

ISLAMIC FUNERAL

“None of you should die except that he has good thoughts towards Allāh, the Most High.”
(*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*)

“The eyes shed tears, the heart feels sad, but we do not say except that which pleases our Lord.”
(*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)

أحكام الجنائز

AN AUTHENTIC STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Including common mistakes
that must be avoided

DEATH IS INEVITABLE

One reality that each and every person must face is death. Allāh (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) has stated, “Every soul shall taste death” (Āl ‘Imrān, 3:185), and He said, “Verily, the death from which you flee will meet you” (al-Jumu‘ah, 62:8). When a person dies, he passes on to the life of the grave, and he remains there until he is resurrected on Judgement Day. The transition between this life and the next is a tremendous moment for everyone, and as such, our Lord has legislated the Islamic funeral. A Muslim is obligated to follow the Book of Allāh and the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) at this very important stage in the journey of a human being. Anyone who establishes the rites of a funeral in other than the Islamically legislated manner has opposed the guidance of the Qur’ān and the Prophetic Sunnah of Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Indeed, Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) has warned severely against opposing the Messenger Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions, “Whoever opposes the Messenger, after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows other than the path of the believers (i.e. the Companions), We will leave him in the path he has chosen and cast him into Hell, and what an evil destination” (al-Nisā’, 4:115). So be aware, my Muslim brothers and sisters, of speaking and acting without knowledge of the Prophetic texts and the understanding of his noble Disciples.

AT THE POINT OF DEATH

At the point of death, one should encourage the dying Muslim to have good thoughts and expectations of Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى). The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “None of you should die except that he has good thoughts towards Allāh, the Most High” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). The Muslim must be patient and seek the reward of Allāh. One should also prompt the dying person to utter as his final words, “There is nothing worthy of worship except Allāh,” as the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “Prompt your dying ones to say: ‘Lā ilāha illallāh’” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said, “Anyone who dies without associating anything in worship with Allāh enters Paradise” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). So a Muslim should die upon the pure and sincere worship of Allāh, not calling upon saints, angels, prophets, jinns or dead ancestors for aid, salvation or forgiveness. One should also present Islām to a dying non-Muslim, as this is a very noble act and is in accordance with Prophetic tradition. The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to invite non-Muslims to Islām whilst they were in good health, in sickness and upon their deathbeds, as he did with his own uncle, Abū Ṭālib, as this is the last opportunity to invite one to the worship of their Lord and Creator. Once a Muslim has died, his eyes should be closed and the entire body should be covered. It is obligatory to make haste in washing, shrouding and burying him, as the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated, “Hurry with performing the funeral” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). False practices at the point of death which have no proof from the Qur’ān and Prophetic Sunnah must be avoided, such as reciting Sūrah Yāsīn over the dying or dead person; turning his bed or his face towards the Qiblah; putting a copy of the Qur’ān over his head or chest; chanting remembrances of Allāh around him; and delaying the burial whilst people arrive to view the deceased.

GRIEVING AND MOURNING

Let the relatives and close ones who have been struck with the calamity of death be patient and beware of saying anything that will cause them to anger their Lord and lose reward. They should remember that Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) is just and does not oppress. Whatever He took belongs to Him and whatever He gives belongs to Him. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“Whoever strikes the cheeks, tears the clothes and calls out with the cries of the days of ignorance is not from us”** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). Wailing and screaming with grief and tearing clothes is completely forbidden and is a sign of one’s displeasure with the decree of Allāh. Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) took an oath from the believing women that they would not wail, and he said, **“The one whom the people wail over is punished”** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). There is no doubt that sadness and grief is something which Allāh places in the hearts of those close to the deceased, but one is not allowed to go outside the bounds of Islamic guidance in expressing that grief. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) shed tears at the death of his young beloved son, and he stated, **“Crying is a mercy! The eyes shed tears, the heart feels sad, but we do not say except that which pleases our Lord. We are indeed saddened by your departing, O Ibrāhīm”** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). Grief or sadness does not have a time limit, as one may feel sadness at a loss several weeks after it occurs. Mourning however, is something different. Mourning has been legislated for women for a specified period wherein they withhold from beautification, perfume and displaying outward joy. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“It is not allowed for a woman who believes in Allāh and the last day to mourn over a deceased person for more than three days, except for her husband for whom she mourns four months and ten days”** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). There is no mourning period for men.

CONDOLENCES

The condolence in Islām is an important way of expressing one’s support for his fellow Muslim and of comforting him and reminding him of his Lord and Creator. This can be done whenever the deceased’s family is seen and is not restricted to three days. However, the condolence itself must be in accordance to the Sunnah of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) so as not to displease our Lord and earn His anger. It is from the Prophetic Sunnah to say when one is afflicted by a calamity, **“Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn.”** Translation: **“Verily, we belong to Allāh and unto Him we are returning”** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). Or one may say, **“Innā lillāhi mā akhadhá, wa-lillāhi mā a‘ṭá, wa-kullu shay‘in ‘indahu li-ajalin musammá.”** Translation: **“To Allāh belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term”** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). As for the family of the deceased establishing a room or building to receive condolences for a number of days or to prepare food for visitors, then all of this is not permissible and is in fact in opposition to the religious guidance, and it increases the burden and stress upon the deceased’s family. In fact, the Sunnah is to provide food for the family of the deceased whilst they are occupied with the washing, shrouding and burial, as the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“Make food for the family of Ja‘far, because they have become**

busy [by his death]” (Abū Dāwūd). Many people designate a place to receive condolences and to make congregational supplications for the dead. This is an innovated practice that was forbidden at the time of the Companions of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), one of whom said, “We regarded gathering to visit the family of the deceased and making food after his burial, both as acts of wailing” (Musnad Aḥmad). Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) stated that the family of the deceased should not gather to receive condolences; rather, they should close their doors to prevent these gatherings. From the false practises and innovations that take place immediately after the death are: continuously reciting the Qur’ān; counting the remembrances of Allāh using beads, stones and seeds; announcing deaths by leaflet distributions; gathering in a place and reciting Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, known as a ma’tam; making congregational supplications with raised hands; wearing specific colours such as black as a sign of grief or mourning.

WASHING AND SHROUDING THE DECEASED

It is of great importance to make haste with the funeral and burial of the deceased. This begins with the washing. In general, men wash men and women wash women, except in the case of spouses, in which case a husband may wash his wife, and likewise, a wife may wash her deceased husband (Musnad Aḥmad). The body should be washed three times, or more if required, so long as it is an odd number using a crushed lotus leaf and water mixture or soap and water mixture; however, the final wash should be using a camphor and water mixture or perfume and water mixture. During the washing process, the private areas of the body, known as the ‘awrah, must remain covered with a sheet or towel, and this can be placed on the body and the clothes removed carefully underneath, using scissors if necessary. One begins by washing the private parts of the deceased using a sponge or cloth. Any hair is untied, then the body is turned on its left side. The head and the places of ablution (wuḍu’) are washed, except that the water is not entered into the nose and mouth; one simply moistens a cloth and cleans the nose and mouth. Then the arms and feet are washed. The whole of the right side is then washed. Then the body is turned on its right side and the same is done again. This whole process is repeated again, and in the final odd wash, camphor or perfume mixed with water is used. If the hair is long, comb it and plat into three braids, placing it behind the head. Towel dry the body and shroud with three large white sheets, each one large enough to wrap the entire body. Sinful innovations that people fall into at this stage include: making loud congregational dhikr; shaving armpits and pubic area; clipping nails; reciting Sūrah Yāsīn; writing on the shroud; using expensive and ostentatious shrouds; using additional cloth for the private parts; enclosing items and possessions within the shroud (see *Aḥkām al-Janā’iz of Shaykh al-Albānī* (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ)).

THE FUNERAL PRAYER (JANĀZAH)

Once the deceased has been washed and shrouded, he or she should be prayed over and buried as soon as possible. The deceased should not be taken to another place for viewing, as this opposes the command of the Messenger of Allāh, “Hurry with the burial” (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī). The janāzah can take place in the mosque or in a place designated outside the mosque. There is no bowing or prostrating in the janāzah prayer. It

is prohibited to pray or bury the deceased when the sun is rising till it has fully arisen, when it is at the highest point in the sky till it passes noon, and when the sun is setting until it has fully set (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). The prayer is conducted as follows: 1) The prayer is led by the imām reciting silently throughout - except for the takbīrs and the salām at the end - facing the Qiblah with the body of the deceased in front of him; he stands at the head of a male and at the middle of a female. 2) The people line up behind him in rows and follow him as in the regular prayer. 3) He begins by saying, “**Allāhu Akbar,**” raising the hands and then placing the right hand upon the left on the chest as in the regular prayers. 4) He then seeks refuge in Allāh with the words, “**A‘ūdhu billāhi min al-shayṭān al-rajīm [min hamzihi wa nafkhihi wa nathihi]**” followed by, “**Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm.**” 5) He recites the first chapter of the Qur‘ān, Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, followed by another short sūrah (if he wishes). 6) Then the imām makes takbīr for the second time, and the people send the peace and salutations upon the Prophets Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm just as one does at the end of the regular prayer. 7) The third takbīr is then made by the imām, and the people sincerely supplicate for the deceased. There are many supplications reported in authentic narrations, from them we have the authentic supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَغَائِبِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرْنَا وَأُنْثَانَا اللَّهُمَّ مِنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَيَّ الْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَيَّ الْإِيمَانَ اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تُضِلَّنَا بَعْدَهُ

Allāhumma aghfir liḥayyinā wa mayyitinā wa shāhidinā wa ghā'ibinā wa ṣaghīrinā wa kabīrinā wa dhakarīnā wa unthānā. Allāhumma man ahyaytahu minnā fa ahyihi ‘alā al-islām wa man tawaffaytahu minnā fatawaffahu ‘alā al-imān. Allāhumma lā taḥrimnā ajrahu wa lā tuḍillanā ba‘dahu” (Ibn Mājah).

8) The fourth and final takbīr is again followed by supplicating for the deceased. 9) The prayer is concluded with the taslīm, which is the pronunciation of, “**Al-salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāh**” as in the regular prayers. Women should not be prevented from the janāzah prayer. The sinful innovations of the janāzah prayer that people fall into at this stage include: chanting remembrances of Allāh in unison, loudly, as the body is brought into the mosque and after the prayer; taking the body to another location other than the graveyard for people to view the face of the deceased and thus delaying the burial; wailing, lamenting and screaming.

THE BURIAL

The Sunnah of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) was to bury the deceased in the graveyard in the land in which he died and not to transport the body to other lands. The grave should be amongst other Muslim graves; it should be dug deep and wide. It can be dug as a deep, rectangular hole with its long side facing Makkah, such that when the body is placed within it, it faces the Qiblah. At the bottom of this hole, another spacious cavity can be dug in the side closest to the Qiblah, within which the body is placed on its right side facing the Qiblah. Both types of graves were used in the time of Prophethood. The closest male relatives should lower the deceased into the grave from those who did not have recent sexual relations with their wives. The body should be entered lengthwise into the grave from the feet-side of the grave so the head enters the grave area first – and on the right side facing the Qiblah. As the dead person is placed in the grave, one should

say, “Bismillāh wa ‘alá millati rasūlillāh.” The body is then covered with soil. The Prophet (ﷺ) once buried a Muslim and put three handfuls of soil into the grave. The grave should be filled and mounded by approximately a handspan as was done with the grave of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. The Prophet (ﷺ) finished a burial and said to his Companions, “Ask forgiveness for your brother; ask for steadfastness for him for indeed he is now being questioned” (Abū Dāwūd). It is permissible to mark the head of the grave with a rock so that it is distinguished for family members who are to be buried in the same vicinity later (Abū Dāwūd). As for placing wreaths and flowers and the like upon the grave, then all of these are sinful acts that have no proof from the Book and Sunnah and was not practised by the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). One must remember that the Muslims have a distinct method of conducting funerals in accordance to the Prophetic Sunnah. Muslims are commanded not to follow and imitate non-Muslims in our rites and rituals. In this regard there are many authentic narrations from the Prophet (ﷺ), “Differ from the people of the Scripture...”; “Differ from the unbelievers...”; “Whoever imitates a people is from them” (reported by *al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Hibbān, Abū Dāwūd*). Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) forbade plastering graves, building structures over them, making them high and writing upon them (*Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah*). The Prophet commanded ‘Alī (رضي الله عنه) saying, “Do not leave a statue in a house except that you demolish it, and do not leave a grave except that you flatten it” (*Muslim*). As for common innovations that must be avoided: making dhikr whilst throwing soil into the grave; reciting Sūrah al-Fātiḥah at the graveside; gathering in a house after the burial to remember or supplicate for the deceased; lamenting and wailing at the graveside; hanging pictures at the grave; planting flowers upon the grave and organising “funeral” dinners, gatherings and anniversaries.

AFTER THE BURIAL

It is allowed to visit the graveyard so as to supplicate for the deceased Muslims. This practice is permissible so long as lamenting and wailing is avoided. Women, likewise, are permitted but they should not do so frequently as has been mentioned by the Prophet (ﷺ) in some narrations.

All the information contained in this leaflet is supported by evidences from the Qur’ān, the authentic Sunnah and the statements of the Companions, most of which can be found in the monumental work, *Aḥkām al-Janā’iz* by the great scholar of Ḥadīth, Imām al-Albānī (رحمة الله), and also in the fatāwá of Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn (رحمة الله) and Shaykh Ibn Bāz (رحمة الله).

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