244009 - She is suffering from flatus incontinence and stopped praying for a while because of that; she is asking for a remedy

the question

I am suffering from flatus incontinence (continually passing wind), to the extent that there was a time when I did not pray because of that. How can I pray with this problem?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Many worshippers, both men and women, are confused and unable to tell the difference between waswaas (intrusive thoughts; whispers from the Shaytaan) and true incontinence. Based on our knowledge and experience, we can say that the vast majority of those who complain about incontinence are in fact affected by illusion and waswaas, and there is no problem in the urinary tract. In that case, what the individual must do is seek to deal with that by having firm resolve and seeking clear fatwas, so as to base his judgement on certainty. He should not pay any attention to illusions, even if there is some truth mixed with what he imagines, for he is pardoned for that, praise be to Allah, and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will not bring to account the one who is affected by waswaas for any shortcomings that occur when he is treating himself and dealing with his problem. This is an important matter which should be noted.

Secondly:

Many people misunderstand the nature of incontinence, and they think that if any najaasah is emitted or any wind is passed without them realizing, this means that they are excused because of incontinence. This is incorrect

The correct view is that if the worshipper thinks that there is a certain window of time, even if it is short, in which he thinks that he will be unlikely to emit urine or wind without being able to control it, then he must delay the prayer until that time, do wudoo' for it then offer the prayer in the proper manner. But for the one who thinks that some urine comes out of him two or three times a day without him being able to control it, or that wind comes out of him once or twice a day without him being able to control it, and that because of this he is excused and comes under the rulings on incontinence, this is a mistaken notion. The one who is excused is the one whose passing of wind or urine is ongoing, and he can hardly find sufficient time to pray without his wudoo' being invalidated and he has no control over that, or there is no window of time in which he hopes that it will stop so that he can pray.

Ibn Nujaym al-Hanafi said:

The ruling on those who are suffering from istihaadah (irregular, non-menstrual bleeding) and incontinence is that they remain subject to the rulings on those conditions if the time for prayer comes and the problem is still there, even if it is a few drops. End quote from *al-Bahr ar-Raa'iq* (1/228).

With regard to the Maalikis, they have some concessions in their madhhab. They said:

1.. If the person has no control over these things for half of the time [between two prayers] or more, then their wudoo' is not invalidated; rather it is only mustahabb for them [to do wudoo' when it stops].

2.. But if it does not continue for half the time [between two prayers], then their wudoo' does become invalid.

Shaykh ad-Dardeer said: A person's wudoo' must be renewed if his incontinence does not last for most of the time [between two prayers], and it is less than that. But if it lasts for half of the time – or most of it or all of it – then it is more appropriate to say that incontinence does not invalidate his wudoo'. End quote.

Ad-Dasooqi commented on that by saying: The author spoke about incontinence as a general concept, which includes urinary, fecal and flatus incontinence, as well as incontinence in terms of maniy (semen), madhiy (urethral discharge) and wadiy (thick white fluid which is passed after passing urine).

It should be noted that the way in which the author discussed incontinence is the Maghrebi way, which is well known in their madhhab. The Iraqi scholars of the same madhhab are of the view that incontinence does not invalidate wudoo' at all; all that can be said about the issue is that it is mustahabb to do wudoo' if the incontinence is not constant throughout the time [between two prayers], but if it is constant, then it is not mustahabb to do wudoo'. End quote from *Haashiyat ad-Dasooqi* (1/116-117).

Imam an-Nawawi said:

If her bleeding ceases after doing wudoo', and it does not usually stop and start, or it does stop and start and the time it stops is usually sufficient to do wudoo', then in that case she must do wudoo' and pray. See: *Mughni al-Muhtaaj* (1/283).

Ibn Qudaamah said:

If it usually stops for sufficient time for her to purify herself and pray, then she should not pray whilst she is bleeding, and she should wait until it stops, unless she fears that the time for the prayer will end, in which case she should do wudoo' and pray. End quote from *al-Mughni* (1/250).

Conclusion:

If the incontinence usually stops for long enough to do your prayer, then you must wait until it stops, then pray with complete purity.

But if your incontinence is constant, or there is no regular time when it stops – rather it is ongoing and could come at any time, and there is no known time when it may stop, then in that case you should wear some protection or pads if any najaasah is coming out of you, do wudoo' for each prayer, and pray as you are.

And Allah knows best.