



HOW CAN I GET CLOSER TO ALLAH?

***What Every Muslim Woman Needs to Know
About Her Menses and After Giving Birth***

by

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and

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In the name of Allah, Most Merciful, the Compassionate, all praise is for Allah, and prayer and peace on Prophet Muhammad, Messenger of Allah and on his family and all his companions. We thank Allah for all His Blessings, and we intend by our efforts to please Him, and to make known to our sisters in Islam some important information regarding the true religion.

Allah (Subhanuhu wa Ta'ala) said: **“I created the jinns and human beings only that they may worship Me.”** (*Surat adh-Dhariyat: 56*). **The Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said, “Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, afternoons, and during the last hours of the night.”** (Narrated by Abu Huraira (ra) in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, hadith no.38)

Preface to the Second Edition

In response to the requests of some readers, we have made some revisions to the original manuscript, and expanded it in order to include more information, particularly about worship in Ramadan. In addition, we felt that it was important to note the availability of more material in English on this subject in the years since the first edition was published. This new edition is dedicated to ‘Umm Omar’, who lovingly reminded us of the importance of imparting beneficial knowledge as a *sadaqa jariya*, or ‘continuous charity’. May Allah accept this effort from her, and may He cure her and grant her Paradise for her patience in adversity.

Preface

Some of the questions Muslim women ask most often regarding their practice of the religion have to do with menstruation. This is because most women are affected by menstruation and/or post-childbirth bleeding for regular and prolonged periods in their lives. Also, Islam has specific rules for a woman in these conditions.

Jamila Hakam is a mother and teacher who is currently studying for a Master’s degree in Linguistics. She has been interested in the subject of the worship of Allah as it affects women since she accepted Islam many years ago. She felt that she had many unanswered questions about the topic of worship during the time of a woman’s menstruation. More specifically, she had not found an answer to the question of whether or not a menstruating woman could read the Qur’an.

Jamila began to look for answers to her questions in books of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). She found a *fatwa* (religious decree) in the great work of Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Fatawa Al-Kubra*, which stated that it was permitted for a menstruating woman to read and recite the Qur’an. From there she started to research the subject in more detail. She wrote a short paper outlining what she had learned, and kept it in her file until she could find a way to disseminate the information to other women.

Later on she moved to Oman, where she met Nazek Younis, a neighbor of hers. Nazek, who is also a mother and a teacher, is pursuing a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies with the American Open University. She and Jamila discussed the paper and the topic of menstruation from the *fiqh* point of view. Nazek’s native language is Arabic, and so she was able to help research the topic more thoroughly and to add to the scholarliness of the work. Thus she became a co-author of the paper, and has now translated it into Arabic.

Upon the encouragement and suggestion of friends, Nazek and Jamila decided to prepare their research for publication as a booklet. With Allah’s help, it will be available in English and Arabic to Muslim women all over the world.

Introduction

Whenever a Muslim woman has a question about her religion, she should seek the answer in the Qur'an (Allah's revealed Word) and the Sunna (the way) of His Prophet Muhammad (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem). If the answer is not found in these two sources, she should look to trustworthy Muslim scholars for help. She is encouraged to read, study, and learn as much as she can about her religion, for the search for religious knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim individual. (*Ihya' Ulum al-Din: Revitalization of the Sciences of Religion*, English trans. 1997: 9-15)

If the question is about a subject related to *fiqh* (understanding of the *shari'ah* or Islamic law), she may find more than one simple answer. This is in part because after the death of the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) and the end of Revelation, the companions and those who came after them spread out over the Muslim world and became separated by space and time. This separation, in an era where fast transportation and instant communication did not yet exist, meant that scholars had to develop their schools of opinion or thought in near isolation from each other and, in some cases, far from the sources of the Sunna.

As a result, the Imams who founded these schools of Islamic thought (*madh-hab*; plural: *madhahib*) each developed a different set of opinions and legal decisions to be put into practice by their followers. The four Imams of the major Sunni madhahib never intended for their opinions to be used to divide and split the Muslim community. In fact, they all said that if anything which they had decreed was not in accordance with the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Messenger (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem), then it was to be disregarded. (See *Al-Muwatta* by Imam Malik.) Nonetheless, these madhahib evolved over many centuries into rigid sects.* People began following them blindly, and Muslims lost sight of the more important goals of unity in their religion and obedience to Allah and His Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) above all else.

Every century or so, however, Allah (Subhanuhu wa Ta'ala) has given one or two of His servants the knowledge and wisdom to look beyond the petty divisions and call Muslims back to the straight path. (As-Sayyid Sabeq's Introduction to *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, English trans. :xi-xiii) These people are known as as-Salaf as-Saleh (the righteous who follow what has been originally handed down) or Ahl as-Sunna (people of the Sunna).

Some of those in the long chain of scholars and thinkers whose work still influences Islamic thought today are Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali, Muhammad Ibn Rushd, Taqi ad-Deen Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, and Hassan Al-Banna. It was Al-Banna who commissioned his student and colleague As-Sayyid Sabeq to write the now well known *Fiqh us-Sunnah*. (Introduction to *Fiqh us-Sunnah*: xv) Contemporary Ahl as-Sunna scholars like As-Sayyid Sabeq and Muhammad Ash-Shaukani have depended greatly on the legacy of the earlier Salaf as-Saleh in making known to modern Muslim readers the true nature of the Sunna. It is in these scholars' writings as well as in the opinions of the four Imams that we can find the answers to our questions on the topic of worship and menstruation.

How does menstruation or childbirth affect my ability to worship?

Believing Muslims who practice their religion sincerely, know that worship of Allah takes many forms. *Salat* (prayer), *sadaqa* (charity), *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *du'a* (supplication), reading and reciting the Qur'an, and *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from Allah) are all forms of worship that they perform on a daily basis. Fasting, *i'tikaf* (seclusion in the mosque), *zakat*, and *hajj* and *'umra* are acts of worship that Muslims perform periodically.

A Muslim woman who is learning about her religion finds out quickly that the menstrual period and the period of bleeding after childbirth (postpartum *lochia*), are times for her to leave

* For a detailed discussion of this topic, see *Evolution of the Madh-habs* by Bilal Philips.

off certain acts of worship such as salat and fasting, as well as specified sexual relations with her husband. It is important for believing women to be aware of exactly which acts are forbidden and which ones are permitted to them in these situations. This booklet is intended to clear up the issue as much as possible (with Allah's permission).

What is forbidden to me during my menses or postpartum?

The Qur'an and the Sunna of Allah's Messenger are clear about these restrictions. Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala—may He be Glorified and Exalted) says in surat *al-Baqara*, ayah 222, **“They ask you concerning menstruation. Say that it is an *adha* (a harmful thing), therefore keep away from [your wives] during menses and do not have sexual intercourse with them until they have become pure [from menstrual blood], and when they have purified themselves [from menses by taking a shower (*ghusl*)] then you [husbands] may have sexual intercourse with them as Allah has ordained for you.”** (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 473)

The Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) told Fatema bint Abu Hubaish, **“When your menses begins, leave off the salat, and when it has ended, wash the blood from your body and pray.”** (narrated by 'A'isha (radhy Allahu 'anha—may Allah be pleased with her) and related by the 'group' except for Ibn Majah) In Al-Bukhari's version, **he (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) said, “...and you [women] are to leave off the salat for the number of days in which you menstruate, then wash and pray.”** (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol. 1: 468)

Should I make up the prayers that I miss?

In another hadith, 'A'isha told a woman who had asked her about this, **“That was what the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) told us to do. We were ordered to make up the fasts [missed because of menstruation or lochia], and we were ordered not to make up the prayers.”** (“Chapter on Menstruation”, *Sahih al-Bukhari*) If, however, a woman did not pray an obligatory salat in the beginning of the prescribed time for that prayer, and then her menses began after she would have had enough time to make *wudhu* (ablution) and pray, she would have to make up that prayer after her menses ends. For example, if *dhuhr* started at 12 noon, and by 12:20 she had not started to pray, and then her menstrual blood started to flow, she has missed the *dhuhr* prayer in its time, and must make it up at the end of her menses. If on the other hand, her period began at 12:05 for example, she would not be obligated to make up the salat of *dhuhr* later, as there would not have been sufficient time in 5 minutes to make *wudhu* and pray. Therefore, a woman who is expecting her menstrual period to start anytime soon should try her best to pray on time, so that she will not miss a prayer.

If a woman is in the midst of a salat (whether obligatory or not), and she feels her menstrual blood starting to flow out, she should immediately stop her prayer. If, however, there is a pressing reason for her not to stop, she may continue the salat. For example, if she is praying a congregational prayer in a group of worshippers and feels too embarrassed to leave the salat in the middle, she may complete the prayer. This opinion has been deduced from the scholars' opinion that the excretion of impure substances from the body during one's salat permits, but does not oblige, the worshipper to leave the prayer without completing it. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.2: 37-38) Then, once her menses has ended, she should repeat that salat as a missed prayer. That permission to continue her prayer does not mean, however, that a woman who is already menstruating and is aware of it can join a group prayer simply because she is shy about letting it be known. To intentionally pray any salat during one's menses would be a sin, as this is in defiance of Prophet Muhammad's (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) order.

Can I perform any ablutions during menses or lochia (postpartum)?

Before this question is answered, some fiqh terms must be explained and defined. Impurities are “substances that the Muslim must avoid and wash off if they happen to contaminate his clothes, body and so on.” (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 6) They include blood, urine,

feces, vomit, and other excretions from the body. Some of these impurities cause the believer to become temporarily 'impure' simply by coming into contact with them. Certain substances excreted from his or her own body also impose a state of impurity.

A Muslim is always either in a state of purity, or of minor impurity, or of major impurity. A state of minor impurity can mean that he or she has passed a bodily fluid, or solid or gas, or that he or she has come into physical contact with an impure substance, or even that the believer was asleep or lost consciousness. In order to purify him or herself from a minor impurity, the Muslim must make wudhu. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 35-36) A state of major impurity means that she or he has had sexual intercourse or emitted a sexual discharge, or that she is menstruating or having postpartum bleeding. According to the madh-hab of Imam Ash-Shafi'i, childbirth (live or still), even without any bleeding postpartum, puts her in a state of major impurity as well. (*Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 146) In order to purify him or herself from a major impurity, a Muslim must perform *ghusl* (take a complete shower with the intention of purification). Wudhu and *ghusl* will return the person from a state of minor or major impurity to a state of purity.*

The opinion of the scholars of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is that while a woman is in her menses or postpartum, she is not permitted to make ablution or purify herself from it until the discharge has stopped completely, or until the prescribed period for the menses or lochia has ended, whichever comes first. Most scholars say that it is permitted—and actually preferred—however, to perform the *ghusl* (ritual shower for purification) for other specified reasons, such as putting on the *ihram* for hajj or 'umra, entering Mecca, and standing at Arafat. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 469; *Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 10) The proof that this type of *ghusl* is preferred is found in a **hadith related by 'A'isha (ra) that when she was on her way to perform the hajj with the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem), her menses began. The Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) told A'isha, "Do what the pilgrims do on hajj, but do not perform tawaf (circumambulation of the Ka'aba) until you become pure."** (*Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 146-147)

It is also permitted for her to make *ghusl* for *janaba* (the state of post-sex impurity). For example, if a woman had intercourse before the onset of her menstrual period, and then her menstrual blood began to flow before she had made *ghusl* (taken a shower), she may still make *ghusl* with the intention of purifying herself from *janaba*, but without the intention of purifying herself from menses. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 469) The Shafi'i madh-hab does not permit the ha'idh or nafsah to make *ghusl* for *janaba* during the time her discharge is still flowing, but once the discharge has stopped, she may do so. (*Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 149)

Am I allowed to make sajda (prostration)?

Most of the scholars say that the prohibition of performing salat also includes *sajda* (prostration). It is forbidden for anyone to make *sajda* upon reciting or hearing an *ayah* (verse) of prostration even in a state of minor impurity, as it is considered to be like salat. Therefore it is also forbidden for those in a state of major impurity to do so. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 294-295; 383 & 478) There is some difference of opinion among the scholars of the Sunna, however, about whether in fact a state of purity is required at all. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.2: 43) *Sajdat ash-shukr* (prostration of thankfulness) also necessitates a state of purity according to some scholars (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 294-295; *Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 147); whereas others say that no prerequisite of purity for the prostration of thankfulness exists, as it is not part of salat. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.2: 46) In that case, there is nothing to prohibit a woman from making a prostration of thankfulness during her menses or postpartum.

Must I avoid all acts of worship altogether?

* For a detailed discussion of purification, please refer to volume 1 of *Fiqh us-Sunnah* by As-Sayyid Sabeq.

In addition to not fasting and not performing salat, many women have been taught that they may not read the Qur'an, or recite it or touch it while menstruating. Some women, uneducated as to the extent of the restrictions upon them during this period, go so far as to give up other forms of worship such as dhikr, *tasbih* (praise of Allah) and du'a until their menses or lochia are over. Due to a misconception of what is off limits to them, the menstrual and postpartum periods have often meant for many women long periods of non-spirituality, feeling far away from Allah, forgetting parts of the Qur'an which they had memorized, and missing many opportunities for seeking the Pleasure of Allah (Subhanuhu wa Ta'ala).

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about the acts of worship that are forbidden and those that are permitted to the *ha'idh* (woman who has her menses) and the *nafsa'* (woman who has lochia). The Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) make it clear that the acts of worship expressly forbidden to the *ha'idh* are salat, staying in the mosque, and fasting. How, then, have women been led to extremes in avoiding other acts of worship?

Much of the confusion regarding this matter arises from a tendency by many scholars to classify menstruation and postpartum bleeding together with post-sex impurity (*janaba*) as belonging in one and the same category of major impurity. An important example: the section in as-Sayyid Sabeq's *Fiqh us-Sunnah* on "Acts that are forbidden to the impure" makes no distinction between those who are impure due to menstruation and those who are impure due to *janaba*. (Vol. 1: 52-53) This lack of detailed discussion of the topic in English makes it difficult for any woman to find out what is permissible and what is forbidden to her during her menses or postpartum *lochia*.

Should I read or recite the Qur'an?

It is a general principle of fiqh that everything is permissible unless it has been expressly made impermissible. Scholars of fiqh and the sunna have noted—among them Ibn Taymiyyah and the late Sheikh Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Uthaymeen—that certainly, women in the time of the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) menstruated and gave birth, yet the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) did not make any statements or commands (that can be confirmed as authentic or *sahih*) forbidding them from reading or reciting the Qur'an, or from any form of dhikr or du'a. (See *The Natural Blood of Women* by Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Uthaymeen, and *Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 28.) There is documentation in Arabic of further clarification of this subject. Ibn Taymiyyah, the famous scholar who wrote and taught some 500 years after the Qur'an was revealed, said in his huge work entitled *Al-Fatawa al-Kubra* (Major Religious Decrees or Decisions), in the chapter on menstruation,

The menstruating woman (*ha'idh*) may read and recite the Qur'an, unlike the one who is *junub* (in post-sex impurity), and this is in the Maliki madh-hab; and according to Ahmed [ibn Hanbal], if she fears she may forget [what she has memorized or learnt of the Qur'an] then it is *wajib* [required for her to read it]. (vol.5: 314)

In a similar fatwa, he said:

The scholars hold three different views in regard to reciting Qur'an by a *junub* or a menstruating woman:

1. It is permissible for both. This is the opinion of Abu Hanifa, and the most well-known opinion of ash-Shafi'i and Ahmed.
2. It is not permissible for a *junub*, but is absolutely permissible for a menstruating woman.
3. It is permissible for her (a menstruating woman) only if she is afraid of forgetting (parts of the Qur'an). This is the opinion of Malik, and one of the opinions of Ahmed and others. (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 27-28)

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, then, the founders of all of the four major madhahib (schools of fiqh law) namely, Imam Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man ibn Thabit, Imam Muhammad ash-Shafi'i, Imam Malik ibn Anas and Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, are of the opinion that the ha'idh and the nafsa' may or should read and recite the Qur'an.

Imam ash-Shafi'i, however, holds the view that the ha'idh or nafsa' may not recite out loud any verses of the Qur'an. In support of this opinion, scholars often quote the following weak hadith: "Abdallah ibn Omar (ra) related that the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) said, 'The one who is junub and the one who is ha'idh may not recite anything from the Qur'an.'" (narrated by Abu Dawood and At-Tirmidhi) (*Al-Fiqh al-Muyassir*: 71 and *Fiqh Al-Ibadat*: 147) This hadith as it has been reported has been graded weak by Imam an-Nawawi, as well as by subsequent scholars. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1:385 footnote (1) & 471 footnote (1)) The late Sheikh Ibn Baz, who had been the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, quoted the above hadith and then commented that it was weak, because it came from an unreliable source*. (*Fatawa Ibn Baz*: No.117)

Nevertheless, the major schools of thought and a number of well known scholars have put certain restrictions on the way in which a woman during her menses or postpartum can read the Qur'an. According to the Maliki madh-hab, she is permitted to recite parts of the Qur'an until and unless her blood has stopped flowing, i.e. at the end of the menses or lochia, at which time she may not recite until she has performed ghusl. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 385 & 471) The Shafi'i opinion is that she is permitted to read while moving her tongue, but silently. She may read as much as she needs to for purposes of study or teaching. According to Ash-Shafi'i, she can also recite ayat or surat for blessing and protection (like Ayat al-Kursi, Surat al-Falaq, and Surat an-Nass), but not with the intention of worship or dhikr Allah. (*Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 147) All of the four madhahib agree that reading without reciting is not forbidden, as long as she does not directly touch the *mus-haf* (the purely Arabic Qur'an which is not mixed with other writing such as explanations of the meaning of the verses). (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 471)

Despite the tendency of all four madhahib to put conditions and limitations on the permissibility of reciting the Qur'an during the *haidh* (menses) or *nifas* (postpartum), there remains the fact that there is no proof from the Qur'an or the Sunna of Allah's Messenger (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) that a menstruating woman may not recite the Qur'an. (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 26) Sheikh Ibn Baz wrote in his book *Fatawa* (Islamic Decrees) in the chapter "Decrees about the Qur'an" that (in summary) a woman who is ha'idh or nafsa' may read and recite the Qur'an silently or aloud and in any situation. Ibn Baz states that this is the most correct opinion of the scholars, and that there is nothing from the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) which forbids this (125-126). She may recite to herself or to others (excluding of course men who are not her closest relatives or her husband) as for example in teaching her children, in a study group, reciting verses before sleeping, as part of du'a (supplication to Allah), studying from books of *tafseer* or other books containing Qur'anic verses, and memorizing or reciting verses from the *mus-haf* (purely Arabic Qur'an). (*Fatawa Ibn Baz*: 128)

Whether she is menstruating or not, there is no proof from either the Qur'an or the Sunna that a woman must cover her head when she reads or recites the Qur'an. A sense of self-respect and respect for the Word of Allah (Subhanuhu wa Ta'ala) will dictate what any believer (male or female) would understand to be 'suitable attire' for the occasion. Scholars have advised that a woman may wear her ordinary house dress while reciting the Qur'an.

May I touch or carry the Qur'an?

Most scholars, from all the major madhahib, say that the ha'idh and nafsa' may not directly touch or carry the *mus-haf* (*Fatawa Ibn Baz*: 128 and *Fiqh us-Sunnah* vol.1: 39-40; 52-

* For more comment about this hadith, please refer to Chapter 7 of *Regulations of Worship During Menses* by Muhammad Al-Jibaly.

53) She may touch it only if it becomes necessary to do so. There are differences of opinion as to which situations indicate necessity. In the Shafi'i madh-hab, the risk to the mus-haf of harm from fire or water, or of coming into contact with impurities, all would compel the ha'idh or the nafsa' to pick it up. She is otherwise forbidden from carrying the mus-haf even if it were in a bag that she carried, if her intention was expressly to carry the mus-haf. (*Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 148) The Hanafi madh-hab and others consider the need to read from the mus-haf itself a necessity, but say that in this case the ha'idh or nafsa' should avoid touching it directly. (*Fatawa Ibn Baz*: 128 and *Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 471)

The majority of scholars agree that touching and holding a copy of the Qur'an which is mixed with *tafseer* (explanations) or which is not purely in Arabic, is acceptable for anyone who is ha'idh or in minor impurity. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 53; *Fatawa Ibn Baz*: 129) This means, of course, that it is perfectly acceptable for a woman in her menses or postpartum to carry the book which is the Qur'an translated into English, or which has both the Arabic verses and the English translation and explanation included in the same volume. The Shafi'i madh-hab is in general agreement with this opinion, but makes the condition that the amount of non-Qur'anic material must exceed the amount of Qur'anic verses in the book. (*Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 148)

On this issue, we asked an Imam and scholar who studied the Sunna in Jami' at al-Imam in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, about touching the Qur'an. He said that the ha'idh or nafsa' may use gloves or a piece of cloth, or turn the pages with a pen, for example, if she needs to read from the pure Arabic mus-haf itself. The Hanafi madh-hab agrees with this opinion. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 471) This is an important point as many women in the Islamic world cannot afford, or otherwise have no access to, books of tafseer or other scholarly works. Their only option is the family mus-haf found in their own homes.

Some scholars permit the mus-haf to be touched or carried by an impure person if a separable cover or case covers it, and as long as only the cover of the book is touched, and not the inner pages on which the verses are written. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 471) There is a scholarly opinion—held by a minority, but with a strong argument for their claims—that even touching or carrying the mus-haf is not forbidden to the ha'idh, nafsa', or junub. (See *Regulations of Worship During Menses* by Muhammad Al-Jibaly, especially Ch.5.) This view is based on the interpretation of the ayat (verses) in surat *al-Waqi'ah*, “**In a book well guarded, which none can touch but those who are pure,**” (*al-Waqi'ah*: 78-79) as referring to the Book with Allah in Heaven, and “those who are pure” as referring specifically to the angels, not human beings. Thus, the restriction would not apply to the Qur'an of which we have copies in our hands. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah* vol.1: 39-40; 52-53)

What is the difference between the junub and the ha'idh or nafsa'?

According to scholars, among whom are Ibn Taymiyyah (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 27-29) and Ibn Baz, (*Fatawa Ibn Baz*: 128-129), the reasons for differentiating between a person who is *junub* (impure because of sexual relations or discharge) and a woman who is ha'idh or nafsa' (bleeding from menstruation or postpartum) are clear. There are sound *ahadith* stating that mentioning Allah and reciting the Qur'an were allowed for menstruating women by order of the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem). (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 26) In addition, we know that the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) was never kept from mentioning Allah or reciting the Qur'an except by janaba (sexual impurity), and this is why scholars have ruled that saying du'a and dhikr is makruh (disliked) for the junub. (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 23) According to some narrations, he (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallem) expressly forbade reciting even one verse by the junub until he or she was purified (related by Imams Ahmed, Al-Baihaqi and others; see *Fiqh us-Sunnah* vol.1: 53 and *Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 384-385).

Ibn Baz explains that the junub usually has control over when and for how long he or she becomes and remains impure, thus the state of impurity continues only for a short period of time. The junub may take a ritual shower (ghusl) or make dry ablution (*tayammum*) at any time to return to a state of ritual purity. The ha'idh or nafsa', on the other hand, has no control over when

and for how long she will be bleeding. The timing and duration of her state of impurity is up to Allah (Subhanuhu wa Ta'ala). A woman may be in this state of major impurity for days or even weeks (as is the case with postpartum bleeding). A woman in this situation needs to be able to read the Qur'an in order to receive guidance, so that she does not miss the blessings and benefit of the Qur'an, and so as not to forget what she has learned and memorized. (*Fatawa Ibn Baz: 128-129*) We know from ahadith and from the opinions of scholars that to intentionally forget what has been memorized and understood of the verses of the Qur'an is a sin. (*Fatawa Ibn Baz: 113-114; Riyadh as-Salihin: hadith no.1551*) It is necessary for Muslim women to have continuous access to the guidance and blessings received by reading and reciting the Qur'an, and this is the most correct opinion of the scholars. (*Fatawa Ibn Baz: 128-129*)

The scholars who do not share this opinion differ as to the classification of major impurities. Imam Ash-Shafi'i and others do make some distinctions between the case of the junub and that of the ha'idh and nafsah, insofar as the latter two are permitted to read (silently) small surahs and sections of the Qur'an, whereas the former may not. In general, though, these three categories are all considered to be in a state of major impurity, and thus those scholars have forbidden them from reciting the Qur'an. (*Fiqh al-Ibadat: 146-147; Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy, vol.1: 471*) As a result, the strict prohibitions regarding the recitation of Qur'an by the junub are also often applied to women in their menses and postpartum, but with some exceptions. For a more detailed discussion of these restrictions, please refer to the previous questions about reading, reciting and touching the Qur'an.

What do I do if I am menstruating or postpartum during Ramadhan?

It makes sense that while she may not pray or fast during Ramadhan, the ha'idh or nafsah should be encouraged to do as many other acts of worship as are allowed for her. She is not expected to leave off remembering Allah or praising Him or supplicating to Him at any time of the year. She is not required to give up her daily reading and reciting of the Qur'an. Scholars who hold this view have said that during Ramadhan, when the recital of Qur'an is especially encouraged, it is permissible for a woman in her menses or postpartum to continue her reading and reciting, although her salat and fasting have been interrupted. The ruling on this issue has been explained in detail in the following fatwa from Islam Q&A.com, and which we reproduce in its entirety, in accordance with their guidelines:

Question: I was wondering what a woman can do on laylat al-qadr if she is menstruating at that time. Can she earn extra rewards for engaging herself in worship? If so, what is permissible for her to do so that night?

Answer: Praise be to Allah.

A woman who is menstruating may do all acts of worship apart from praying, fasting, circumambulating the Ka'bah and doing i'tikaaf in the mosque.

It was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to stay up at night during the last ten nights of Ramadaan. Al-Bukhaari (2401) and Muslim (1174) narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: "When the last ten nights of Ramadaan came, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would refrain from marital relations, stay up at night and wake his family up."

Staying up at night is not only for prayer, rather it includes all kinds of acts of worship. This is how the scholars interpreted it. Al-Haafiz said: "Staying up at night" means staying up to do acts of worship. Al-Nawawi said: spending the night staying up to pray etc. He said in 'Awn al-Ma'bood: i.e., in prayer, dhikr and reciting the Qur'aan.

Praying qiyaam is the best act of worship that a person can do on Laylat al-Qadr. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever spends the night of Laylat al-Qadr in prayer out of faith and in hope of

reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1901; Muslim, 760).

Because the woman who is menstruating is not allowed to pray, she can spend the night in doing other acts of worship apart from prayer, such as:

- 1- Reading or reciting Qur’aan.
- 2- Dhikr – such as saying Subhaan-Allaah, La ilaaha illa-Allaah, al-Hamdu Lillaah, etc. She can repeat the words “Subhaan-Allaah wa’l-hamdu Lillaah, wa laa ilaaha ill-Allaah, wa Allaahu akbar (Glory be to Allaah, praise be to Allaah, there is no god but Allaah and Allaah is Most Great)” and “Subhaan Allaah wa bi hamdihi, subhaan Allaah il-‘Azeem (Glory and praise be to Allaah, glory be to Allaah the Almighty)” etc.
- 3- Istighfaar (praying for forgiveness), by repeating the phrase “Astaghfir-Allaah (I ask Allaah for forgiveness).”
- 4- Du’aa’ (supplication) – she can pray to Allaah and ask Him for what is good in this world and in the Hereafter, for du’aa’ is one of the best acts of worship. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, “Du’aa’ is ‘ibaadah (worship).” (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2895; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 2370).

The woman who is menstruating can do these acts of worship and others on Laylat al-Qadr. (source: Islam-qa.com, question ref. No. 26753)

Can I perform the hajj?

There are other acts of worship which are permissible for menstruating and postpartum women. These include performing the hajj and ‘umra (minor pilgrimage), of which only the rites of prayer, *tawaf* (circumambulating the Ka’aba), and staying within the bounds of the sanctuary of the Ka’aba are forbidden to them. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, “Chapter on Menstruation” and *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 40 & 52).

The reason that the ha’idh is not allowed to perform tawaf is because tawaf is a form of salat, as explained by the following hadith: **‘Tawaf around the House is salat, but Allah permitted speaking during it. So whoever speaks should not say except good things.’** (related by at-Tirmidhi, and verified as sahih by al-Albani) (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: 5) In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) told women what to do if they were menstruating or post-partum during hajj:

‘A’isha (radhi Allahu anha) narrated: ‘We [all of the Prophet’s (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) wives] accompanied him during his [Farewell] Pilgrimage. When we reached Sarif [shortly before arriving at Makkah], my menses started. When the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) came to me, I was weeping. He asked, “What makes you weep?” I replied, “I wish I had not come for Hajj this year.” He inquired, “Perhaps you have got your menses?” I replied, “Yes.” He said, “Indeed, this is something that Allah has ordained for the daughters of Adam. So do as other pilgrims do, but do not circumambulate the House [perform tawaf] or pray until you are purified (of the menses).’ (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol.1, hadith no.302)

In another narration about the incident:

‘A’isha (ra) narrated, “In the last hajj of Allah’s Messenger (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem), I assumed the *ihram* for hajj along with Allah’s Messenger (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem). I was one of those who intended *tamattu’* [by assuming *ihram* for ‘umra first, and once completed, coming out of that *ihram* and then assuming another *ihram* for the performance of the hajj from Mecca, without bringing a *hady* (sacrificial animal)] and so I did not take the *hady* with me. I got my menses and was not clean [i.e. the menses continued] until the night before the day of ‘Arafat. I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! It is the night before the day of ‘Arafat and I intended to perform the hajj *tamattu’* with ‘umra.’ Allah’s Messenger (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) told me to undo my hair [while

performing ghusl] and comb it and to postpone the ‘umra. I did so and completed the hajj. On the night of Al-Hasba [a place outside Mecca where the pilgrims go after finishing all the ceremonies of hajj at Mina] he (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) ordered Abder Rahman [‘A’isha’s brother] to take me to At-Tan’im to assume the ihram for ‘umra instead of that of hajj at-tamattu’ which I had intended to perform.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol.1: hadith no. 313)

These ahadith also point to the way in which we should accept menstruation as a natural occurrence, not trying to avoid it or getting upset about it, and that we ought to simply make the necessary adjustments to our routine of worship when menses does occur.

A question was posed to Sheikh Ibn Baz: “Is it permissible for the ha’idh and the nafsa’ to recite from books of du’a on the day of [standing at] Arafat even though they contain Qur’anic verses?” Ibn Baz replied, “There is no blame on the ha’idh or nafsa’ for reciting the du’a prescribed for the *manasik* [‘sacrifices’ or required actions] of the hajj, or for that matter, for reciting from the Qur’an itself, for the prohibition is meant for the junub only, that he should not recite the Qur’an, from a hadith narrated by ‘Ali (ra).” (*Fatawa Ibn Baz*: 128) “**Ali (ra) stated that nothing kept the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) from the Qur’an save being sexually impure.** This is related by ‘the four’.” (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 53)

May I enter a mosque?

According to the majority of scholars, it is forbidden for the ha’idh and the nafsa’ as well as for the *junub* to stay inside any mosque (including the Sacred Mosque of the Ka’aba), but there is no harm in their passing through it on their way. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 54) This topic, especially the opinion which holds that there is nothing prohibiting the ha’idh or nafsa’ from entering the masjid, is discussed in great detail by al-Jibaly. (*Regulations of Worship During Menses*: Ch.6) This means, of course, that the other act of worship forbidden to the ha’idh or nafsa’ is *i’tikaf*, or seclusion in the mosque. The Hanbali madh-hab, however, permits the ha’idh and the nafsa’ to sit inside the mosque once her blood has stopped flowing, even before she has performed ghusl, if she has made ablution by wudhu’. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 471-472)

Should I attend the Eid prayers?

Attendance of the Eid prayers and listening there to the Eid *khutba* (sermon) is highly recommended for all women—including menstruating women and of course, women in postpartum. **In a hadith by Hafsa bint Sireen, “We used to forbid our young women to go out for the two ‘Id prayers. A woman came and stayed at the palace of Bani Khalaf, and she told us about her sister whose husband had taken part in twelve battles along with the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem), and her sister had been with her husband in six [of those twelve battles]. She [the sister] had said, ‘We used to treat the wounded and look after the patients. Once I asked the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem), ‘Is there any harm for any of us to stay at home if she doesn’t have a *jilbab* [outer garment to veil herself]?’”**

‘He said, “She should cover herself with her sister’s [in Islam] *jilbab* and should participate in the good deeds and in the religious gathering of the Muslims.”

[Hafsa said,] “When Umm ‘Atiyah came, I asked her whether she had heard this from the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem). She replied, ‘Yes, may my father be sacrificed for him!’ (Whenever she mentioned the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) she used to say that). ‘I have heard the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) say, “The unmarried young girls, the mature unmarried women who screen themselves from the public view, and the menstruating women should come out and participate in the good deeds as well as the religious gathering of the faithful believers. Those who are ha’idh should keep away from the prayer area.””

[Hafsa asked,] “Even the menstruating women?”

[Umm ‘Atiyah replied,] “Doesn’t a ha’idh stand at ‘Arafat and so forth [i.e., participate in other religious activities]?” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol.1: Hadith no.321)

In a similar hadith, **“Umm ‘Atiyah reports: ‘We were ordered to go out with the single and menstruating women to the two ‘ids in order to witness the good and the supplications of the Muslims. The menstruating women would be separated from the others.’** This is related by Bukhari and Muslim.” (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.2: 148; *The Status of Women in Islam*: 29-30)

The separation of the women in their menses and postpartum from the rest of the worshippers is easily accomplished if the Eid prayer is performed outdoors or in a place other than a mosque (such as an open field, an arena or a stadium). If the prayer is held in a mosque, however, then the opinion of the scholars is that the women in this condition of impurity must remain outside the areas of the mosque that have been designated for prayer, and apart from those who are praying. (Committee of Sheikhs, *Merkaz ad-Da’wa wal-Irshad*, Bahrain)

Am I permitted to wash or prepare the dead for burial?

The ha’idh and the nafsā’ may wash and shroud the dead, or assist others in doing so. The scholar Ibn Qudama wrote in his well known fiqh book *Al-Mughni* that it is permitted for the menstruating woman, as well as for one who is junub, to perform the ghusl and *kafen* (shrouding) of the dead, although it is preferable that this important religious rite be performed by one who is in a state of purity. (*Al-Mufeed fee Ahkam Al-Jana’iz* by Sheikh Abdallah bin Jibreen: 14)

So, how can I get closer to Allah?

Once women know the facts about which actions are allowed and forbidden during their menses and lochia, they should encourage each other not to neglect these important *ibadat* (acts of worship of Allah). **From a hadith narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri, the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu alayhi wa sallem) once passed by a group of women on his way to offer the Eid prayer and said, “O, women! Give sadaqa (charity), as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you [women].”**

They asked, **“Why is that, O Messenger of Allah?”**

He replied, **“You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more lacking in intelligence and religion. A cautious, sensible man could be led astray by some of you.”**

The women asked, **“O Messenger of Allah, what is deficient in our intelligence and religion?”**

He said, **“Isn’t the evidence of a woman [in witnessing a debt contract] equal to half* that of a man’s?”**

They replied, **“It is.”**

He said, **“That is where you are deficient in intelligence. Isn’t it true that a woman in her menses neither prays nor fasts?”**

The women replied, **“It is.”**

He told them, **“That is where you are deficient in your religion.”** (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol.1: Hadith No.301)

The meaning of this hadith could not be clearer. The period of time during which a woman neither prays nor fasts is potentially a period in which her faith and worship are in jeopardy. The rewards and benefits of ablution and prayer are missing at this time. **Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said,**

* For a detailed discussion of the testimony of women, see *The Status of Women in Islam* by Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawy 1997:9-14)

“When a Muslim makes his ablutions and washes his face the water carries away all sins committed by his eyes, and when he washes his hands the water carries away all sins committed by his hands, and when he washes his feet the water carries away all sins towards which he had walked, and he emerges cleansed of all his sins.” (Related by Muslim, *Riyadh as-Salihin*: hadith no.129) In another narration by Abu Huraira, **the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said, “The five daily prayers, two Friday congregational prayers [Jumu’a], and observing the fast during two Ramadhans atone for whatever may be between them so long as major sins are guarded against.”** (Related by Muslim, *Riyadh as-Salihin*: hadith no.130) By not being able to perform wudhu and salat, the small sins that accumulate are not being washed away or erased. If women sit back and ‘take a vacation’ from their worship during the haidh and nifas, they are giving Satan easy access to their minds and hearts.

Therefore, while they are not praying the prescribed prayers (*salawat*), they can and should still be striving to be as close to Allah as is possible. Even though they are not required to get up in the middle of the night, it is highly recommended. According to a scholar of the Sunna, the following hadith applies to women in their menses and postpartum as well as to all believers: **The Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said, “Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven every night during the last third of the night and says, ‘Who will call on Me so that I may respond to him? Who is asking something of Me so I may give it to him? Who is turning in repentance to Me so I may turn to him in acceptance of it?’”** (Related by Ahmed) While they don’t have to get up at *fajr* (dawn) for salat, the female servants of Allah will still (by Allah’s will) get rewarded for waking up to seek Allah’s forgiveness, remember Allah with their tongues and on their fingers (saying subhan Allah, alhamdulillah, Allahu akbar), and reading and reciting Qur’an. **“Indeed the recitation of the Qur’an at fajr is witnessed.”** (*Surat al-Isra’*: 78).

Women who feel that they must not recite the Qur’an while postpartum or during their menses should at least continue and even increase their remembrance of Allah. He (Subhanuhu wa Ta’ala) has said, **“And remember your Lord by your tongue and within yourself, humbly and with fear, without loudness in words, in the mornings and in the afternoons, and be not of those who are neglectful.”** (*Surat al-A’raf*: 205) When she hears the adhan, she should respond with the words and the du’a that our Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) taught us to say. (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.1: 99-100) While other members of her household are in salat, she can sit quietly and remember Allah with dhikr, tasbih, and du’a. **Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said, “There are two phrases that are easy on the tongue, but are heavy on the scales [that weigh the good deeds on the Day of Judgement] and are loved by the Most Merciful: Glorified be Allah, and His is the Praise; Glorified be Allah, the Lord of Majesty. (Subhan Allah wa bihamdih and Subhan Allah al ‘Adheem.)”** (Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, *Riyadh as-Saliheen*: hadith no.1413). In another hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (ra), **the Prophet (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said, “One who recites, ‘There is none worthy of worship save Allah the One, who has no partner, His is the Kingdom and His is the Praise and He has Power over all things,’ a hundred times during the day will have merit equal to that of freeing ten slaves, and a hundred good deeds will be credited to him, and a hundred of his defaults will be wiped out, and he will be safeguarded against Satan till the end of the day; and no one will exceed him in doing good except one who recites these phrases more often than he does.”** The Messenger (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) also said, **“The defaults of one even if they be as the foam of the sea will be wiped out if he recites a hundred times in the day, ‘Glorified be Allah, and to Him is due all praise.”** (Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, *Riyadh as-Saliheen*: hadith no.1415; *Sahih al Bukhari* vol.8: hadith no.414)

How will I know that my menstrual or postpartum period has ended?

For women who have questions regarding the duration of their menstrual or postpartum discharge, the length of their cycles, or what to do if the discharge lasts longer than is normal,

please consult the chapter on “Menstruation” in *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, volume one, where this subject is discussed in detail. The website of Islam Q&A (www.islamqa.com) also has a large body of fatawa that clarify many questions on this issue.

Once this period ends, what do I do?

Allah (the Exalted) tells us in the Qur’an, “...therefore keep away from [your wives] during menses and do not have sexual intercourse with them until they have become pure [from menstrual blood], and when they have purified themselves [from menses by taking a shower (*ghusl*)] then you (husbands) may have sexual intercourse with them as Allah has ordained for you.” (*Surat al-Baqara*: 222) This is the meaning of the verse as the scholars have defined the terms *yat-hurna* and *tatahurna*. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 473).

The scholars agree that having intercourse before the menstrual or postpartum discharge has stopped, or before the prescribed period of *haidh* (menstruation) or *nifas* (postpartum lochia) has ended, is a sin. This is based on the ayah mentioned above, and on a **hadith in which the Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) was asked, “What is allowed for me [to do] with my wife when she is ha’idh?” He (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) answered, “[Allowed] for you is what is above the waist cloth.”** (Related by An-Nasa’i) There is a similar hadith narrated by A’isha and related by Al-Bukhari. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 472-473)

The scholars differ somewhat on the question of whether or not intercourse is permitted once the discharge has stopped, but before the woman makes her *ghusl* from menstruation. The Maliki madh-hab as well as that of the Shafi’i and the Hanbali agree that sexual intercourse and touching in a sexual manner what is between the woman’s navel and her knees, are both prohibited until she makes *ghusl*; and this is based on the above hadith and the definition of the term in ayah 222 of *Surat al-Baqara*, ‘*tatahurna*’, as “purified themselves by *ghusl*.” The Hanafi madh-hab and the Shafi’i make the exception that if her menses has lasted ten days or more, the couple may have intercourse once her discharge has stopped—or if it stops and starts again and stops again—before she makes *ghusl*; but if the menses has lasted less than ten days, then she must perform *ghusl* before they have intercourse. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.1: 472-473; *Fiqh al-Ibadat*: 149-150)

A’isha (ra), wife of Prophet Muhammad (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said, “The Messenger of Allah (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) said to me, ‘Give up the prayer when your menses begins, and when it has finished, wash the blood off your body [take a shower] and start praying.’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.1, hadith no. 327) The opinion of Ahl as-Sunna is that *ghusl* is required after menstruation or lochia, both for prayer and before sexual intercourse. They have also said, however, “It is sufficient to perform one *ghusl* for both menstruation and sexual impurity...if one has the intention for both of them. This is based on **the Prophet’s (salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallem) saying, ‘All acts are based on intentions.’”** (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*: 60) From this statement of the opinion of the scholars, it can be inferred that sexual intercourse may take place before the *ghusl* from menstruation.

The first thing a woman should do once she has performed *ghusl*, and the most beloved act to Allah, is to pray. If she had missed a prayer that was due on her at the time her menses began, she should make up that *salat* (*qadha*) first. If, however, the time for the established *salat* (*hadher*) is almost over (say, *dhuhr* time is nearly over and *asr* will begin in a few minutes), then she should pray the *salat hadher* in its time, without delay, and then the *qadha*. (*Al-Fiqh al-Islamiy*, vol.2: 138)

In conclusion:

Once a woman has informed herself correctly about the *haidh* and *nifas*, she can begin to prepare herself for these conditions which recur during her life cycle. She should prepare mentally and spiritually by increasing her reading, reciting and memorizing of the Qur’an, of *du’a*, and of *dhikr* Allah. She no longer needs to feel cut off, far away from Allah at these otherwise difficult periods of her life.

In sha' Allah, this information will prove to be of some use to our Muslim sisters. If there is any mistake in what we have reported, may Allah forgive us; and whoever knows of the error, please inform us of it. With Allah is the Guidance, may Allah guide us all.

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