

THE CORRECT MUSLIM FUNERAL & SINFUL PRACTICES TO BE AVOIDED

One reality that each and every person must face is death. Allaah has stated, **“Every soul shall taste death.”** (*Aal ‘Imraan* 3:185) and He said, **“Verily, the death from which you flee will meet you.”** (*Al-Jumu’ah* 62:8). Once each of us has died, he passes on to the life of the grave and he remains there until he or she is resurrected on Judgement Day. The transition between this life and the next is a tremendous moment for everyone, and as such our Lord, the Most Merciful, has legislated the Islamic funeral. The Muslim is obligated to follow the book of Allaah and the traditions of the Prophet, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, 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’aan and the Prophetic *Sunnah* of Allaah’s Messenger. Indeed Allaah has attached a severe warning to opposing the Messenger Muhammad, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, and likewise opposing the path of the Companions of the Messenger, **“Whoever opposes the Messenger, after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows other than the way of the believers (i.e. the Companions), we will leave him in the way he has chosen and cast him into Hell, and what an evil destination.”** (*An-Nisaa* 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 Allaah. The Prophet, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, said, **“None of you should die except that he has good thoughts towards Allaah, the Most High.”** (*Saheeh Muslim*). The Muslim must be patient and seek the reward of Allaah. One should also prompt the dying person to utter that ‘there is nothing worthy of worship except Allaah’, as the Messenger, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, said, **“Prompt your dying ones to say *laa ilaaha illallaah*.”** (*Saheeh Muslim*). The Messenger also said, **“Anyone who dies without associating anything in worship with Allaah enters Paradise.”** (*Saheeh Muslim*). So a Muslim should die upon the pure and sincere worship of Allaah, not calling upon saints, angels, prophets, jinn or dead ancestors for aid, salvation or forgiveness. One should also present Islaam to a dying non-Muslim, as this is a very noble act, and is in accordance with Prophetic tradition. The Messenger, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, used to invite non-Muslims to Islaam whilst they were in good health, in sickness and upon their deathbed as he did with his uncle Abu Taalib, 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 stated, **“Hurry with performing the funeral”** (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*). **False practices at the point of death which have no proof from the Qur’aan and Prophetic Sunnah must be avoided**, such as reciting *Soorah Yaaseen* over the dying or dead person; turning his bed or his face to the *Qiblah*; putting a copy of the Qur’aan over his head or chest; chanting remembrances of Allaah around him; delaying the burial whilst people gather 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 Allaah is just and does not oppress. Whatever He took belongs to Him and whatever He gave belongs to Him. The Prophet, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, said, **“Whoever strikes the cheeks, tears the clothes and calls out with the cries of the days of ignorance, is not from us.”** (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*) Wailing and screaming with sorrow and grief is completely forbidden and is a sign of one’s displeasure at the decree of Allaah. Indeed Allaah’s Messenger took an oath from the believing women that they would not wail (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*) and he said, **“The one whom the people wail over is punished”** (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*). No doubt sadness and grief is something which Allaah places in the hearts of those close to the deceased, but one is not allowed to go outside the bounds of Islamic guidance in grief and sadness. The Prophet shed tears at the death of his young beloved son and he stated, **“It (the weeping) 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 Ibraaheem.”** (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*). Grief or sadness does not have a time limit, as one may feel sadness at a loss several weeks after a death. Mourning however is something different. Mourning has been legislated for women for a specified period and they withhold from beautification, perfume and displaying outward joy. The Prophet, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, said, **“It is not allowed for a woman who believes in Allaah 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.”** (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*). There is no mourning period for men.

Condolences

The condolence in Islaam is an important way of expressing one’s support for his fellow Muslim and 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 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, **“Innaa lillaahi wa innaa ilaihi raaji’oon (Verily, we belong to Allaah and unto Him we are returning)”** (*Saheeh Muslim*), or one may say, **“Inna lillaahi maa akhadhaa, wa lillaahi maa a’taa, wa kullu shay’in indahu li ajalil musammaa.”** (**To Allaah belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term.**) (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*). 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 the visitors, then all of this is not permissible and is in fact in opposition to the religious guidance and 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, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, said, **“Make food for the family of Ja’far, because they have become busy (by his death).”** (*Abu Dawood*). Many people designate a place to receive condolences and to make con-

AFTER DEATH GRIEVING AND MOURNING

gregational supplications for the dead. This is an innovated and deviated practice that was forbidden at the time of the Companions of the Prophet, may the salutations and peace of Allaah be upon him, 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 Ahmad*). Shaikh Ibn Uthaimin has 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’aan; counting the remembrances of Allaah using beads, stones and seeds; announcing deaths by leaflet distributions; gathering in a place and reciting *Soorah al-Faatihah* 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 Ahmad*). The body should be washed three times, or more

WASHING & SHROUDING THE DECEASED

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 or *wud-hoo* 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 whole body. **Sinful innovations that people fall into at this stage include:** pushing cotton wool into the mouth, nose and anus; making loud congregational *dhikr*; shaving armpits and pubic area; clipping nails; reciting *Soorah Yaa-seen*; writing on the shroud; using expensive and ostentatious shrouds; using additional cloth for the private parts; enclosing anything else within the shroud. (See *Ahkaam al-Janaa’iz* of Shaikh Al-Albaanee).

The Funeral Prayer (*Janaazah*)

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 Allaah, **“Hurry with the burial.”** (*Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*). The *janaazah* can take place in the mosque or in a place designated out-

side the mosque called a *musalla*. There is no bowing or prostrating in the *janaazah* prayer. It is prohibited to pray or bury when the sun is rising till it has fully arisen, when it's at the highest point in the sky till it passes noon, and when the sun is setting till it has fully set (*Saheeh Muslim*). The prayer is conducted as follows, **1.** The prayer is led by the Imaam reciting silently throughout except for the *takbeers* and the *salaam* 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 woman. **2.** The people line up behind him in rows and follow him as in the regular prayer; **3.** He begins by saying, "**Allaahu 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 Allaah by stating, "**A'oodhu billaahi minash-shaytaanir-rajeem min hamzihi wa nafkhihi wa nafthihi,**" followed by, "**Bismillaahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem**". **5.** He recites the first chapter of the Qur'aan, *Soorah al-Faatihah* followed by another short *Soorah*. **6.** Then the Imaam makes *takbeer* for the second time and the people send the peace and salutations upon the Prophets Muhammad and Ibraaheem as one does at the end of the regular prayer whilst seated. **7.** The third *takbeer* is then made by the Imaam and the people sincerely supplicate for the deceased. There are many supplications reported in authentic narrations, from them we have the authentic supplication:

«اللَّهُمَّ عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ أُمَّتِكَ أَحْتَاَجُ إِلَى رَحْمَتِكَ، وَأَنْتَ غَيْرِي عَنْ عَذَابِهِ، إِنْ كَانَ مُخْسِنًا فَرِّدْ فِي حَسَنَاتِهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ مُسِيئًا فَتَجَاوَزْ عَنْهُ»

'Allaahumma `abduka wabnu amatika ihtaaja ilaa rahmatika, wa anta ghaniyyun `an adhaabihi, inkaana muhsinan fazid fee hasanaatihi, wa inkaana musee'an fatajaawaz `anhu.' **8.** The fourth and final *takbeer* is again followed by supplicating for the deceased. **9.** The prayer is concluded with the *tasleem* which is the pronunciation of "**As-salaamu alaikum wa rahmatullaah**" as in the regular prayers. **From the forbidden and sinful innovations of the *janaazah* prayer that people fall into at this stage include:** Chanting remembrances of Allaah 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 delay the burial; wailing, lamenting and screaming; preventing women from praying the *janaazah* prayer.

The Burial

The *Sunnah* of the Prophet and his Companions was to bury the deceased in the graveyard in the land in which he dies 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 grave 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, "**Bismillaah, wa `alaa millati rasoolillaah.**" The body is then covered with soil; the Prophet 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 himself. The Prophet 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**" (*Abu Dawood*). 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 (*Abu Dawood*). 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. 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 (*sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*), "**Differ from the people of the Scripture...**", "**Differ from the unbelievers...**", "**Whoever imitates a people is from them.**" (Reported by *At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Hibbaan, Abu Dawood* and others). Allaah's Messenger forbade plastering graves, building structures over them, making them high and writing upon them. (*Muslim, Abu Dawood, Ibn Maajah*). The Prophet commanded `Ali 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, then from them are:** Making *zikh* whilst throwing soil into the grave, reciting *Soorah al-Faatihah* at the grave side; 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.

After The Burial

It is allowed to visit the graveyards 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 in some narrations.

All the information contained in this leaflet is supported by evidences from the Qur'aan, the authentic *Sunnah* and the statements of the Companions, most of which can be found in the monumental work, *Ahkaamul-Janaa'iz* by the scholar of *hadeeth* Al-Albaanee, and also in the *fatawa* of Shaikhs Ibn Uthaimen and Ibn Baaz.

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THE ISLAMIC FUNERAL

أحكام الجنائز

AN AUTHENTIC STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Including common mistakes that must be avoided

"None of you should die except that he has goods thoughts towards Allaah, the Most High." (Saheeh Muslim)

"The eyes shed tears, the heart feels sad, but we do not say except that which pleases our Lord." (Saheeh al-Bukhaaree)