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, “When one of you is on the point of death, tell him, ‘Verily, we belong to Allaah and unto Him we are returning’.” (Sahheeh al-Bukhaaree)

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, (Sahheeh Muslim).’”

The Messenger also said, “Anyone who dies without associating anything in worship with Allaah enters Paradise.” (Sahheeh 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, said, “The person who dies without associating anything in worship with Allaah enters Paradise.” (Sahheeh al-Bukhaaree).

Condolences

The condolence in Islam 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 the Lord and His Prophet. It is from the Prophetic tradition that we are told that when one is afflicted by a calamity, “Innaa lillaahi wa inna ilaihi raaj’oon (Verily, we belong to Allaah and unto Him we are returning)” (Sahheeh Muslim). One may also say, “Inna lillahi maan akhadhawo, waa lillaahi maan ‘a’taaw, waa kulluu shay’in indahoo li ajaalin musammaana” (To Allaah belong what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term).” (Sahheeh 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, this then 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-

gregational supplications for the dead. This is an innovated and deviated practice that was forbidden by the Messenger 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 wall-

ging.” (Masud Ahmad). Shaikh Ibn Uthaimine 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 of a deceased the following are mentioned: Many people designate a place to receive condolences and to make 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-

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.” (Sahheeh al-Bukhaaree) Wailing and screaming with sorrow and grief is completely forbidden and is a sign of one’s disrespect at the decree of Allaah. Indeed Allaah’s Messenger took an oath from the believing women that they would not wail (Sahheeh al-Bukhaaree) and he said, “The one whom the people wail over is punished” (Sahheeh al-Bukhaaree). No sad feeling and grief is something which Allaah does not like, and it is unseemly in the heart of one who is closer to the Islamic legislation, but it 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.” (Sahheeh 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 specific period and they withdraw 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 in 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.” (Sahheeh al-Bukhaaree). There is no mourning period for men.

Washing

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 hus-

band may wash his wife and likewise a wife may wash her deceased hus-

band (Masud Ahmad). The body should be washed three times, or more if required, so long as it is an odd num-

ber using a crushed lotus leaf and water mixture or soap and water mixture; however the body should not be washed by a camp or 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, the body is turned on its left side; the head and the places of ablution or wud-

ho 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. Thenthe arms and feet are washed. The whole of the 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.” (Sahheeh 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 Sooroh Hosen over the dying persons. dead persons, and the recitation of the Qiblah alphabet 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.
side the mosque called a musolla. There is no bowing or prostrating in the janazah 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, the Imaam is reciting silently throughout except for the takbeers and the salam at the end, facing the Qiblah with the body of the deceased in front of him; he stands at the head of the grave, then all of the people. The people line up behind him in rows and follow him in the regular prayers. He then begins by saying, “Allahu akbar” raising the hands and then placing the right hand upon the left on the chest as in the regular prayers. He then seeks refuge in Allah by stating, “A’oodh billaahi minash-shaytaanir-rajeem min ham zihi wa nafkhihi wa nafthihi,” followed by, “Bismillahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem”. He recites the first chapter of the Qur’an, Soorah al-Faatihah, followed by another short Soorah. Then the Imaam makes takbeers 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. 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:

Allahumma abduka wabnu amatika ihtaaja ilaa rahmatika, wa anta ghaniyyun ‘an adhaabihi, inkaana muhsinan fazid fee hasanaatihi, wa inkaanamusee’an fatajaawaz `anhu.’

From the forbidden and sinful innovations of the janazah prayer that people fall into at this stage include: Chanting remembrances of Allah 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 whilst seated. 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. Making the grave a deep rectangular hole with its long side facing Makkah, such that when the body is placed within it, it faces the Qiblah. From the Prophets Muhammad 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 filled and mounded by approximately a handspan as was done with the grave of the Prophet himself. The Prophets 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). For as placing wreaths and flowers and other ornaments on 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 ‘alaihi wa sallam), “Differ from the people of the Scriptures...” “Differ from the unbelievers...” (Reported by At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Hibbaan, Abu Dawood and others). Allah’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 jgho where 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.

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