

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE ALL-BENEFICENT, THE ALL-MERCIFUL**

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴾

Indeed, Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

(Sūrat al-Ah^zāb ٣٣:٣٣)

Prophetic traditions, mentioned in most reliable Sunnī and Shī'ite reference books of *h^zādīth* and *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis), confirm that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively involve the five People of the Cloak; namely, Muh^zammad, 'Alī, Fāt^zimah, al-H^zasan, and al-H^zusayn, peace be upon them, to whom the term 'Ahl al-Bayt (People of the House)' is solely dedicated.

For instance, refer to the following references:

(١) Ah^zmad ibn H^zanbal (d. ٢٤١ AH), *Al-Musnad*, ١:٣٣١; ٤:١٠٧; ٦:٢٩٢, ٣٠٤. (٢) S^zah^zih^z Muslim (d. ٢٦١ AH), ٧:١٣٠. (٣) Al-Tirmidhī (d. ٢٧٩ AH), *Sunan*, ٥:٣٦١ et al. (٤) Al-Dūlābī (d. ٣١٠ AH), *Al-Dhurriyyah al-T^zāhirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. ١٠٨. (٥) Al-Nassā'ī (d. ٣٠٣ AH), *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, ٥: p. ١٠٨, ١١٣. (٦) Al-H^zākim al-Naysābūrī (d. ٤٠٥ AH), *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-S^zah^zih^zayn*, ٢:٤١٦, ٣:١٣٣, ١٤٦, ١٤٧. (٧) Al-Zarkāshī (d. ٧٩٤ AH), *Al-Burhān*, p. ١٩٧. (٨) Ibn Hājar al-Asqalānī (d. ٨٥٢), *Fath^z al-Barī Sharh^z S^zah^zih^z al-Bukhārī*, ٧:١٠٤.

As for Shī'ite reference books of *h^zādīth*, refer to the following references:

(١) Al-Kulaynī (d. ٣٢٨ AH), *Us^zūl al-Kāfi*, ١:٢٨٧. (٢) Ibn Bābawayh (d. ٣٢٩ AH), *Al-Imāmah wa al-Tabs^zirah*, p. ٤٧, H^z. ٢٩. (٣) Al-Maghribī (d. ٣٦٣ AH), *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, pp. ٣٥, ٣٧. (٤) Al-S^zādūq (d. ٣٨١ AH), *Al-Khis^zāl*, pp. ٤٠٣, ٥٥٠. (٥) Al-T^zūsī (d. ٤٦٠ AH), *Al-Amālī*, H^z. ٤٣٨, ٤٨٢, ٧٨٣.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse involved in the following reference books of *tafsīr*: (١) Al-T^zabarī (d. ٣١٠ AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (٢) Al-Jassāss (d. ٣٧٠ AH), *Ah^zkām al-Qur'an*. (٣) Al-Wah^zidī (d. ٤٦٨ AH), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. (٤) Ibn al-Jawzī (d. ٥٩٧ AH), *Zād al-Mas^zīr*. (٥) Al-Qurt^zubī (d. ٦٧١ AH), *Al-Jāmi' li-Ah^zkām al-Qur'an*. (٦) Ibn Kathīr (d. ٧٧٤ AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (٧) Al-Tha'ālibī (d. ٨٢٥ AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (٨) Al-Suyūt^zī (d. ٩١١ AH), *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*. (٩) Al-Shawkanī (d. ١٢٥٠ AH), *Fath^z al-Qadīr*. (١٠) Al-'Ayyāshī (d. ٢٢٠ AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (١١) Al-Qummī (d. ٢٢٩ AH), *Book of Tafsīr*. (١٢) Furt^z al-Kūfī (d. ٣٥٢ AH), *Book of Tafsīr*; in the margin of the exegesis of verse ٤:٥٩. (١٣) Al-T^zabrisī (d. ٥٦٠ AH), *Majma' al-Bayān*, as well as many other reference books of *h^zādīth* and *tafsīr*.

**PROSTRATION
ON EARTH**

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِزَّتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَدًا، وَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرَقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“Verily, I am leaving among you two weighty things [thaqalayn]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [‘itrat], the members of my Household [Ahl al-Bayt]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [hawḍ] (of Kawthar).”

Some references:

- Al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. ۳, pp. ۱۰۹-۱۱۰, ۱۴۸, ۵۳۳
- Muslim, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English translation), book ۳۱, h□adīths ۵۹۲۰-۳
- Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. ۵, pp. ۶۲۱-۲, h□adīths ۳۷۸۶, ۳۷۸۸; vol. ۲, p. ۲۱۹
- Al-Nassā’ī, *Khaṣā’iṣ ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, h□adīth ۷۹
- Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. ۳, pp. ۱۴, ۱۷, ۲۶; vol. ۳, pp. ۲۶, ۵۹; vol. ۴, p. ۳۷۱; vol. ۵, pp. ۱۸۱-۱۸۲, ۱۸۹-۱۹۰.
- Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi‘ al-Uṣūl*, vol. ۱, p. ۲۷۷
- Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, vol. ۵, p. ۲۰۹
- Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. ۶, p. ۱۹۹
- Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Al-Dār al-Salafiyyah), vol. ۴, pp. ۳۵۵-۳۵۸

Prostration on Earth

Sayyid ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Sharīfī

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Ahl al-Bayt^(a) World Assembly

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FOREWORD



The legacy of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('*a*), preserved by their followers, is in the custody of their school of thought, which forms a complete system that covers the various branches of Islamic learning. This school has been able to train minds that were favorably disposed to drink from this spring and present the Islamic nation with great scholars who emulated the missionary life of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('*a*). For centuries, these scholars provided convincing answers in response to questions that were posed by people from different schools of thought and intellectual tendencies, both from within and outside the Muslim nation.

In line with its responsibilities, the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('*a*) World Assembly has undertaken to defend the sacred message of Islam and reveal its true nature, which

unfortunately has been adulterated by followers of other sects and proponents of ideologies that are in opposition with Islam. This organization, following in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and their followers, strives to respond to constant challenges and remain in the forefront of the struggle.

The intellectual experiences of the scholars of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) school in this regard are unparalleled, as they contain scientific investigation, which depends on rational proof and shuns personal opinion and chauvinism, thus, accepted by all people possessing an unimpaired natural disposition.

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly endeavors to present, to the seekers of truth, a new round of these rich experiences by publishing a series of works written by contemporary writers who are followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) school of thought, including those who received divine grace and embraced this noble school. In addition, this organization undertakes the edition and publication of beneficial works of past Shī'ah scholars, to ensure sufficient resource material for the seekers of truth. The purpose of this effort is to put the facts possessed by the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) school at the disposal of the whole world, at a time when minds are globally moving towards perfection and speedily correlating.

It is hoped that readers will not deprive the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly of their valuable views and suggestions as well as constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the pure Muhāmmadan (ṣ) Islam.

We ask God, the Exalted, to accept this trivial effort and enhance it further under the auspices of His vicegerent on earth, Hādīrat al-Mahdī (may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent). It is appropriate here to express our utmost gratitude to Sayyid ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Sharīfī for writing the book and to Mr. Afzal Sumar for translating it, as well as to all our honorable colleagues in accomplishing this task, especially the dear ones in the Translation Office for performing their responsibility.

Cultural Affairs Department
Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

INTRODUCTION



Islamic Law considers the daily ritual prayer as an important pillar of Islam. A specific form has been legislated for the ritual prayer which constitutes elements as well as specific conditions which further augment it, so that the ritual prayer may be valid and correct in the eyes of the Legislator, the Glorified and Exalted.

Prostration, without any doubt, is an important part of the obligatory [*wājib*] and supererogatory [*nāfilah*] prayers. In fact, it is the highest degree of humbleness and sincerity in the ritual prayer as it is the clearest manifestation of servitude, obedience and self-abasement on the part of the creature towards his Creator. Indeed, by the act of prostration, a believer reiterates his absolute worship and obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is why Allah has not

permitted His creatures to prostrate before anyone other than Himself.

All Muslims unanimously believe that prostration is due only to Allah, the Exalted. Indeed, he who rejects this belief will have left the bounds of Islam.

As for the question of what to prostrate on, all Muslims, unanimously regard the validity of prostrating on earth and soil. Rather, they concur that it is preferable to prostrate on earth or soil according to Prophetic traditions.

Thus, we shall concentrate on investigating the transmitted noble traditions regarding the substances on which it is permissible and impermissible to prostrate. Secondly, we shall endeavor to find out the legal position regarding permissibility of prostrating on what grows from the earth in relation to what is edible and inedible, wearable and un-wearable. Thirdly, we shall aim to discover from these sayings the distinction between the established practice [*sunnah*] of the Prophet (s[□])¹ and innovation [*bid'ah*]. Fourthly, we shall try to discern the legal position regarding prostrating on earth and its soil. Lastly, we shall study the merits of the soil from the grave of Imām al-H[□]usayn ('a)² and what

¹ The abbreviation, “s[□]”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, s[□]*allallāhu 'alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam* [may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muh[□]ammad (s[□]). [Trans.]

² The abbreviation, “'a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, '*alayhi's-salām, 'alayhim'us-salām, or 'alayhā's-salām* [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names

distinguishes it. In the process we shall discover the secret behind the emphasis and value placed on the soil from the grave of Imām al-H□usayn (‘a) and the current practice among Muslims of carrying clay tablets made from the soil of his grave for the purpose of prostrating on it during the ritual prayers.

Thus, we shall present this study as follows:

- ١) The transmitted traditions regarding what to prostrate on during the daily ritual prayers.
- ٢) The preference of prostrating on earth and on soil.
- ٣) The merits of the soil from the grave of Imām al-H□usayn (‘a).
- ٤) The reason of emphasis on prostrating on the soil from the grave of Imām al-H□usayn (‘a).

FIRST DISCUSSION

Transmitted Traditions Regarding Prostration

In this chapter we shall present the transmitted teachings and practice [*sunnah*] of the Prophet (s□) regarding what is permissible to prostrate on during the ritual prayers, as recorded in the six authentic books of traditions and other main books of traditions. Proceeding in the light of these traditions, we shall adopt them as worthy of emulation and as the correct path from which there is no escape. These traditions are divided into three sections.

Traditions which furnish evidence on the permissibility of prostration on earth and soil

1) The Prophet (s□) is reported to have said, “The earth has been established for me as a place of prostration and as an agent of purification.”

Al-Muslim records the same thus, “The entire earth has been created for us as a place of prostration and its soil has been made for us as a purifying agent when we do not find water.”

Al-Tirmidhī records it thus, “The entire earth has been appointed for us as a place of prostration and as a purifying agent.” This report has been narrated by ‘Alī ibn Abū Tālib, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, Abū Hurayrah, Jābir, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, Hudhayfah, Anas, Abū Umaymah and Abū Dharr.

In al-Bayhaqī, the tradition reads, “The earth has been made pure as well as a place of prostration for me.” Yet another tradition in this collection says: “The earth has been established as pure and as a place of prostration, thus whenever the time for prayer arrives, pray wherever you are.”^١

١) The Prophet (ﷺ) said to Abū Dharr, “The earth for you is a place of prostration, so whenever the time for prayers comes upon you, then do not hesitate to pray.”^٢

٢) ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās reports, “The Prophet (ﷺ) prostrated on stones.”^٣

^١ *Sūḥah al-ḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. ١, pp. ١٦, ١١٣; *Sūḥah al-ḥīḥ al-Muslim*, vol. ٢, p. ١٤; *Sunan al-Nassā’ī*, vol. ٢, p. ٣٢; *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, vol. ١, p. ٧٩; *Sūḥah al-ḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, vol. ٢, p. ١١٤; *Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, pp. ٤٣٣, ٤٣٥.

^٢ *Sunan al-Nassā’ī*, vol. ٢, p. ٣٧.

^٣ Al-Hākim al-Naysābūrī quotes this in his *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Sūḥah al-ḥīḥ ayn*, vol. ٢, p. ٤٧٣. He has verified it and so has Al-Dhahabī.

۴) Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī reports, “Indeed, my eyes caught sight of the Prophet (s□) when there were traces of water and soil on his nose and forehead.”^۱

۵) In a report traced to Rifa ibn Rafī, he is quoted as saying, “Then, he (s□) glorified (Allah) and prostrated, firmly setting down his forehead on the earth until his limbs became still, settled and even.”^۲

۶) ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, Anas and Buraydah report^۳ that, “Three things are useless and vain: (one of them being) when a person wipes dust off his forehead before completing his prayers.” A report with a similar import and in the words of Wathilah ibn Asqā’ reads: “A man does not wipe the dust from his brow till he finishes his prayers.”^۴

۷) Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh reports: “I was offering the noon ritual prayers with the Prophet (s□) and took a handful of pebbles into my palms in order to cool them and to prostrate on them due to the intensity of the heat.”

The text of a similar report from Jābir, in the collection of Ah□mad ibn H□anbal, reads, “We were offering the noon ritual prayers with the Prophet (s□) and I took into my hands a handful of pebbles and began to move them from one hand to the other in order to cool them.

^۱ *S□ah□ih□ al-Bukhārī*, vol. ۱, pp. ۱۶۳, ۱۹۸; vol. ۲, pp. ۲۵۳-۲۵۴, ۲۵۶, ۲۵۸-۲۵۹; *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* vol. ۱, pp. ۱۴۳-۱۴۴; *Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ۲, p. ۱۰۴.

^۲ Al-Bayhaqī quotes this in his *Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ۲, p. ۱۰۲.

^۳ This report has a sound chain, traceable to these companions.

^۴ Al-Bazzar and al-T□abrānī cite this from *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol. ۲, pp. ۸۳-۸۴ in the chapter on “Wiping the Forehead during the Ritual Prayer”.

Then, I prostrated on them due to the intensity of the heat.”

In the words of a report from Jābir and recorded in the collection of al-Bayhaqī, it reads, “I was offering the noon ritual prayers with the Prophet (s□) and took a handful of pebbles into my palms to cool them, and placed my forehead on them when I prostrated, due to the intensity of the heat.”

Then al-Bayhaqī writes that the Shaykh^١ said, “If prostration on cloth that is joined to one’s apparel is permissible, then that is because it is easier than cooling pebbles in one’s palm and prostrating on them. And with Allah lies success.”^٢

١) Anas ibn Mālik reports, “We used to pray with the Prophet (s□) in the intense heat and one of us would take some pebbles in his palms. When the pebbles cooled he would place them on the ground and prostrate on them.”^٣

٢) Khubab ibn Art reports, “We complained to the Prophet (s□) about the intense heat of the burning sands on our foreheads and palms but he did not complain to us.”^٤

١٠) ‘Umar ibn Khat□t□āb reports, “One night it rained, so when we left our houses for the morning ritual prayer, one of the men walked to the valley and

^١ Identity of the shaykh is unknown. [trans.]

^٢ Ah□mad ibn H□anbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. ١, p. ٣٢٧; Al- Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, p. ١٠٥.

^٣ Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, p. ١٠٦.

^٤ Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, pp. ١٠٥, ١٠٧; *Nayl al-Awtar*, vol. ٢, p. ٢٦٨.

collected pebbles in his clothes and used them to prostrate on. When the Prophet (ﷺ) saw this, he remarked, ‘What a beautiful spread!’ That was the beginning of the use of pebbles.”

Abū Dāwūd quotes ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Umar saying, “It rained one night and the earth became moist and wet. So a man set out to collect pebbles in his clothes which he then spread under himself...”^۱

۱۱) ‘Ayādh ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurashī reports, “The Prophet (ﷺ) saw a man prostrating on his turban. He gestured towards his turban and forehead, meaning thereby to tell him to raise his turban (from his forehead).”^۲

۱۲) The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī (‘a), said, “When one of you prays he should draw away his turban from his forehead.”^۳

۱۳) Nafi (the client of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar) reports, “Indeed, when ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar (the son of the Caliph ‘Umar) would prostrate and he had his turban on his head, he would raise it in order to place his forehead on the earth.”^۴

۱۴) It is reported about Ubādah ibn Sāmit (a companion of the Prophet (ﷺ)), that when he would stand up for prayers, he would remove his turban from his forehead.^۵

^۱ Abū Dāwūd, vol. ۱, p. ۷۰; *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ۲, p. ۴۴۰.

^۲ *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ۲, p. ۱۰۰.

^۳ *Ibid.*

^۴ *Ibid.*

^۵ *Ibid.*

١٥) Abū ‘Ubaydah reports that the companion of the Prophet (s□), ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd would never pray or prostrate except on earth.^١

١٦) It is reported about Ibrāhīm that when he would stand up to pray, he would do so on a “*bardī*” whilst he would prostrate on the earth. When asked as to what a “*bardī*” was, the reply was that it was a papyrus mat.^٢

١٧) S□ālih□ ibn Haywān al-Siba’ī reports, “The Prophet (s□) saw a man prostrating on his forehead when he had a turban on it! So, the Prophet (s□) removed the turban from his forehead.”^٣

Regarding what has been transmitted about prostration on other than earth without any excuse

١) Malikah, the grandmother of Anas ibn Mālik invited the Prophet (s□) for a meal which she had prepared for him. He partook of it and then said, “Do stand up so that I may lead you in the ritual prayer.” Anas ibn Mālik says, “I got up to get our mat which had blackened due to excessive use. I sprinkled it with some water and then the Prophet (s□) stood on it and I lined up behind him and so did the orphan and the elderly behind us...”^٤

^١ Al-T□abarānī cites it in *Al-Kabūr*, vol ٩, p. ٣٥٥, and on its authority in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol ٢, p. ٥٧.

^٢ Al-T□abarānī cites it in *Al-Kabūr*, vol ٩, p. ٣٥٥, and on its authority in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol ٢, p. ٥٧.

^٣ *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, p. ١٠٥; *Nasb al-Rayā*, vol. ١, p. ٣٨٦.

^٤ Al-Bukhārī quotes it in *Al-Sah□th□*, vol. ١, p. ١٠١; *Sunan al-Nassā’ī*, vol. ٢, p. ٥٧.

Umm Sulaym asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to come to her house and to pray in it. He agreed, thus she led him to the place of prayer in her house where there lay a mat which she moistened with some water, whereupon he prayed on it and the others prayed with him.¹

Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mājah said, “*Al-fihl* is a mat which has blackened.”

In the book of traditions compiled by al-Bayhaqī[†] is a report that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to take a siesta in the house of Umm Sulaym and she would spread out for him a leather mat, which she would perfume for him. She would then spread a “*khamra*”[‡] (mat) and he would pray on it.[§]

¹ In the words of the report in *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. ١, p. ٢٠٠, he said: “Some of my uncles prepared food for the Prophet (ﷺ). Then, he said to the Prophet (ﷺ), I would like you to eat at my house and to pray in it. And so he arrived, and in the house were a couple of “*fuhūl*” (plural form of *fihl*). He then instructed that a portion of one of them be swept and sprinkled with water, and then he prayed and we prayed with him.”

[†] Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, p. ٤٢١.

[‡] *Khamra* has been defined in E.W. Lane’s Arabic to English Lexicon, vol. ١, p. ٥٨٢, as “a small oblong shaped mat, large enough for a man to prostrate on, made of palm leaves and woven with thread or skin.” [trans.]

[§] This is also reported in *Sunan*, vol. ٢, p. ٤٢٦ in these words: “The Prophet (ﷺ) was the best of men in character, and sometimes the time for prayers would arrive while he would be in our house. So, he would instruct that the spread on which he was sitting be swept and moistened. Then, he would stand on it and we would stand behind him and he would lead us in prayer. The mat used to be of palm branches stripped of their leaves.” This report is also recorded in these words: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) entered a house in which was a “*fihl*”—a blackened mat—so he swept a portion of it and sprayed water on it and prayed on it.”

On the margins of al-Bayhaqī's collection is the note that a "*fihl*" is a used mat, made from palm leaves.^١

٢) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās reports, "The Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray on the "*khamra*" (a mat)."^٢

٣) It is narrated that Abū Sa'īd Khudrī once visited the Prophet (ﷺ) and saw him praying on a mat and prostrating on it.^٣

٤) Lady Maymūnah, the wife of the Prophet (ﷺ) reports, "The Prophet (ﷺ) would be praying and I would be sitting opposite him and sometimes his clothes would brush me when he went into prostration. He used to pray on a "*khamra*"."^٤

٥) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar reports, "The Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray on a "*khamra*", and prostrate on it."^٥

^١ Al-Tirmidhī quotes it in his *Al-Sahīh*, vol. ٢, p. ١٢٧ from Anas that he said: "He moistened the spread for us and prayed on it."

^٢ *Sahīh al-Tirmidhī*, vol. ٢, p. ١٢٦; Imām ibn al-'Arabī al-Mālikī said: "*Al-Khumra* is the mat for prayers."

^٣ *Sahīh al-Muslim*, vol. ٢, pp. ٦٢, ١٢٧; Ibn Mājah quotes this in his *Al-Sunan*, vol. ١, p. ٣٢١; Al-Tirmidhī also quotes this in his *Jāmi'*, vol. ٢, p. ١٢٧, but the words "he was prostrating on it" are missing.

^٤ Al-Bukhārī, vol. ١, p. ١٠١; Al-Muslim, vol. ٢, p. ١٢٧; Ibn Mājah, vol. ١, p. ٣٢٠; Al-Nassā'ī, vol. ٢, p. ٥٧; Al-Bayhaqī, vol. ٢, p. ٤٢١.

Al-Muslim quotes as follows in vol ١, p. ١٦٧ from 'Ā'ishah that she said that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked her to pass the "*khumra*" from the mosque. She replied that she was in the state of menstruation. He said, "Your state of menstruation is not of your doing."

^٥ Al-Tabrānī quotes this in *Al-Awsat*, vol. ٧, p. ٣٤٧ and in *al-Kabīr*, vol. ١٢, p. ٢٩٢.

۶) Lady Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet (ﷺ) narrates, “The Prophet (ﷺ) had a “*hāsīrah*” and a “*khamra*”, which he used to pray on.”^۶

۷) Anas ibn Mālik reports, “The Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray on a “*khamra*” and prostrate on it.”^۷

Regarding what has been transmitted about prostration on things other than earth due to an excuse

۱) Anas ibn Mālik reports, “When we prayed with the Prophet (ﷺ) and one of us was unable to place his forehead firmly on the earth due to intense heat, he would take off his cloak (outer garment) and prostrate on it.”

The text of a similar report from Anas and recorded in the collection of Al-Bukhārī reads, “When we used to pray with the Prophet (ﷺ), one of us would place the border (or fringe) of his cloak (or outer garment) at the place of prostration due to the intensity of heat.”

A variant of this report in the collection of Al-Muslim, reads, “We used to pray with the Prophet (ﷺ) in the intense heat, thus when one of us would be

^۶ A *hāsīrah* has been defined in E.W. Lane’s Arabic to English Lexicon, vol. ۱, p. ۸۰۹ as “a mat woven with reeds or rushes or palm leaves).

^۷ Abū Ya‘lā quotes it and so does al-Tābrānī in *Al-Awsat*, vol. ۳, p. ۳۸۸. The narrators in the chain of the report in the book of Abū Ya‘lā are reliable and trustworthy and similar is the case of the report from Umm Hābībah quoted in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol. ۳, p. ۵۷.

^۸ Al-Tābrānī quotes it in *Al-Awsat* and in *Al-Sūaghīr* with chains, some of which are authentic, the narrators are trustworthy as in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol. ۳, p. ۵۷.

unable^١ to place his forehead firmly on the earth, he would spread his cloak and prostrate on it.”

This report has also been recorded in the following words, “We used to pray with the Prophet (s) and one of us would place the edge of his cloak at the place of prostration due to the intensity of heat.”^٢

Al-Shawkanī writes in *Al-Nayl*, “This tradition offers evidence for the permissibility of prostration on cloth in order to protect oneself from the heat of the ground. However, this tradition also alludes to the fact that the placing of the forehead on the earth during prostration is the basic rule and principle, while the spreading of the cloak for the purpose of prostration is only a temporary respite, due to the inability of the worshipper to place his brow on the burning sand.”

٣) Anas ibn Mālik reports, “When we would pray the “*al-dhahayr*” prayers behind the Prophet (s), we would prostrate on our cloaks in order to protect ourselves from the heat.”

Ibn Mājah in his collection of traditions *Al-Sunan*,^٤ as well as Imām al-Sindī in his commentary state that the word “*al-dhahayr*” is the plural of “*al-dhahīrah*”,

^١ This report can also be found in the collection of Ibn Mājah with a different choice of word for “inability.”

^٢ Al-Bukhārī, vol. ١, p. ١٠١; Al-Muslim, vol. ٢, p. ١٠٩; Ibn Mājah vol. ١, p. ٣٢١; Abū Dāwūd, vol. ١, p. ١٠٦; Al-Darimī, *Sunan*, vol. ١, p. ٣٠٨; Ahḥmad ibn Hānbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. ١, p. ١٠٠; *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. ٢, p. ١٠٦; and *Nayl al-Awtar*, vol. ٢, p. ٢٦٨.

^٣ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. ٢, p. ٢١٦.

which means the intense heat in the middle of the day.^١

It is in this context that the report from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās regarding the Prophet (ﷺ) is to be understood when he said, “I saw the Prophet (ﷺ) prostrating on his cloak.”^٢

Al-Bukhārī^٣ states in the chapter on prostrating on cloth due to the intensity of heat that Hāshim said, “The community used to prostrate on their turbans and headgears while their hands would be in their sleeves.”

There is a traceable report which Ahmād ibn Hānbal^٤ cites from Muḥammad ibn Rabi‘ah who reports from Yūnus ibn Hārith al-Tāfi who reports from Abū ‘Awn who reports from his father and who reports from Mughayrah, or liked to pray on tanned skin hide.”^٥

The chain of this report completely lacks credibility, and thus reports of such nature cannot be used as evidence in legal rulings. For in this chain is Yūnus ibn Hārith, and Imām Ahmād says about him, “His reports are confused, weak or insufficiently supported.”

^١ Thus, the report from Anas would mean, they used to spread out and prostrate on their cloaks when praying the noon prayers.

^٢ Abū Ya‘lā quotes it and al-Tābrānī too, in *Al-Kabīr*, vol. ١١, p. ٨٤.

^٣ *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, vol. ١, p. ١٠١ in the chapter on prostration on cloth due to intense heat.

^٤ Ahmād ibn Hānbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. ٤, p. ٢٠٤.

^٥ Abū Dāwūd quotes it in his collection, vol. ١, p. ١٠٦; Al-Bayhaqī in his *Al-Sunan*, vol. ٢, p. ٤٢٠ with the same chain.

‘Abd Allāh ibn Ahmād says, “I asked my father about Yūnus ibn Hārith and he discredited him strongly.”

Yahyā ibn Main opined about him as being a person having no worth or integrity. Abū Hātam said regarding him, “His reports are not strongly supported,” whilst al-Nassā’ī considered him as being weak in his narrations and again reiterated that his reports were not strongly supported. Ibn Abū Shaybah says, “I asked Ibn Main about him and he replied, ‘We consider him to be extremely weak and lacking integrity,’ while al-Sajī said about him, ‘He is weak in credibility.’”¹

Furthermore, in the chain of this report we have as one of the links, Abū Awn Ubayd Allāh ibn Sa‘īd al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī, regarding whom Abū Hātam says in his work *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta’dīl*, that he is unknown, similar to what he said about his son.

And Ibn Hājar says about him: “Abū Awn Ubayd Allāh ibn Sa‘īd al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī’s report narrated from Mughayrah ibn Shu‘bah is incompletely transmitted.”²

As for the text of this (allegedly) traceable report, it is silent regarding the act of prostration and its rules, and to forge a link between prayers on skin hide and prostration on it cannot be justified and is thus repudiated.

¹ *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. ١١, p. ٤٣٧.

² This means the chain is not properly linked but rather has defects.

Conclusion

All these traditions are the totality of what has been reported in the six authentic books of traditions as well as other books of traditions, whether with complete chains of transmission or otherwise, on the issue of what to prostrate on. Indeed, there does not remain any report which we have failed to quote. The texts of all these reports prove that the primary ruling and basic principle regarding prostration is that it has to be done on earth to the best of one's ability. The second alternative is to prostrate on what grows from the earth but which is inedible and unwearable, and this ruling is derived from the reports which depict the Prophet (s) as praying on mats made from palm leaves such as the reports which mention the "khamra", "hasīrah", "fihl", etc. There is no escaping these two rulings in the absence of an excuse. However, in the event of an excuse or the inability of placing firmly one's forehead on the earth, it is permitted to prostrate on cloth that is joined to one's apparel over cloth that is separate from it because of the absence of its mention in the practice [sunnah] of the Prophet (s).

As for prostration on carpets, rugs, mattresses or woven spreads made from wool, animal hair or fur, silk and their like, there is no proof whatsoever, which may permit it. Neither do we find any reason or cause mentioned in the reports transmitted which permit it. It should be borne in mind that these are the traditions of the Six Authentic Books, collections which shoulder the responsibility of explaining and clarifying the rules of religion, especially rules pertaining to the ritual prayer which is the pillar of the

faith, and yet we do not find in them even one report or even a hint or allusion to permit prostration on carpets and their like!

Similar is the case in the rest of the important collections of traditions compiled during the first three centuries of the Hijrah. We do not find in them any indication which may establish for us an evidence for the permissibility of such a practice in either a connected report or an unconnected one.

Therefore, the opinion permitting prostration on carpets and rugs and adhering to such a practice as well as the carpeting of mosques for prostration on them, a practice which is current among the people is an outright innovation [*bid'ah*] and a novel practice which has no legal precedent. It goes contrary to the guidance of Allah, the Glorious and Honorable, and the teachings and practice [*sunnah*] of His Prophet (ﷺ).

Al-Hafiz al-Kabir (the great memorizer) Abū Bakr ibn Abū Shaybah, the reliable and trustworthy *hadith* scholar, based on his chain and recorded in his work *Al-Musannaf*, in the second volume, reports from Sa'īd ibn Musayyab, who reports from Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn who said, "Surely, the prayer performed on a carpet is a new and unprecedented practice." And he has verified a report from the Prophet (ﷺ) which says, "The worst of affairs are the novel ones and every novel affair is an innovation [*bid'ah*]."¹

¹ Cited in "Our Conduct and Practice" by Amīnī (i.e. the conduct and practice [*sunnah*] of the Prophet -ﷺ-), pp. ١٤٦-١٥٧.

SECOND DISCUSSION

Preference of Prostration on Earth

The instruction to rub one's face on the earth or to place one's face on earth or soil during prostration has been transmitted in the noble traditions. This instruction proves the preference or desirability of prostrating on earth at the very least, if not proving its obligation. Here are some of the authoritative narrations regarding rubbing one's face or placing one's face on earth during prostration. Surely, these reports indicate a preference for such an attitude, without doubt.

١) Khālid al-Juhanī says, "The Prophet (ﷺ) saw Sahib prostrating in such a manner as if he was trying to save his face from the dust or soil of the earth!

Whereupon the Prophet (ﷺ) said to him, ‘Rub’ your face on the earth, O Sahib!’”^١

٢) It is clear from this report that Sahib was trying to protect his face from the dust of the ground or the earth by prostrating on cloth, either joined to his apparel or otherwise. But the least required is to prostrate on mats or clean and pure stones in all cases, for the report above as well as those mentioned in the previous section insist on prostration on earth in preference to prostration on pebbles, whereas they permit prostration on pebbles in preference to prostration on things other than earth.

٣) Lady Umm Salamah narrates, “The Prophet (ﷺ) saw our slave called “Aflah” blowing on the ground when prostrating,^٢ so he said: ‘O Aflah, rub your face on the earth!’”^٤

٤) In another report, the Prophet (ﷺ) is described as saying, “O Rabbāh, rub your face on the earth.”^٥

٥) Abū Sālih narrates, “I once visited Lady Umm Salamah. While I was there, her nephew came in to visit her and performed two cycles [*rak‘ahs*] of prayer in her house. When he went into prostration he tried blowing away the dust, so Lady Umm Salamah said,

^١ The words in the traditions are, “*tarraba wajhaka, yā...*” The meaning of the word “*tarraba*” in the Hans Wehr Dictionary is given as “to cover with dust/earth.” [trans.]

^٢ Al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. ٧, p. ٤٦٥, no. ١٩٨١٠.

^٣ Presumably trying to blow away the dust.

^٤ Al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. ٧, p. ٤٥٩, no. ١٩٧٧٦.

^٥ *Ibid.*, p. ٤٦٥, no. ١٩٧٧٧.

‘My nephew, do not blow thus, for I have heard the Prophet (ﷺ) telling his slave by the name of Yasār, who was trying to blow away the dust likewise; ‘Rub your face on the earth for the sake of Allah, the Honorable and Glorious’.’’^٦

٦) It would not be out of place to quote here what the prominent jurist of Medina in the second century of the Hijrah, Imām Ja‘far al-Sādiq, a descendant of the Prophet (ﷺ) and a contemporary of Imām Mālik, had to say when asked about the place of prostration and the wisdom behind it. He responded, “Prostration is not allowed except on earth or on what grows from the earth with the proviso that it should not be edible or wearable.” When prompted to explain the wisdom behind such an instruction, he said, “The prostration is in obedience and submission to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, thus it does not behoove that it be done on things that are eaten or worn, for the people of this world are slaves of what they eat and wear. It does not behoove the one prostrating during his worship for Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, to place his forehead on that which is the object of deification for the people of the world and which is known to mislead by its deception.”^٧

^٦ *Ibid.*, p. ٤٦٥, no. ١٩٨١ and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. ٦, p. ٣٠١.

^٧ *Fiqh al-Imām al-Sādiq*, vol. ١, p. ١٦١, *‘Ilal al-Sharā‘i‘*, vol. ٢, p. ٣٧.

THIRD DISCUSSION

Merits of the Soil from the Grave of Imām al-Husayn (‘a)

When Imām al-Awzaī (d: ١٥٧ AH / ٧٧٤ AD), the teacher of Imām Abū Hānīfah, intended to travel from Medina, he carried with him some clay of Medina for the sake of prostrating on it. When he was asked the reason for this, he replied, “The best place on the face of this earth is the place in which is buried the Prophet of Allah (s), and I desire that my prostrations to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, be on it.”¹

Either Lady ‘Ā’ishah or Umm Salamah reports that the Prophet (s) said (to one of them), “An angel visited me today in the house, one who had never visited me before. It said to me: ‘This grandson of

¹ See Bāqir Sharīf al-Qarashī, “*This is Shī‘ism*”, pp. ٢٦٧-٢٧٠.

yours, al-H□usayn, will be killed and if you like I can show you the clay from the earth where he will be killed.’ And he brought me this red clay!”^١

Lady Umm Salamah narrates, “The Prophet (s□) was sitting in my house one day and said to me: ‘Do not permit any one to enter my room.’ So I waited, bidding my time and keeping watch. Then, al-H□usayn entered and suddenly I heard the sound of the Prophet (s□) sobbing. I rose to inquire and saw al-H□usayn in the Prophet’s room while the Prophet (s□) was stroking his forehead and weeping. I said: ‘By Allah, I did not see him enter your room!’ The Prophet (s□) said: ‘Gabriel was with us in the house. He asked me: ‘Do you love him (al-H□usayn)? See him enter your room!’ I replied, ‘Certainly’. He said: ‘Surely, your community will murder him in a land called Karbalā,’ and then he reached out for the clay of this land and showed it to me.” (Many years later) when al-H□usayn was completely surrounded and about to be killed, he asked, ‘What is the name of this land?’ They (the people around him or his murderers) replied, ‘Karbalā.’ He said: ‘The Prophet of Allah (s□) spoke the truth, “sorrow (the meaning of “*karb*”) and affliction” (the meaning of “*balā*”).”^٢

Muh□ammad ibn Mashhadī records in the book *Mazār al-Kabīr* with his chain from Ibrāhīm ibn Muh□ammad al-Thaqafī, from his father, from Imām al-S□ādiq (‘a), who said, “Fāt□imah, the daughter of

^١ Ah□mad ibn H□anbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. ٧, p. ٤١٨, here it is reported from Lady Umm Salamah.

^٢ Al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol. ٩, pp. ١٨٠-١٨٩, in the chapter on “*the Merits of al-H□usayn (‘a)*”.

the Prophet (s) used to glorify and praise Allah using a woven thread rosary which had knots equal to the number of glorifications [*takbīrāt*] (*allāh-u akbar*). She would turn the rosary in her hand, glorifying and praising Allah till when Hūsamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Mut‘alib was martyred. Thereafter, she used the clay from his grave to make a rosary and the people followed her example. When Hūsayn ibn ‘Alī (‘a) was martyred this practice was transferred to the clay of his grave and the people began to use it due to the grace and excellence it possessed.”¹

The earth of Karbalā is like the earth of Mecca or Medina, surrounded by a halo of sanctity and exaltation. A narrator reports that when the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī (‘a) happened to pass across the land of Karbalā, he took a handful of its soil to smell it, and then cried so hard that the earth got wet with his tears. He said, “Seventy thousand people will be gathered from this land and will enter heaven without reckoning.”²

The Mother of the Faithful, Lady Umm Salamah narrates that one night the Prophet (s) was reclining on his bed, but he was in a strangely perplexed mood! He got up and then went back to sleep, this time even more perplexed and disconcerted than before. He then

¹ *Mustadrak al-Wasā’il*, vol. ٤, p. ١٢, chapter ٩ from the section on the Recommendation of Prostration on the Clay from the Grave of al-Hūsayn (‘a), *hādīth* number ٤٠٥٦, based on Mashhadī’s *Mazār al-Kabīr*; *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. ١٠١, p. ١٣٣, number ٦٤; *Wasā’il al-Shī’ah*, vol. ٦, p. ٤٥٥, chapter ١٦, the chapter on Making Rosaries from the Clay of the Grave of al-Hūsayn (‘a).

² Al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-Zawā’id*, vol. ٩, p. ١٩١.

again got up and in his hand was red clay which he was turning over in his hand. I asked, “What is this clay, O Prophet of Allah?” He replied, pointing at al-Hūsayn: “Gabriel informed me that he (al-Hūsayn) will be murdered in the land of Iraq. So I asked Gabriel to show me the clay of the land on which he will be killed, and this is that clay.”^١

Umm al-Fadl bint Hārith narrates, “Al-Hūsayn was in my lap when I visited the Prophet (s). Whilst there, I suddenly happened to turn around and I saw the Prophet’s (s) eyes shedding copious tears. So I asked, ‘May my parents be your sacrifice, O Prophet of Allah (s), what has happened to you?’ He replied: ‘Gabriel came to me and informed me that my community will murder this grandson of mine.’ Umm al-Fadl became alarmed and asked in disbelief: ‘Will he be killed—pointing to Husayn?’

The Prophet (s) replied in the affirmative and said, ‘Gabriel offered me this red clay.’”^٢

Lady ‘Ā’ishah narrates, “Al-Hūsayn ibn ‘Alī visited the Prophet (s) at a time when revelation was taking place, and dashed towards him. Gabriel asked the Prophet, ‘Do you love him O Muhammad (s)?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Why should I not love him?’ So Gabriel said, ‘Your community will murder him after you,’ and he extended his hand and brought forward

^١ Al-Hūākīm al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Sahihayn*, vol. ٤, p. ٣٩٨; Al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. ٧, p. ١٠٦; *Siyar Alāmu al-Nubala*, vol. ٢, p. ١٥.

^٢ Al-Hūākīm al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Sahihayn*, vol. ٢, p. ١٧٦, vol. ٤, p. ٣٩٨; *Kitāb Ta’bīr al-Ru’yā*.

some white clay. Then he said: ‘On this land will this son of yours be killed. Its name is al-Taff.’

When Gabriel left, the clay was still there in the Prophet’s (s) hand and he was weeping. He said: ‘Ā’ishah, Gabriel has informed me that my grandson al-Husayn will be killed in a land called al-Taff and that my community will turn away after me.’

Then the Prophet (s) went out weeping to his companions among who were ‘Alī, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, Hudhayfah and Abū Dharr. They rushed towards him, exclaiming, ‘What makes you cry, O Prophet of Allah (s)...?’

He replied: ‘Gabriel informed me that my grandson al-Husayn will be murdered in a land known as al-Taff and he brought me this clay telling me that in it will be his final resting place.’^۱

Lady Umm Salamah reports, “Al-Hasan and al-Husayn were playing in front of the Prophet (s) in our house when Gabriel descended. He said: ‘O Muhammad, your community will murder this grandson of yours’—and he pointed at al-Husayn. The Prophet (s) wept and clasped al-Husayn to his chest. In his hand was some clay which he began to smell and said, ‘Woe unto “sorrow” (the meaning of “*karb*”) and “affliction” (the meaning of “*balā*”).’

^۱ *Majma’ al-Zawā’id*, vol. ۹, p. ۱۸۷; *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl*, p. ۷۱: The Prophet took the clay which Gabriel had brought and began to smell it, saying, “Woe unto sorrow (*karb*) and affliction (*balā*).”

He handed the clay over to Lady Umm Salamah and said, ‘When this clay changes to blood, then know that my grandson has been killed...’

Lady Umm Salamah placed the clay in a long-necked bottle and began to look at it everyday, saying: ‘The day on which you turn to blood will indeed be a grave day.’”¹

Many similar reports like these exist which reliable scholars of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'at* have narrated from the Prophet (s) regarding the sanctity of the blessed place in which was martyred his grandson and his sweet basil, Imām al-Husayn (may Allah’s blessings be upon him). Thus, where is the fault and defect if some clay is taken from such a place for the sake of prostration to Allah, the Exalted, the One and Peerless?

¹ Al-Tabarānī, *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, vol. ۳, p. ۱۰۸, in the chapter on *the Biography of Imām al-Husayn (‘a)*.

FOURTH DISCUSSION

Reason for Emphasis on Prostrating on the Soil from the Grave of Imām al-Husayn ('a)

The intended objective of prostrating on the earth of Karbalā is to take advantage of two basic and precious principles.

The first principle

It is considered appropriate to take clean and pure soil by a worshipper for himself,¹ for the sake of prostration, when he is certain of its purity. This soil may be from any place and from any land for they are all legally suitable and acceptable as there is no superiority of one land over the other with respect to prostration on it. This attitude on the part of the

¹ The use of the masculine gender here is by no means meant to belittle the feminine gender; rather it simply denotes the person of a human being and is used for the sake of simplicity. [trans.]

worshipper is similar to the care and attention necessary with respect to the purity of his body, clothes and place of prayer. Thus, a Muslim sensibly takes clean and pure clay for himself so as to prostrate on it whether traveling or at rest, but especially when traveling as it is difficult to obtain the required level of certitude of the purity of every land that a Muslim happens to travel to and halts at, such as hotels, inns, guest houses, ports and stations. Indeed, how is it possible for him to acquire certainty of the requisite purity of the different lands he may travel to, especially when scores of different people, Muslims and non-Muslims travel through them and who do not pay heed to the religious instructions regarding purity and impurity?

So what is the objection if a Muslim, mindful of his religious duties, carries with him clean soil, absolutely satisfied and certain of its purity so that he may be able to prostrate on it during the ritual prayers, thereby saving himself from prostrating on dirt, squalor or impurity which will not draw him close to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious? Moreover, the established practice [*sunnah*] of the Prophet (ﷺ) does not permit prostrating on filth. A considerable number of emphatic legal instructions demand the purity of the body parts of the worshipper and his clothes, and the prohibition to pray at, on or in various places such as dunghills, abattoirs, cemeteries, in the middle of a path, bathrooms and the watering places of camels.¹

¹ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. ۱, p. ۴۰۴, these instructions can also found in the other books of traditions.

There are also recommendations for keeping mosques clean and fragrant.^١

This was the view adopted by the Muslims of the earlier centuries and mindful of this prudent attitude was the successor and jurist Masrūq ibn Ajdā^٢ who used to carry on his travels a brick or clay tablet for prostrating on it. This is reported by Abū Bakr ibn Abū Shaybah in the second volume of his book *Al-Musannaf*, in the chapter entitled: “He who used to carry a thing on which to prostrate while traveling on a ship.” Reporting through the medium of two chains, he writes, “When Masrūq would travel by ship he would carry with him a tablet to prostrate on.”

This thus is the first principle used by the Shī‘ites, and sharing this view with them are the early Muslims from among the earliest Companions and Successors, may they all be blessed.

^١ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. ١, p. ٢٠٦, as also in other sources.

^٢ Masrūq ibn Ajdā ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mālik al-Hamadānī, known by the agnomen Abū ‘Ā’ishah (d: ٦٢ Hijri) was a prominent Successor and from the narrators of the Six Authentic Books. He narrates from Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, Uthmān, and ‘Alī. He was a jurist, a devout worshipper, trustworthy and virtuous. He was from amongst those of ‘Abd Allāh bin Mas‘ūd’s companions who used to teach the Prophetic *Sunnah* to the people. He is reported to have uttered these words at the moment of his death as recorded in the *Tabaqāt* of Ibn Sa‘d, “O Allah, I am not dying on any affair which the Prophet of Allah did not practice, nor Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.” Refer to Bukhārī, *Great History*, ٤th edition (old) vol. ٢, p. ٢٥; Ibn Sa‘d, *Tabaqāt*, vol. ١, pp. ٥٠-٥١; Ibn Abū Hātam, *Al-Jarh wa al-Ta‘dīl*, ٤th edition (old), vol. ١, p. ٢٩٦; *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. ١٠, p. ١٠٩.

The second principle

There exists a long established general rule that various lands possess varying degrees of excellence and precedence, which suggests that they possess differences in nature, qualities and effects. This is a natural and rational principle agreed upon by all the nations of the world, that due to specific associations and relationships, which certain lands may enjoy with certain things, they possess special merits. From these merits flow certain decrees and from these flow rules which may not be overlooked.

Have you not seen official squares, royal palaces, halls and buildings associated with governments, especially those related to the person of the monarch possess a special significance and prestige and rules unique to them? Is it not incumbent on the nation to give due regard to them, and to act in accordance with what is promulgated from within them, of rules, regulations and decrees?

Similar is the case in relation to lands, buildings and houses linked to and associated with Allah, the Honorable and Glorious. They possess special merits, rules, rites and attributes, which are necessary for all those who have submitted themselves to Allah, to observe and respect.

This universally accepted principle yields special rules for the Ka'bah, a unique significance for the Sacred Mosque [Masjid al-Harām] and specific rules for the two holy mosques of Mecca and Medina. The same is true of other mosques, synagogues, churches and places of worship wherein the name of the Lord is uttered, which possess sacredness, nobility, rules of

purity and impurity. Ladies in menstruation and those experiencing bleeding due to child birth as well as individuals who have not purified themselves after sexual coition may not enter these places. It is absolutely prohibited to sell buildings housing a mosque, and many other special rules and limits drawn up with respect to their relationship to the King of Kings, the Lord of the Universe.

Thus, the command to consider Mecca as a sacred precinct wherein no violence is permitted, calling believers to gather there from every far off place, the promulgation of a body of rules for it, even the plants which grow inside it, are all due to the association of Mecca with Allah, the Honorable and Glorious. The religious legal decrees mentioned confirm this consideration and this is the reason for Allah's choosing it above all other lands.

Similarly, the city of Medina is regarded as a Divine sanctuary and a place revered. All those rules of sanctity and reverence, transmitted in the noble traditions in its favor and in favor of its soil, its inhabitants and those buried in it, depend upon its association and relation with Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, and the fact of it being the seat of His great Prophet (ﷺ), the deliverer of His last message.

This rule of association is not specific to Islamic law; rather, it is a natural law, which Islam affirms and is in accord with. This rule is not restricted to the comparative excellence of various lands, but is an established principle, which extends to the comparative merits of the prophets and messengers, the successors of the prophets, the special Friends of

Allah, the truthful, the martyrs, the individual believers, everything meritorious in relation to another in the light of established Islamic criteria. This principle is the very crux and the pivot of life by which every thing is strengthened, and in which every desire and affair terminates, and which gives birth to bonds of affection.

So in light of the above, we ask: what was that which caused the Prophet (s) to weep for his grandson al-Husayn ('a), to mourn him as he did, and to have that attitude towards the soil of Karbalā which he did?

What was that which made Lady Umm Salamah guard so carefully the soil of Karbalā in a bottle?

What was it which made Lady Fātimah take some soil from the pure grave of her father and to smell its fragrance?

What was it that made the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ('a), take a handful of the earth of Karbalā when he traveled across it, to smell it and to weep over it till the ground was wet with his tears? And he said, "Seventy thousand souls will be resurrected from this land that will enter heaven without any reckoning," as recorded by al-Tabarānī and regarding whose chain al-Haythamī¹ said, "Its narrators are reliable."

The above discourse will have clarified for the objective researcher the secret of the merit of the soil of Karbalā, the extent of its affiliation to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, the degree of its sanctity,

¹ *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, vol. ۹, p. ۱۹۱.

and the sanctity of the one buried in it with regard to his proximity to Allah.

So now, what is your opinion about the sacredness of the earth which is the resting place of the one martyred in the way of Allah and the great leader of His army, the one who dedicated himself completely to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious? The resting place of His beloved and the grandson of His beloved, the one who called towards Allah and was His proof, the one who rose for His cause and generously offered his life, his family and his valuable possessions in His path; the resting place of the one, who laid down his life for the sake of enlivening the Word of Allah [*kalimatullāh*], the Honorable and Glorious, testifying His oneness and strengthening His path?

How can Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, not perpetuate his memory in the heavens and on the earth when the love of Allah had completely captivated al-Husayn's ('a) heart?

Is not prostration on the soil of this earth more deserving than prostrating on any other pure earth, highland or courtyard, and more worthy than a spread, or carpet, or woven fabric, for which there is no permission in the practice [*sunnah*] of the Prophet (s)?

Is not prostration on the soil of this earth better to gain nearness to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, and is it not closer in servitude to Him, and more suitable to express humbleness, servility and obedience to Him?

Is it not more fitting to place the side of the face and the forehead on the soil of that earth, hidden in which

are lessons of defense, loyalty and sacrifice to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious, the manifestation of His Holiness and that of the Protector of Islam?

Is it not befitting, in the light of the secrets of prostration on earth, that prostration be done on that earth in which lies the secret of the majesty, glory, grandeur and illustriousness of Allah, the Exalted, and in which lies the most distinct manifestation of signs of servitude to Allah, the Honorable and Glorious?

Is it not worthy to prostrate on the soil of that earth within which are buried solid proofs of monotheism, who accepted annihilation for it? Do they not arouse a generosity of heart, compassion and sympathy?

Is it not preferable and perfect to take for the place of one's prostration, soil from that earth from whose surface gush out springs of blood, dyed in the color of love for God and His message, the color of pure devotion to Him?

It should be borne in mind that the use of the soil from the grave of Imām al-Husayn ('a) is not an imposed obligation and neither is it a religious or legal obligation, which the school of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) imposes. Neither has anyone of the adherents of this school ever differentiated between it and the soil of other places with respect to the permissibility of prostration on it. Instead, this practice is only a preference to prostrate on it in the light of the reason and logic given earlier.

Indeed, many of the adherents of this school carry with them in their travels things besides the clay from

Karbalā, clean, pure straw mats, provided they are certain of its purity.

In addition, the Imāms of the house of the Prophet (s), in many reliable texts, have declared great care and interest in this noble and virtuous soil with respect to the blessings in it, kissing it and the preference of prostrating on it.

Therefore, do not confine the value of the soil from the grave of Imām al-Husayn ('a) only to its comparative aspect vis-à-vis other soils, for it has taken on another character for a great cause in Islam, and a theological and pedagogical dimension, whose worth is drawn from the immortality of the revolution of Imām al-Husayn ('a).

Transliteration Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>	<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>
ء	'	أ	a
ب	B	ت	t
ث	Th	ج	j
ح	ḥ	خ	kh
د	D	ذ	dh
ر	R	ز	z
س	S	ش	sh
ص	ṣ	ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ	ظ	ẓ
ع	'	غ	gh
ف	F	ق	q
ك	K	ل	l
م	M	ن	n
ه	H	و	w
ي	Y	ة	ah
<u>Long Vowels</u>		<u>Short Vowels</u>	
آ	Ā	اَ	a
ای	Ī	اِ	i
او	Ū	اُ	u
Persian Letters			
<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>	<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>
پ	P	چ	ch
ز	Zh	گ	g