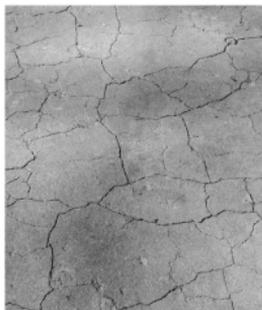


A SIMPLE GUIDE TO  
**FUNERAL RITES**

IN ISLAM FROM THE POINT OF DEATH TO THE BURIAL



ABU KHADEEJAH ABDUL-WAHID ALAM  
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472 Coventry Road, Birmingham, UK, B10 0UG

t. 0121.773.0003 t. 0121.773.0033 E:

info@salafibookstore.com

Websites:

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@salafibookstore

@salafimasjidcom

Author:

abukhadeejah.com

facebook.com/abukhadeejahSP

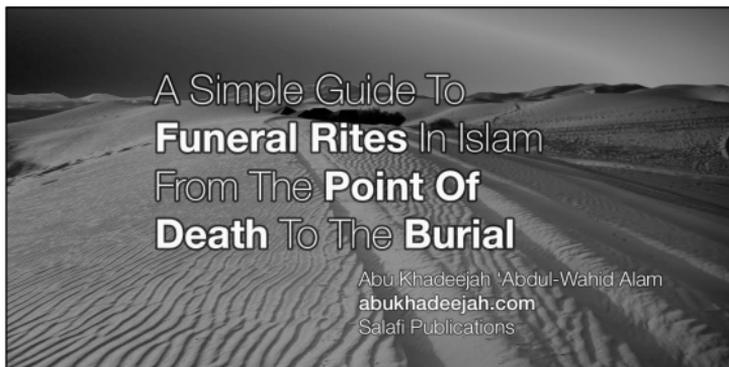
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# A Simple Guide To **Funeral Rites** In Islam From The **Point of Death** To **The Burial**

By Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid Alam



All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all creation. May Allah extol the Messenger in the highest company of Angels and grant him peace; and likewise, his family, his Companions and all those who truly follow him until the Day of Resurrection.

## Death Is Inevitable

One reality that each and every person must face is death. Allāh (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) has stated:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ  
الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا  
الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

“Every soul shall taste death. And only on the Day of Resurrection shall you be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a deceiving thing).”<sup>1</sup> And He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said:

قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ  
إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“Say to them: Verily, the death from which you flee will surely meet you, then you will be sent

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<sup>1</sup> Āli ‘Imrān 3:185.

**back to Allah, the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will tell you what you used to do.”<sup>2</sup>**

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 (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) has legislated the Islamic funeral.

A Muslim is obligated to follow the Book of Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) at this very important stage in the journey of a human being.

Anyone who establishes the rites of the funeral in other than the Islamically legislated manner has opposed the guidance of Islam. Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) has warned severely from opposing the methodology and practices of the

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<sup>2</sup> Surah Al-Jumu'ah 62:8.

Messenger Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ  
غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ  
مَصِيرًا

**“Whoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance has become clear to him, and he 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.”**<sup>3</sup> So be aware, O Muslims, of speaking and acting without knowledge. The janāzah of a Muslim must be carried out in accordance to the Sunnah of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and not based on culture, following of forefathers or imitating the non-Muslims.

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<sup>3</sup> Surah An-Nisā 4:115.

## 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.”**<sup>4</sup>



A Muslim should be patient and seek Allāh’s reward right up until the end of his life. One should prompt the dying person to utter as his final words, **‘there is none worthy of worship**

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<sup>4</sup> Sahīh Muslim.

except Allāh'. The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **"Prompt your dying ones to say: لا إله إلا الله lā ilāha illallāh."** <sup>5</sup> This is not to be done continually, rather you should prompt them such that they are the last words uttered.

The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said, **"Anyone who dies without associating anything in worship with Allāh enters Paradise."**<sup>6</sup>

So, a Muslim must die upon the pure and sincere worship of Allāh (Tawhīd). He must not call upon the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) or those in the graves for help, salvation and forgiveness. As Muslims, we worship and call upon only Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) and we do not seek intercession through the righteous in the graves or the Jinn or the Angels.

Islam should be presented to a dying non-Muslim such as a Jew, Christian, Hindu, etc. This is a praiseworthy invitation to salvation and

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<sup>5</sup> Sahīh Muslim.

<sup>6</sup> Sahīh Muslim.

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, Abu Tālib, because this is the last opportunity to invite them to the worship of their Lord and Creator, Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى).

Once a Muslim dies his eyes should be closed<sup>7</sup> and the entire body should be covered.<sup>8</sup> It is obligatory to make haste in washing, shrouding and the burial as the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated, **“Hurry with performing the funeral.”**<sup>9</sup>

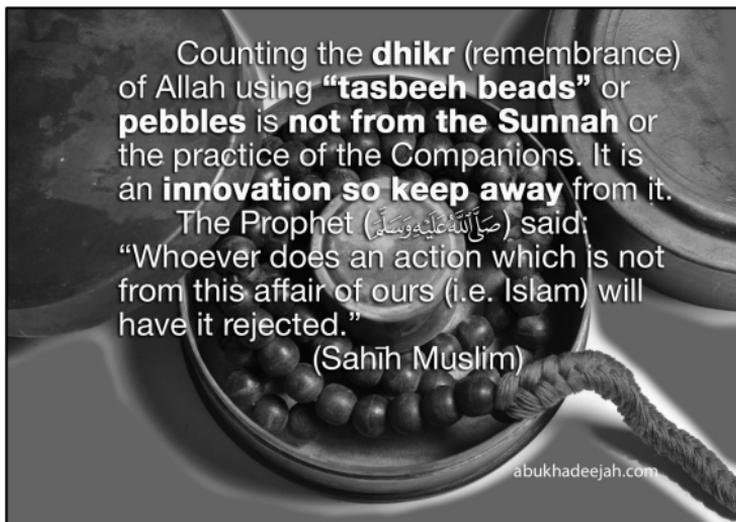
**Forbidden practices** at the point of death which have no proof from the Qur’ān and Sunnah must be avoided, such as:

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<sup>7</sup> Muslim, Ahmad (6/297), Al-Bayhaqi (3/334), see Ahkām Al-Janā’iz of Al-Albāni, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Bukhāri and Muslim.

<sup>9</sup> Sahīh Al-Bukhārī.



1. Reciting Sūrah Yāsīn over the dying or dead person as this practice is based on a weak hadīth.
2. Turning the bed or body towards the Qiblah.
3. Putting a copy of the Qur’ān on the chest.
4. Chanting remembrances of Allāh in the presence of the deceased.
5. Delaying the burial whilst people arrive to view the deceased.
6. Video and photography.

It is also not correct to transport the deceased to other countries as this delays the burial and opposes the practice of the Sahabah and Salaf (رضي الله عنهم).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The word Salaf refers to Pious Predecessors – they are the early generations of Muslims, and specifically the scholars of Sunnah, Fiqh and Hadīth.

## Grieving And Mourning

The relatives and close ones who have been struck with the calamity of death must be patient with their loss 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 He does not oppress anyone, ever. Whatever He, the Most High, took belongs to Him and whatever He gives belongs to Him.

It is permitted for the close female relatives<sup>11</sup> to kiss the deceased, or for a man to kiss the head of his close companion just as Abu Bakr (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) kissed the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) after his death.

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“Whoever strikes the cheeks, tears the clothes and calls out with the cries of the days of ignorance is not from**

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<sup>11</sup> Such as his daughter, sister, mother, wife, grandmother, etc. This does not extend to non-mahrams.

us.”<sup>12</sup>

Wailing, raising voices with grief and tearing clothes is completely forbidden and is a sign of one’s displeasure at the decree of Allāh. Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) took an oath from the believing women that they would not wail over the dead and he said, **“The one whom the people wail over is punished.”**<sup>13</sup> This is a serious point to note. There is no doubt that sadness and grief is something which Allāh places in the hearts of those close to the deceased because of their love, 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 son and he said, **“Crying is a mercy! The eyes shed tears, the heart feels sad, but we do not say except that which pleases**

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<sup>12</sup> Sahīh Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>13</sup> Sahīh Al-Bukhārī. Meaning, if he did not take measures to prevent wailing while he was alive.

**our Lord. We are indeed saddened by your departing, O Ibrāhīm.”**<sup>14</sup> Grief or sadness does not have a time limit, as one may feel sadness for several weeks after a death. But a Muslim does not enter into a state of constant depression over a death because that implies a deficiency in īmān and dissatisfaction in the Pre-Decree. 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.”**<sup>15</sup> There is no mourning period for men.

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<sup>14</sup> Sahīh Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>15</sup> Sahīh Al-Bukhārī.

During this time the wife (widow) confines herself to her husband's home and does not leave except for a need. Her sons and close family should always be at hand to serve her needs such as food, provision and clothing. The widow has a right over her family and relatives that they care for her during her waiting period (*'iddah*) so she is not compelled to leave her home.

## Condolences

The condolence in Islam is an important way of expressing one's support for his fellow Muslim, comforting him and reminding him of Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى). 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 Allāh and earn His anger. It is from the Prophetic Sunnah to say when one is afflicted by a calamity:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

**"Innā lillāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn."**<sup>16</sup>

Muslims know that everything has an appointed term with Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى), and therefore one says,

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<sup>16</sup> Translation: **"Verily, we belong to Allāh and unto Him we are returning."** (Reported by Muslim).

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ، وَلَهُ مَا أَعْطَى، وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى

**“Innā lillāhi mā akhadha, wa lahu mā a’tā, wa kullu shay’in indahu bi ajalīn musammā.”<sup>17</sup>**

Gentle comforting words of condolence are important when people lose a loved-one, such as saying:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ، وَلَهُ مَا أَعْطَى، وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَلْتَصْبِرْ وَلْتَحْتَسِبْ

**“Innā lillāhi mā akhadha, wa lahu mā a’tā, wa kullu shay’in indahu bi ajalīn musammā fal-tasbir wal-tahtasib.”<sup>18</sup>**

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<sup>17</sup> Translation: **“To Allāh belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term.”** (Reported by Al-Bukhārī).

<sup>18</sup> Translation: **“To Allāh belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term. So be patient and**

Some of the early scholars recommended the following additional words of condolence:

أَعْظَمَ اللَّهُ أَجْرَكَ، وَأَحْسَنَ عَزَاءَكَ، وَغَفَرَ لِمَيِّتِكَ

**“A’dhamallāhu ajrak, wa ahsana ‘azā-ak wa ghafara limayyitik.”** <sup>19</sup> These words of condolence can be said in one’s own language other than Arabic because the purpose is to bring comfort.

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**anticipate His reward.”** (Reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

<sup>19</sup> Translation: **“May Allah magnify your reward, and make perfect your bereavement, and forgive your deceased.”** (An-Nawawī in *Kitāb Al-Adhkār*).

## A Place To Receive Guests For Condolences

It is not permissible for the family of the deceased to establish a room or a building to receive condolences for a number of days or to prepare food for visitors — all of this is in opposition to the religious guidance and increases the burden and stress upon the deceased's family.

The Sunnah is to provide food for the family of the deceased whilst they are occupied with the washing, shrouding and the burial. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **"Make food for the family of Ja'far because they have become occupied [with his death]."**<sup>20</sup>

Many families designate a place to receive condolences, to make congregational supplications for the deceased — they all raise their hands at the same time with one person

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<sup>20</sup> Abu Dāwūd.

reciting and the others listening. This is an innovated practice, never done by the Companions of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Jarīr Ibn Abdillāh Al-Bajali (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said, **“We would consider gathering to visit the house of the deceased and making food after their burial to be from wailing over them.”**<sup>21</sup> Meaning, it is the same as wailing and therefore prohibited.

Imām Ash-Shāfi‘ī (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said, **“I hold that gathering to mourn and lament (*ma’tam*) for the deceased and to be forbidden even if they do not cry — for it is a revival of grief, and is a burden on provisions alongside conflicting with what has been stated in the narration.”**<sup>22</sup>

Ibn Al-Humām (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) likewise declared the practice of hosting people after a burial at the home of the deceased and making food to be something hated and he said, **“It is an ugly**

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<sup>21</sup> Collected in Al-Musnad of Ahmad (6905), Ibn Mājah (1/490). Also reported as a saying of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ). See Ahkām al-Janā‘iz p. 210.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Umm (1/248).

## innovation (bid'ah)."<sup>23</sup>

From the deplorable innovations is to remove furniture from the home of the family of the deceased in order to make space for the people to gather for mourning and receive condolences — and then to remain in that state for three, or seven days and then to bring back the furniture.<sup>24</sup>

The great Scholar, Shaikh Muhammad Ibn Sālih Al-'Uthaimīn (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated, "As for gathering the people together upon the death of a relative — and some may even light candles — and get chairs ready, and then reciters appear and so on, then this is not permitted. The Muslims used not to do this until only recently.

Instead when a person died and people had finished from the burial and they would see the one who was affected by the bereavement,

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<sup>23</sup> *Sharhul-Hidāyah* (2/565).

<sup>24</sup> See also *Al-Madkhal* (3/279-280) and *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albānī (pp. 210, 211, 320).

they would console them and then return back to their families. And if one was to meet a person for example in the marketplace, or at the Mosque, they would offer condolences. But as for gatherings for that purpose, then no doubt, it is an innovation (*bid'ah*), an affair that is forbidden. And this is especially so when it is accompanied by lamenting and wailing wherein women gather together and say, 'By Allah, he was like this and like that, he was the father of these children. He was the head of this household, for who now is this family, and for who is this house?' and so on. This is forbidden lamenting. It is for the students of knowledge to make the people aware before the floodgates are breached!"<sup>25</sup>

**Forbidden practices** and innovations that take place immediately after the death are:

1. Continuously reciting the Qur'ān over the

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<sup>25</sup> *Fatāwā fī Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* (pp. 278-279).

deceased.

2. Counting the remembrances of Allāh (*dhikr*) using beads, stones, etc.

3. Announcing deaths using town-criers or from the minarets.

4. Gathering in a place and reciting *Sūrah Al-Fātihah* known as a *ma'tam*.

5. Making congregational supplications with raised hands.

6. Wearing specific colours such as black as a sign of grief or mourning.

## Washing The Deceased



It is important to make haste with the funeral and burial of the deceased.<sup>26</sup> 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

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Bukhāri, Muslim and the four books of the Sunan.

deceased husband.<sup>27</sup> A father may wash his daughter, and a mother may wash her son so long as the child is under the age of seven. That is because the *'awrah* (private region) under the age of seven is not counted.<sup>28</sup>

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 a soap and water mixture). The final wash should be using a camphor and water mixture (or a perfume and water mixture).<sup>29</sup> During the washing process, the private areas of the body known as the *'awrah*<sup>30</sup> must remain covered

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<sup>27</sup> As is reported in the *Musnad* of Imām Ahmad (6/228), Ad-Dārimi (1/37-38), Ibn Mājah (1/447), Abu Dāwūd (2/60) and others.

<sup>28</sup> *Fatāwa fi Ahkām al-Janā'iz* of Ibn 'Uthaimīn (p. 86).

<sup>29</sup> Al-Bukhāri, Muslim, Ibn Mājah and others. See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albāni (pp. 64-65).

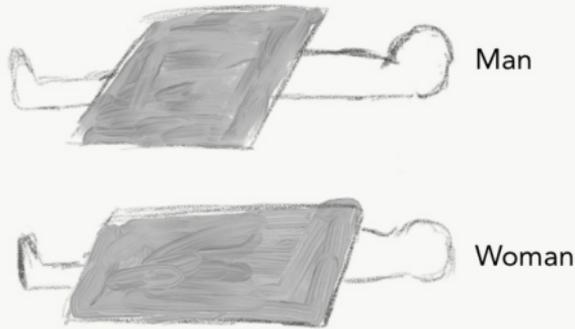
<sup>30</sup> The *'awrah* of the man extends from the naval to the knees. See *Fatāwa fi Ahkām al-Janā'iz* of Ibn 'Uthaimīn (p. 87). As for the woman, then one should

with a sheet or towel, and this can be placed on the body and the clothes removed carefully underneath, using scissors if necessary. One should carefully raise the head and shoulders of the deceased, and gently press the stomach to expel any remains that are still present in the bowels. This should not be done to a woman who was pregnant and is still carrying a foetus.



keep her covered from the chest to her shins.

The 'awrah of the male and female must be kept concealed during washing and shrouding.



One begins by washing the private parts of the deceased using a soapy sponge or cloth and wearing gloves by reaching underneath the covering sheets.

Any tied hair is untied, then *wudū* (ablution) is performed on the deceased:

1. Say *bismillāh* (in the name of Allāh).
2. Wash the mouth and nose without pouring water directly into them. One may moisten a

cloth and clean the nose and mouth, including the teeth.<sup>31</sup>

3. Wash the whole face.

4. Wash the hands up to and including the elbows beginning with the right arm, then the left.

5. Wipe the head and ears.

6. Wash the right foot up to the ankles, then the left.

The *wudū* is now complete. Now the *ghusl* (bath) of the deceased is performed as follows:

1. Wash the head three times with water and soap.

2. Then wash the rest of the body beginning with the right side, then moving to the left. This can be done by laying the body on its left side

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<sup>31</sup> If the deceased has gold teeth, they may be removed as long as that does not entail mutilation. *Fatāwa fi Ahkāmīl-Janā'iz* of Ibn 'Uthaimīn (p. 86, 88).

to wash the exposed right side; and then laying it on its right side to wash the exposed left side.

3. This is done three times. However, the washing (*ghusl*) can be increased to five or seven if needed, finishing with an odd number.

4. In the final wash (i.e. the third, fifth, etc), use camphor (or perfume) mixed with water to leave a pleasant fragrance.

5. Towel dry the body.

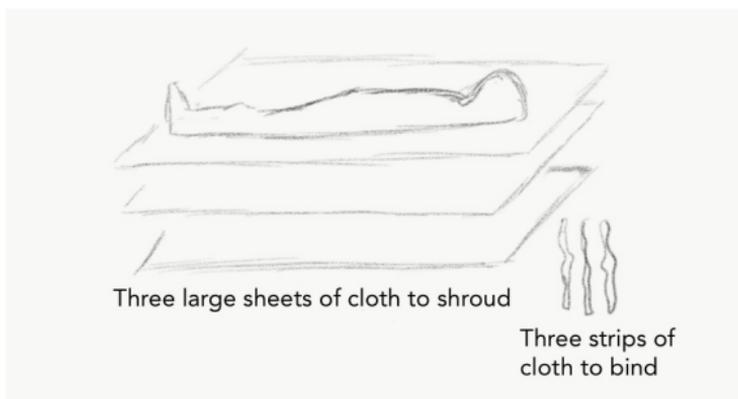
6. If the hair is long, comb it and plait into three braids placing it behind the head.<sup>32</sup>

Remember to keep the *'awrah* covered throughout.

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<sup>32</sup> Al-Bukhāri, Muslim, Abu Dāwūd, An-Nasā'i and others. See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albāni (p. 65)

## Shrouding The Deceased



Now shroud the deceased with three large white sheets, each one large enough to wrap the entire body.<sup>33</sup> Each sheet is wrapped separately over the entire body, including the face and head.<sup>34</sup> Use a strip of cloth to tie the

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<sup>33</sup> Reported by Ahmad (3/331), Ibn Abī Shaybah (4/92), Ibn Hibbān, Al-Hākim (1/355) and others. To exceed upon this number is to be extravagant and excessive because it opposes what the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) himself was buried in. See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albāni (p. 84).

<sup>34</sup> See Al-Bukhāri (3/110) and Muslim (3/48)

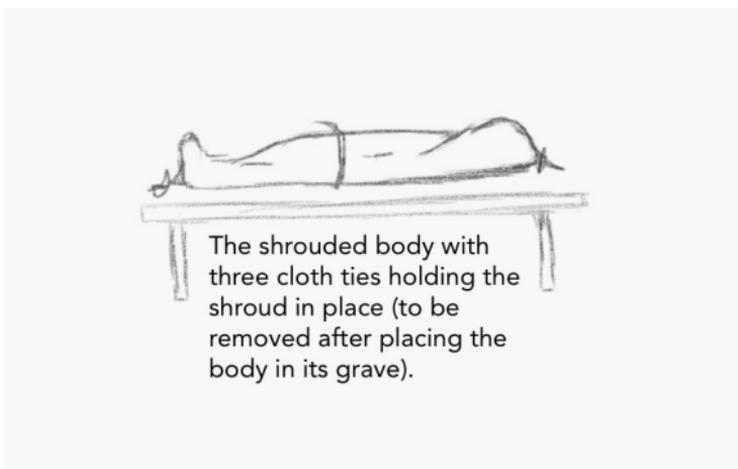
shrouds over the head, below the feet and around the mid-section of the deceased. This is done to keep the shroud secure whilst carrying and burying the deceased. Once the body is placed in the grave, these ties can be undone and removed. If the law of the land demands that the burial is to take place in a coffin, then the cloth ties are not needed unless one fears that the shroud may fall off. The shrouding cloth should be perfumed with *bukhūr* (aloes wood) incense or another perfume before dressing the deceased with it.<sup>35</sup> It is also reported from some of the Sahābah that the

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concerning the shrouding of Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr (رضي الله عنه). The exception to this is the male who dies in a state of *ihrām* of Hajj or 'Umrah whose head is left uncovered — he is not perfumed and is buried in his two *ihrām* cloths as reported in a *hadīth* collected by Bukhāri and Muslim.

<sup>35</sup> *Fatāwa fi Ahkāmīl-Janā'iz* of Ibn 'Uthaimīn (p. 95).

whole body would be perfumed.<sup>36</sup>



The number of shrouds for a woman are the same as for a man because the narrations apply to both sexes equally. Some of the scholars stated that the woman should be dressed in a scarf, a shirt, and lower waist sheet (*izār*), then wrapped in two large white sheets that cover her entire body, then tied with cloth ties.

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<sup>36</sup> See Al-Musannaf of Abdur-Razzāq As-San'āni (3/414) as cited by Ibn 'Uthaimīn in *Fatāwa fi Ahkām al-Janā'iz* (p. 97).

However, the narrations that state that a woman is shrouded with five or seven cloths are weak and not established authentically in the Sunnah, and Allah knows best.<sup>37</sup> Therefore the shrouding cloth for women is the same as men.

**Forbidden practises** and innovations that people fall into at this stage include:

1. Making loud congregational *dhikr*!
2. Reciting Quranic verses over the deceased.
3. Writing on the shrouding cloth.
4. Using expensive and ostentatious shrouds.
5. Wrapping the private parts with additional cloth.
6. Enclosing personal possessions within the

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<sup>37</sup> See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* (p. 85) and *Ad-Da'īfah* of Al-Albāni (no. 5844).

shroud.<sup>38</sup>

## 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.

Following the deceased from the place of washing and shrouding to the place of prayer is for the men — and it is prohibited for the women.<sup>39</sup> However, women are permitted pray the *janāzah* prayer, and they are rewarded just as the men are rewarded. The women supplicate and pray for the deceased just as the men do.<sup>40</sup> However, they should not go into the graveyard to bury the deceased.

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<sup>38</sup> See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albānī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ).

<sup>39</sup> Umm 'Atiyah (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا) said, **"Allāh's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) prevented us from following the funeral, but he was not strict with us."** Reported by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim.

<sup>40</sup> *Fatāwa fi Ahkām al-Janā'iz* of Ibn 'Uthaimīn (p. 114).

The deceased must not be taken to another place for viewing as it was not the practice of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) or his Companions (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) — and it opposes the command of the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), **“Hurry with the burial.”**<sup>41</sup>

The *janāzah* can be performed in the mosque or in a place designated outside the mosque — the latter is preferable.<sup>42</sup>

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated, **“There is no Muslim who dies, and then forty men who do not associate partners in worship with Allah stand to pray his *janāzah* except that Allāh will accept their supplications for him.”**<sup>43</sup> The Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also stated, **“Whoever is present for the *janāzah* until the deceased is prayed over, receives the reward of a *qirāt*. And the one who is present for the *janāzah***

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<sup>41</sup> Sahīh Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>42</sup> See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albānī (p. 135).

<sup>43</sup> Muslim (no. 948).

**until the deceased is buried, receives the reward of two *qirāt*.”** He was asked, **“What are two *qirāts*?”** He replied, **“The like of two huge mountains.”**<sup>44</sup>

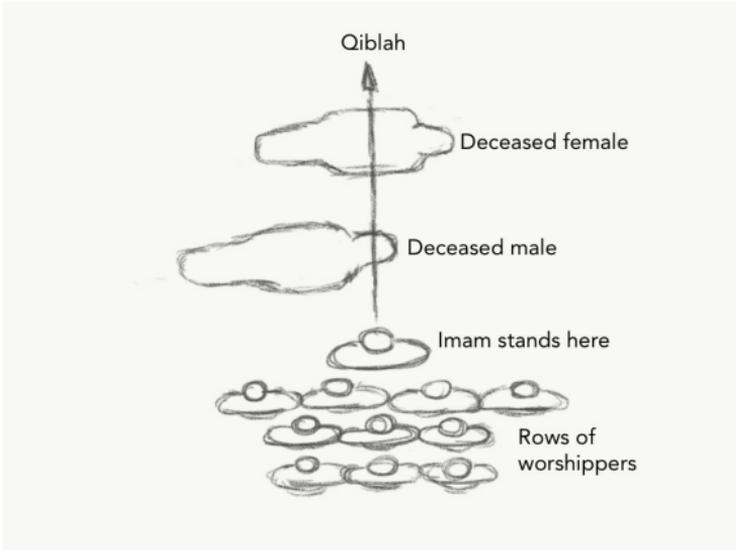
There is no bowing or prostrating in the *janāzah* prayer. It is prohibited to pray or bury the deceased when the sun is rising till it has fully arisen, when it is at the highest point in the sky till it passes midday, and when the sun is setting until it has fully set.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Al-Bukhāri (1325) and Muslim (945).

<sup>45</sup> Sahīh Muslim (2/208), Abu Dāwūd (2/66) and others.

# How The Janāzah Is Performed



1. The prayer is led by the *imām* if it is performed in a Masjid, reciting silently throughout except for the *tabbīrs*<sup>46</sup> and the *taslīm*<sup>47</sup> at the end. The *imām* faces the Qiblah with the body of the deceased in front of him. He stands at the head of a male<sup>48</sup> and at the

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<sup>46</sup> i.e. Allāhu akbar.

<sup>47</sup> i.e. As-salāmu 'alaykum wa rahmatullāh.

<sup>48</sup> Abu Dāwūd (2/66-67), At-Tirmidhi (2/146).

middle of a female,<sup>49</sup> regardless of age. It does not matter whether the head or body of the deceased is on the right side of the imam or on his left.<sup>50</sup>

2. The people line up behind him in rows and follow him as in the regular prayers. It is recommended that the Muslims are arranged into three rows (at least) for the prayer. Abu Umāmah (رضي الله عنه) stated, **“The Messenger prayed a *janāzah* and with him were only seven people. So he placed three in one row, two in another row and two in another row.”**<sup>51</sup> And he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) stated, **“There is not a Muslim who dies and three rows of Muslims pray his *janāzah* except that Allāh will forgive**

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<sup>49</sup> Al-Bukhāri and Muslim.

<sup>50</sup> See *Fatāwa fi Ahkām al-Janā'iz* of Ibn 'Uthaimīn (pp. 101-102).

<sup>51</sup> Reported by At-Tabarāni in *Al-Kabīr* (7785). Al-Albāni declared it to be authentic due to supporting narrations in *Ahkām al-Janā'iz* (p. 127).

**him.**<sup>52</sup> The rows must be straight and close to each other. The rows of the women are well behind the men.<sup>53</sup>

3. The *imām* begins by saying, “**Allāhu akbar**”<sup>54</sup> while raising the hands<sup>55</sup> to the level of the shoulders (or to the level of the earlobes without touching the ears), and then placing the right hand upon the left on the chest as in the regular prayers. The people behind the *imām*, follow him.

4. He then seeks refuge in Allāh with the words,

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

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<sup>52</sup> Abu Dāwūd (2/63), At-Tirmidhi (2/143) and others. See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albānī (p. 127, 128).

<sup>53</sup> Muslim (no. 440).

<sup>54</sup> Translation: “**Allāh is Greater than all else.**”

<sup>55</sup> Many scholars hold it is preferable to raise the hands with every takbir in the *janāzah* due to the practice of Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) as reported in the Sahīh of Al-Bukhāri and in his *Juz' Raf'il-Yadayn* (p. 105) with a connected chain of narration.

**"A'ūdhu billāhi minash-shaytānir-rajīm."<sup>56</sup>**

followed by,

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

**"Bismillāhir-Rahmānir-Rahīm."<sup>57</sup>**

5. He then recites the first chapter of the Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Fātihah followed by another short Sūrah if he wishes.

الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِیْنَ

الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

مَالِكِ یَوْمِ الدِّیْنِ

اِیَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِیَّاكَ نَسْتَعِیْنُ

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<sup>56</sup> Translation: **"I seek refuge with Allāh from Shaytān, the rejected outcast."**

<sup>57</sup> Translation: **"In the Name of Allāh, the Possessor of vast mercy, the One who bestows mercy upon whomever He wills."**

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ  
 صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا  
 الضَّالِّينَ  
 (آمين)

"Al-ḥamdulillāhi Rabbil-‘ālamīn. Ar-Raḥmān ir-  
 Raḥīm. Māliki yawm id-dīn. Iyyāka na‘budu wa  
 iyyāka nasta‘īn. Ihdin aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-  
 mustaqīm. Ṣirāṭ alladhīna an‘amta ‘alayhim,  
 ghayr il-maghḍūbi ‘alayhim, wa lāḍ-ḍāllīn.  
 Amīn."<sup>58</sup>

6. Then the *imām* makes *takbīr* for the second

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<sup>58</sup> Translation: "All praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of  
 all existence. The Possessor of vast mercy, the One  
 who bestows mercy upon whomever He wills. The  
 Sole Owner of the Day of Recompense. You alone  
 we worship, and it is You alone we call upon for  
 aid. Guide us to the Straight Path. The Path of those  
 on whom you have bestowed Your bounty, not the  
 path of those who earned Your anger nor those who  
 went astray."

time and the people send the peace and salutations upon the two Prophets, Muhammad and Ibrāhīm (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَامُ) just as one does at the end of the regular prayer:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى  
إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ  
عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
عَلَى وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

“Allāhumma ṣalli ‘alá Muḥammad wa ‘alá āli Muḥammad, kamā ṣallayta ‘alá Ibrāhīm wa ‘alá āli Ibrāhīm, innaka Ḥamīdun Majīd. Allāhumma bārik ‘alá Muḥammadin wa ‘alá āli Muḥammad, kamā bārakta ‘alá Ibrāhīm, wa ‘alá āli Ibrāhīm, innaka Ḥamīdun Majīd.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Translation: “O Allah, extol the praise of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You extolled the praise of Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhim. You are indeed worthy of praise, full of

7. The third *takbīr* is then pronounced by the *imām* and the people sincerely supplicate for the deceased. There are many supplications reported in the authentic Sunnah. From them is the authentic supplication:

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

“Allāhummagfir lihayyinā wa mayyitinā wa shāhidinā wa ghā’ibinā wa saghīrinā wa kabīrinā wa dhakarīnā wa unthānā. Allāhumma man ahyaitahu minnā fa ahyihi

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glory. And send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm. You are indeed worthy of praise, full of glory.”.

'alal-islām waman tawaffaitahu minnā fatawaffahu 'alal imān. Allāhumma lā tahrirnā ajrahu walā tudillanā ba'dahu."<sup>60</sup> Or one can supplicate with:

اللَّهُمَّ عَبْدُكَ وَأَبْنُ أُمَّتِكَ، اِحْتَاَجَ إِلَى رَحْمَتِكَ، وَأَنْتَ  
غَنِيٌّ عَنْ عَذَابِهِ، إِنْ كَانَ مُحْسِنًا فَزِدْ فِي حَسَنَاتِهِ، وَإِنْ  
كَانَ مُسِيئًا فَتَجَاوَزْ عَنْهُ

"Allāhumma 'abduka wabnu amatika ihtāja ilā rahmatika, wa anta ghaniyyun 'an 'adhābihi, in kāna muhsinan, fa-zid fī hasanātihi, wa in kāna musī'an fatajāwaz 'anhu."<sup>61</sup> If a person has not

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<sup>60</sup> Translation: "O Allah forgive our living and our deceased, those present and those absent, our young and our old, our males and females. O Allah whomever you give life to from us, let such live upon Islam and such whose life you take, then take it upon *Imān*. O Allah, do not prevent us from his reward and do not cause us to go astray after him." Reported by Ibn Mājah (1/456) and others.

<sup>61</sup> Translation: "O Allah, Your servant and the son of

memorised the supplications, they may supplicate general supplications seeking forgiveness and mercy for the deceased.

8. The fourth *takbīr* is again followed by supplicating for the deceased as above.

9. The prayer is concluded with the *taslīm* which is the utterance, "**As-salāmu alaikum wa rahmatullāh**" as in the regular prayers. And it is permitted to make only one *taslīm* by turning the face to the right side.<sup>62</sup>

**Forbidden practices** and innovations of the *janāzah* prayer that some people commit at this

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**Your maidservant is in need of Your mercy and You are without need of punishing him. If he was righteous, increase his reward and if he was wicked, then pardon his sins.**" Reported by At-Tabarāni in *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabīr* (22/249/647), Al-Hākim (1/359) who declared it *sahīh*. See *Ahkām al-Janā'iz* (p. 159).

<sup>62</sup> The *hadīth* of Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) reported by Ad-Dāruqutni (191), Al-Hākim (1/360) and declared *hasan* by Al-Albāni in *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* (p. 163).

stage include:

1. Chanting remembrances of Allāh in unison loudly as the body is brought into the mosque and after the prayer.<sup>63</sup>
2. Taking the body to another location other than the graveyard for people to view the face of the deceased and thus delay the burial.
3. Wailing, lamenting and screaming in grief are all forbidden, as is calling out to Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) asking Him why He has caused this person to die!

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<sup>63</sup> These are newly introduced matters that were not practised by the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) or his Companions (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ). So, avoid them all!

## The Burial

The Sunnah of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) was to bury the deceased<sup>64</sup> in the graveyard of the town in which he dies and not to transport the body to other lands. The Muslim should be buried in the graveyard of the Muslims<sup>65</sup> and the non-Muslim is buried alongside the unbelievers in their graveyard. A Muslim should not be buried at sunrise until the sun has fully arisen, nor

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<sup>64</sup> The deceased are all to be buried, Muslims and non-Muslims. The Companion 'Ali (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) buried his father Abu Tālib, and he died as an unbeliever. Reported by Ahmad (no. 807), also his son in *Zawā'id Al-Musnad* (no. 1074). Al-Albāni declared the chain of narration to be authentic. See also Abu Dāwūd (2/70) and An-Nasā'ī (1/282-3).

<sup>65</sup> Abu Dāwūd (2/72), An-Nasā'ī (1/288). The exceptions to this are martyrs of a battlefield who are buried where they died as reported in the *hadith* collected by Imām Ahmad (3/397) and declared *sahīh* by Al-Albāni (p. 175).

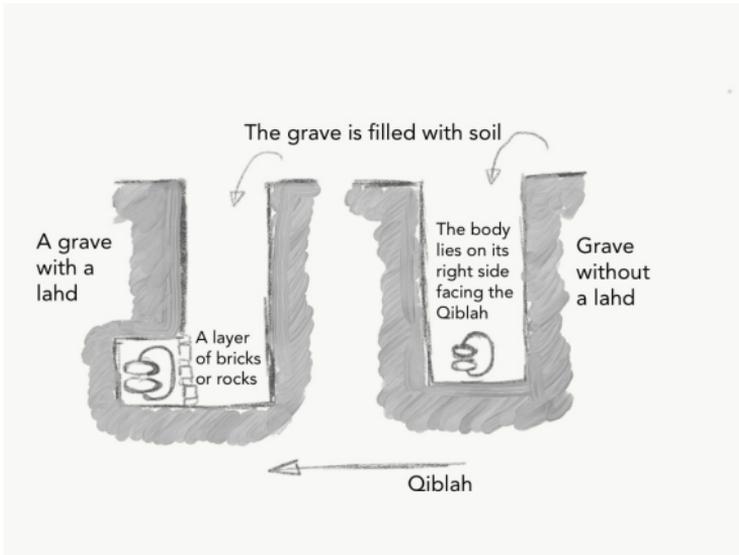
when the sun is at its zenith until it has passed midday, and nor as it sets until it has fully set.<sup>66</sup> Also, the deceased should not be buried during the night<sup>67</sup> because that would mean that less people would gather for the janāzah prayer. However, if the people have already prayed over the deceased in the day, then the burial can go ahead during the night.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Sahīh Muslim (2/208), Abu Dāwūd (2/66) and others.

<sup>67</sup> In a *hadith* reported by Muslim. See *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* of Al-Albāni (p. 177).

<sup>68</sup> It is permitted to enter the grave with a lamp. See *hadith* reported by Ibn Mājah (1/464) and others.



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.<sup>69</sup>

At the bottom of the grave, another spacious cavity can be dug in the side closest to the

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<sup>69</sup> Abu Dāwūd (2/83) and others.

Qiblah,<sup>70</sup> 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<sup>71</sup> relatives should lower the deceased into the grave from those who did not have sexual relations with their wife in the previous night.<sup>72</sup>

The body should be entered lengthwise into the grave on its right-side, from the feet-side of the grave so the head enters the grave area first and facing the Qiblah.<sup>73</sup> As the dead person is

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<sup>70</sup> Called a *lahd*, and the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) himself was buried in a grave with a *lahd*. Reported by Ibn Mājah (1/472) and others.

<sup>71</sup> It is the duty of men to lower the deceased into the grave even if the deceased is a woman. That was the practice in the time of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and throughout the generations. See Al-Albāni in *Ahkām Al-Janā'iz* (p. 186-187). It better that the mahram male relatives of a woman lower her into the grave.

<sup>72</sup> Bukhāri (3/122,162).

<sup>73</sup> Abu Dāwūd (2875).

placed in the grave, one should say, **“Bismillāh wa ‘alā millati rasūlillāh.”**<sup>74</sup>

The body is then covered with soil. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) once buried a Muslim and put three handfuls of soil into the grave.<sup>75</sup> The grave should be filled and mounded above ground-level by approximately a handspan so that it is known as a grave — this was done with the grave of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).<sup>76</sup> It is permitted to sit or stand next to a grave while the burial takes place — and for a person of knowledge to remind the people regarding death and what occurs after it. This is proven by the *hadīth* of Al-Barā Ibn Al-‘Āzib (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ).<sup>77</sup>

It is not recommended to dig a grave before a

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<sup>74</sup> Translation: **“In the name of Allah and upon the religion of the Messenger of Allah.”** Reported by Abu Dāwūd (2/70), At-Tirmidhi (2/152,153), Ibn Mājah (1/470) and others.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Mājah (1/474).

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Hibbān (2160), Al-Bayhaqi (3/410, *hasan*).

<sup>77</sup> Abu Dāwūd (2/281) and others.

person has died because the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) never did that — a person does not know when he will actually die.<sup>78</sup>

It is legislated to seek forgiveness for the deceased Muslim after the burial. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) finished a burial and said to his Companions, **“Seek forgiveness for your brother — ask for steadfastness for him for verily, he is now being questioned.”**<sup>79</sup> It is permissible to mark the head of the grave with a simple rock so that it is distinguished for family members who are to be buried in the same vicinity later.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> However, if a person was to do so in preparation for death, then it is considered a righteous deed as has been stated by Shaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ). See *Al-Ikhtiyārāt Al-‘Ilmiyyah* of Shaikh Al-Islām.

<sup>79</sup> Abu Dawūd.

<sup>80</sup> Abu Dawūd.

As for placing wreaths, flowers, twigs<sup>81</sup> and so 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 (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

We must remember that the Muslims have a distinct method of conducting funerals in accordance to the Prophetic Sunnah. Muslims are prohibited in Islam to imitate the non-Muslims in their religious rites and rituals. In this

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<sup>81</sup> Once a branch was placed on two graves by the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). However, that cannot be used as a proof for anyone else after him for the following reasons: a) The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was given knowledge of the unseen wherein he knew they were both being punished. b) No one after him has knowledge of what is happening to a specific person in his grave. c) This act was unique for the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and not a single Companion did it after him. d) The placement of the branch was not for decoration or commemoration, unlike the wreaths and flowers of today!

regard there are many authentic narrations from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): **“Differ from the people of the Scripture...”, “Differ from the unbelievers...”, “Whoever imitates a people is from them.”**<sup>82</sup>

Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) forbade plastering graves, building structures over them such as domes, mosques and shrines, and making them high and writing upon them.<sup>83</sup> The Prophet commanded his son-in-law, ‘Ali (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) saying, **“Do not leave a statue in a house except that you demolish it and do not leave a grave except that you level it.”**<sup>84</sup> ‘Ali (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said to Abul-Hayyāj (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ), **“Do not leave an image without defacing it, or a high grave without levelling it.”**<sup>85</sup> Elaborate grave-stones, marble tiles and engravings are all

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<sup>82</sup> At-Tirmidhī, Ibn Hibbān and Abu Dawūd.

<sup>83</sup> Muslim (970), also Abu Dawūd and Ibn Mājah.

<sup>84</sup> Reported by Muslim.

<sup>85</sup> Muslim (969).

prohibited innovations.

**Forbidden practices** and innovations that must be avoided:

1. Reciting Sūrah Al-Fātihah or the Qur'an at the graveside. There is no evidence for this practice in the Sunnah regardless of how much the people try and justify it.
2. Gathering in a house before or after the burial to supplicate for the deceased.<sup>86</sup>
3. Wailing at the graveside. Soft weeping is not forbidden as that is the love Allah has placed in the hearts.

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<sup>86</sup> This is from the customs of the Christians called a "Wake" where relatives and friends gather in the home of the deceased, usually with the body present in a prayer vigil. The family of the deceased provide refreshments for their guests. This alien practice has been introduced into our communities by ignorant people who claim they are mourning the deceased and praying for him!

4. Hanging pictures or photographs at the grave.
5. Planting flowers on the grave.
6. Placing lights and candles at the grave.
7. Organising gatherings, commemorations and anniversaries after the funeral.
8. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **"Do not sit on the graves and do not pray facing towards them."**<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Muslim (972).

## After The Burial

It is legislated to visit the graveyard so as to be reminded of one's own mortality and the Hereafter, and to supplicate for the deceased Muslims — and one must avoid useless and futile speech.<sup>88</sup> It is not permitted to hold conversations with the graves as they have left this world and cannot respond. Furthermore, this will open a door to polytheism — and the Shaytān will lead people astray by whispering to them in the name of the deceased.

Visiting the graves is permitted so long as lamenting and wailing is avoided. Women are permitted to visit<sup>89</sup> but they should not do so frequently<sup>90</sup> as commanded by the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in the authentic narrations.

May Allāh have mercy upon the Muslims, and

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<sup>88</sup> Muslim (3/65), Abu Dāwūd (2/72) and others.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Hākim (1/376), Al-Bayhaqi (4/78), Ibn Abdil-Barr in At-Tamhīd (3/233), Ibn Mājah (1/475).

<sup>90</sup> Ibn Mājah (1/478).

may He guide them to live and die upon Islam and the Sunnah.

And all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all creation. May Allah extol the Messenger in the highest company of Angels and grant him peace; and likewise, his family, his Companions and all those who truly follow him until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> The information contained in this booklet is supported by evidences from the Qur'ān, the authentic Sunnah, the statements of the Companions and those who followed them.

Compiled by Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wāhid Alam. The first edition was completed during the final illness of my father, Naik (Sālih) Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hasan (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ).

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