purify herself from both *Janabah* and *Haidh* or *Janabah* and *Nifass,* as the case may be, if her *janabah* happens to be immediately followed by either of the other two states.
3- Washing the hands to the wrists.
4- Removal of impurities (semen, traces of blood, etc) from the entire body - genitals and elsewhere.
5- Washing the private parts (from the navel to the knees).
6- Performing *Wudu* (minor ablution). If one chooses to delay *Wudu* till the end of the bath, one has to rinse one's mouth and nose.
7- Pouring water on the head three times.
8- Washing the right side of the head and then the left, then the right side of the neck and then the left, then the right hand and then the left, then the right side of the trunk and then the left, then the chest, the belly, and the back, then the right leg and finally the left leg. Along with the flow of water, all reachable parts of the body should be rubbed with the hand, and water should be

made to reach all the hidden places such as the armpits, the hollows of the knees and the groin. One must ensure that no part of the body has been left untouched by water. One may also use soap, shampoo and the like if they wish.

NB:

1- If the person can not find any water for purification from major ritual impurity, or can not use it for certain reasons, they will have to turn to clean soil to wipe little of it onto their face and hands (performing *Tayammum*) with the intention of purifying themselves of the major ritual impurity.

2- The woman does not have to undo her plaits (braids) when she is taking a bath following sexual activity. She can just pour water on her head three times pressing the plaits to ensure water reaches the roots of her hair. In contrast with that, when she is having a bath on recovery from menstruation or post-natal bleeding she must undo her plaits.

3- The woman must hasten to bath as soon as she recovers from menstruation or post-natal bleeding whether by discharging lime-white fluid or by complete dryness -- whichever is the usual sign with her. For after her recovery she must not miss any prayer, and should resume fasting the following day if she is in fasting days. In other words, she must not wait to complete ten days for menstruation or forty days for post-natal bleeding (the legal maximum durations for the two cases); for what really matters is her having attained cleanliness

and not the number of days. After she is bathed and purified, she is recommended to wipe off any traces of the nasty smell of blood with a musk-drenched or perfumed peace of cotton.

Appendix:
Fatwas (Legal Opinions) by His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed Bin Hamed Al-Khalili, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman

Q.1: When a man and his wife have had sexual intercourse without any discharge of semen, is it compulsory for the wife to bath?

A.1: Once the penetration gets as far as where their circumcision areas come into contact, a ritual bath becomes obligatory for both regardless of whether ejaculation has occurred or not. And Allah knows best.

Q.2: Is it permissible to utter the "*Basmala*" (saying "*Bismillah*" i.e. "In the name of Allah") and the intention (*Niyah*) for the ritual bathing after sexual activity?

A.2: There is no need to say the "*Basmala*" during ritual bathing; and the intention made in the heart is sufficient without actually saying it. And Allah knows best.

NB: According to His Eminence, saying the "*Basmala*" at the beginning of *Wudu* (ablution for prayer) is a precondition for the validity of *Wudu*, based on the evidence of a certain Prophetic Saying. With nothing ruling out the ablution performed for a ritual bath in that respect, then naturally "*Basmala*" has to be said

upon starting the ablution, rather than upon starting the ritual bath – whether the ablution precedes the bath or comes at the end.

Q.3: Is it permissible to bath nakedly in a locked place?

A.3: It is not forbidden to bath nakedly in a locked or hidden place. And Allah knows best.

Q.4: Is it correct to pray with the same ablution (*Wudu*) performed for a ritual bath (*Ghusl*) after passage of some time?

A.4: Yes, it is correct to pray with the same ablution performed for a ritual bath provided it has remained valid. And Allah knows best.

Q.5: If a person who is in the state of post-sex ritual impurity (*Janabah*) has performed *Tayammum* for the purpose of praying, is he allowed to recite the Noble Qur'an as well as to touch it?

A.5: Scholars have differed on whether *Tayammum* lifts the state of major ritual impurity or whether it merely allows praying. The more acceptable opinion is the second. Hence the most appropriate for such a person is to intend by his *Tayammum* from the beginning to seek permission for praying as well as for recitation of the Holy Qur'an and touching the Noble Mus'haf. And Allah knows best.

Q.6: What is the ruling on the fluid discharged by the woman's genitals if accompanied by sensual pleasure?

A.6: If it is discharged in the same manner as semen, then it requires a bath for purification; otherwise it demands only performing an

ablution (*Wudu*) after she has cleaned it from her body. And Allah knows best.

Q.7: Is it sufficient for the woman taking a ritual bath to wet her fingers and pass them through her hair without flooding the hair with water?

A.7: No, she has to take up some water with her hands to soak her plaits with - as prescribed by the Prophetic Tradition. And Allah knows best.

Q.8: Is it sufficient in ritual bathing to shed water on the entire body without rubbing it with the hand?

A.8: Scholars' opinions have differed on that; and the most acceptable is the one ruling that way to be legally sufficient if the entire body has been made thoroughly wet without leaving out any of its hidden spots. And Allah knows best.

Q.9: What would you say of a person who did not bath after sexual activity on account of the chilliness of the water and therefore prayed without purification?

A.9: It is not permissible after sexual activity to pray without bathing. The chilly water should be heated if possible, and if not possible then one should turn to *Tayammum*. Whoever prays in such a case without bathing or *Tayammum* their prayer is invalid. And Allah knows best.

Q.10: What would you say of a person who, on the evidence of the Prophet's Saying to one of his wives: "Your menstruation is not on your hand", had wrongly believed that the person's body remains pure after menstruation or sexual

activity, and therefore had kept praying without ritual bathing for a certain period of time before he came to realize his mistake? What is the ruling on his previous prayers and fasting?

A.10: He must repeat all the prayers and fasting that he did while in the state of post-sex ritual impurity, as lifting of major ritual impurity is prerequisite for the validity of prayers and fasting. And Allah knows best.

Q.11: What would you say of a woman who had a wet dream but through ignorance of the ruling didn't take a bath until one whole day had passed?

A.11: She has to bath, ask Allah for forgiveness and repeat the prayers of that day as well as the fast if she was fasting. And Allah knows best.

Q.12: What would you say of a woman who, in ignorance of the rule, used not to bath for purification from post-sex ritual impurity (*Janabah*), and has been praying in this way for a long time ever since she married? What is she supposed to do?

A.12: She has to repeat all the prayers she offered while in the state of post-sex ritual impurity (*Janabah)*. If she isn't sure about the number of the prayers, she shall repeat all her prayers from the day she got married till the day she began to bath from *Janabah*. And Allah knows best.

Q.13: With regard to the person who, through lack of knowledge, used not to rinse his mouth and nose whenever he bathed from *Janabah*, and kept on that for quite a long time, what is the ruling on the prayers he offered in this way?

A.13: If he has always been performing *Wudu* (minor ablution) for his prayers, in which he would rinse his mouth and nose, then he is excused from repeating his past prayers, but he has to be careful in future. And Allah knows best.

Q.14: A woman took a bath upon recovery from menstruation, but the following day she discovered in her garment traces of a muddy fluid (*Kudrah*). Does she have in this case to bath again (for the purpose of worship) or can she just clean it from her body and her garment and perform *Wudu* (ablution for prayer)?
A.14: If it is just a muddy fluid she only has to perform *Wudu* after cleaning herself (and her garment). And Allah knows best.

Q.15: Is it permissible for a woman who is having a period (*Haidh*) to wear jewelry that has the name of Allah or some verse of the Noble Qur'an on it?
A.15: That is not forbidden provided the jewelry lies on her clothes and is not in direct contact with her body; otherwise it is not allowed. And Allah knows best.

Q.16: If a menstruating woman saw the Noble Qur'an on the floor, would she be allowed to pick it up for fear that it might be damaged?
A.16: If she actually feared that it might be damaged she would have to pick it up using a cloth or any other material to avoid touching it directly. Otherwise she would have to wait for someone else to pick it up. And Allah knows best.

Q.17: Is it permissible for a menstruating woman to recite some supplications (*du'a*)?

A.17: Yes, she may recite supplications and magnify Allah the Exalted. She is only forbidden to pray, fast, touch the Noble Mus'haf and recite the Holy Qur'an. And Allah knows best.

Q.18: What is the ruling if women who are having a period or post-natal bleeding should ritually wash a female dead Muslim?

A.18: There is nothing wrong with that. And Allah knows best.

Q.19: What would you say of a woman who used not to wash her hair whenever she bathed from post-sex ritual impurity (*Janabah*)? What is the ruling regarding her prayers and fasting?

A.19: With regard to the manner of ritual bathing, the Prophet (PBUH) said "There is *Janabah* under each hair; therefore wet the hair and cleanse the skin". This implies that involvement of all the hair in ritual bathing is compulsory. Accordingly, any woman who neglected to do that, must ask Allah for forgiveness and repeat all the obligatory prayers and fasting that she did in that way. And Allah knows best.

Q.20: Is it permissible for a woman who is having post-natal bleeding to do anything in her home before fourteen days since her delivery - like cooking, washing up, cleaning up the house and bathing the children?

A.20: She may do everything except that she is forbidden to pray, fast and have sexual intercourse. And Allah knows best.

Q.21: Is it permissible for a woman who is having a period to use henna and kohl? And is it true that if a woman having post-natal bleeding has touched anything, it has to be washed?

A.21: A menstruating woman is forbidden to use cosmetics such as kohl and henna lest she should arouse her husband's desire for her. As for the necessity to wash anything touched by a woman having post-natal bleeding, this is absolutely unfounded as far as Islamic law is concerned. And Allah knows best.

Q.22: What is the ruling on recitation of some short chapters of the Holy Qur'an by a menstruating woman when she gets terrified?

A.22: If she is terrified she can recite any portion that may relieve her terror. And Allah knows best.

Q.23: What is your opinion regarding entry of a menstruating woman into a religious school that is on the ground floor of a mosque?

A.23: A menstruating woman may not enter a mosque except in an emergency, such as running away from an enemy or things of that kind. Accordingly, if this woman crosses the praying area of the mosque when she gets into the school then that is not permissible for her; otherwise if she does not enter the praying area of the mosque then there is nothing wrong with that. And Allah knows best.

Q.24: Is it permissible for the husband to have sexual intercourse with his wife when her

monthly period has outlasted the maximum duration of menstruation?

A.24: Yes, that is permissible as long as it is after the maximum period of menstruation. And Allah knows best.

Q.25: What is your opinion regarding a woman whose post-natal bleeding has outlasted the maximum of forty days - should she bath and resume prayers and can her husband have sexual intercourse with her?

A.25: If she has completed forty days with no sign of cleanness she should bath, resume praying and fasting, and there is nothing wrong in her husband having sexual intercourse with her. And Allah knows best.

Q.26: If a woman after she has performed her ablution and offered her prayer discovers in her garment traces of semen, does she have to repeat her ablution and prayer, or what is she supposed to do?

A.26: If it is not likely that the traces of semen were discharged after the prayer then she has to repeat them. And Allah knows best.

Q.27: If a woman recovers from post-natal bleeding before completing forty days does she have to bath and resume prayers, or is it necessary that she complete forty days?

A.27: She has to bath and resume prayers as soon as she gets clean even if on the same day of her delivery. And Allah knows best.