

## INTRODUCTION

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Death of a close relative or of a loved one is probably the most difficult moment of a person's life. It totally transforms the pattern of your life. Life under the loving shade of your parents, and the life without them is very different. Same is true about spouses, brothers and sisters, and often about friends too.

Death is totally a natural phenomenon, yet for a believer there is immense reward if he or she surrenders to the will of the Creator. The Almighty Allah ﷻ says, 'when I take away the beloved of my servant and my servant yet remains patient I grant him in exchange nothing but Paradise'. (Bukhari)

This booklet is designed to give you an overall understanding of the do's and do not's of a Muslim funeral. It is also meant to serve as a guide to make the necessary arrangements, post and pre-funeral. At each stage the booklet shall serve as a reference to give you a broad understanding of Islamic traditions, at the same time tackling myths and customs that have nothing to do with our deen.

Almost all the Ahādith, included in this booklet, were read out after Zuhr Salāh in Central Mosque Glasgow. Many years ago, we started reading one Hadith a day. We had started with the basics of Iman and Islam and later progressed to the subjects on Akhlāq and Ādāb; the etiquettes and manners.

The subject of the rights of a Muslim and his responsibilities was also covered. Part of the rights and responsibilities series was the attending of funerals and Janāzah. This subject went on for a year, because we covered almost every aspect of death.

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While this was going on a suggestion was made that we should compile the relevant Ahādith in an easy to follow order and should prepare a manual for the families on how to deal with the death and its aftermath.

What you have in your hands is exactly that ‘manual’. You would notice that it is primarily based on the blessed words of Rasool-ullah *sallallahu alaihi wa-sallam*. However, where necessary the commentary and explanations of various scholars and Muslim jurists are also included. Since the work is primarily prepared for the Muslim community in Scotland, to make it complete, the relevant information on procedural matters has also been included. I pray to the Almighty Allah ﷻ to accept this humble effort and make it sincerely for Him.

This work was completed many years ago, but I did not feel completely satisfied until it was thoroughly examined and approved by the elders. May Allah ﷻ grant them a generous reward and may He grant barakah in their lives and works. After their approval this is being sent for publication.

Anyone who has experience of preparing something of this nature for general usage would understand the complex and the delicate nature of the task. I do hope that those benefiting from this booklet would remember me – and the others who made contributions to this work – in their du’ās. May Allah ﷻ forgive our shortcomings and accept us for the service of His deen.

*Habib Rauf*

*04/02/1434 – 17/12/2012*

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# PART 1

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First things first:

*This section discusses what you need to do at the time of death if you happen to witness it, and some useful information on what needs doing immediately afterwards.*

*‘Every soul shall taste death’*

Al-Qur’an (03:185)

## IF YOU HAPPEN TO WITNESS THE SOUL DEPART:

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Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

كل نفس ذائقة الموت، وإنما توفون أجوركم يوم القيامة  
فمن زحزح عن النار وأدخل الجنة فقد فاز

*'Every soul shall taste death,*

*and only on the Day of Judgment your wages will be repaid to you in  
full,*

*so the one who is saved from the hell fire and granted entrance to  
Paradise*

*has indeed become successful<sup>1</sup>.*

So there is nothing to be afraid of if you happen to be present with someone who is in his or her last breath. Just remain calm and help the transition of your brother, sister or another loved one to the horizons beyond the scope of this worldly life.

Though we are expected to make every effort to save lives, there yet comes a time when nothing seems to work. That is

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Qur'an (03:185)

the point we can refer to as ‘*the final moments*’ of a servant of Allah. It is important that you contact the emergency services and ask for help. When calling the emergency services:

- try and remain calm
- give your location details as accurately as possible,
- describe the condition of the emergency as best as possible and try following any advice given.

However, if all the efforts to save life seem futile, or if all the life saving measures are in place yet it seems that the final moments of the person affected have started you can ease the burden by carrying out what follows.

When the final moments arrive the person should lie, or be made to lie, on a clean and pure surface. If on a bed, his right side facing the Qibla, (the Makkah direction), however, if this proves to be difficult, one can be assisted to lie on his/her back, legs stretched toward the Qibla, and head raised against some form of head-rest (pillow or cushion etc). Those present around him should slowly recite the declaration of faith:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

**Ash-hadu alla ilaha illal-lahu**

**Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa rasooluh.**

*I testify that there is non worthy of worship but Allah and*

*I testify that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His servant and His messenger.*

This should be repeated in such a soft voice that the departing person (*muhtadhar*) hears it but does not get disturbed or feel annoyed. This procedure is called '*talqeen*'.

Being visited by the angel of death is a tough situation for anyone to be in. Those present should make an effort to lighten the burden as much as possible.

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### THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED:

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- It is desirable that some kind of fragrance is used in the room to make it fresh and comfortable.
- The *talqeen* should be continued until the *muhtadhar* (one on his death bed) recites the *kalimah* at least once. Once this is achieved the *talqeen* should be stopped. However, if the *muhtadhar* says something else, talks about another issue, then the *talqeen* should be started again. The aim simply is to make the *kalimah* to be his or her last words. This is because the Prophet ﷺ has said, 'one who's last words are *Lā Ilāha Illa Allah* shall be placed in Jannah'<sup>2</sup>.
- Someone should recite *surah Yaseen*<sup>3</sup>(al-Quran: 36) and *surah al-Ra'd* (al-Quran:13) in a calm low voice that does not disturb the *muhtadhar*.

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<sup>2</sup> Abu-Dawood, Ahmad

<sup>3</sup> Abu-Dawood, Ahmad.

- Others should engage in du'ā<sup>4</sup> and offer quite supplication to the Almighty to make this stage easy for the *muhtadhar*.
- If the *muhtadhar* begins to express concern about anything, he or she should be given assurance. We have included several *Ahādith* and the prophetic traditions on this subject – the mercy of Allah ﷻ – in part 6 of this booklet. If you have time, referring to it may make your task easy<sup>5</sup>.
- It is very important that the *muhtadhar* is given *hope in the mercy of Allah ﷻ*. The mercy of Allah ﷻ has no limits or bounds. It does not only descend upon those who deserve it. There were so many who despite spending their entire lives in sin were forgiven at their last breath only because of this very *hope*.

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#### THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE AVOIDED:

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- There should not be pictures of living things in that room. Also it is said to be better that no one in the state of *Janābah* (in need of *ghusl*), *haydh* (menses) or *nifās* (post-natal bleeding) is present in the same room.<sup>6</sup>
- The *muhtadhar* should NOT BE ASKED to recite the *kalimah*, out of fear that at this state of distress and

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<sup>4</sup> 'Verily the angels who are present say 'Ameen' to the supplication of the people present'. (Muslim)

<sup>5</sup> Refer to the heading 'the death is not the end' on page 43.

<sup>6</sup> Shāmi, *Chapter on Salat-ul-Janazah*

helplessness, he or she refuses to recite it altogether, or may say something that makes the matters even worse.

- The *muhtadhar's* attention should not be diverted to persons or things he or she is leaving behind. For example children, spouses or material assets etc.
- If the *muhtadhar* engages in *du'ā* allow him or her to do so. Do not interrupt or try to interfere. Instead say *Ameen* and join in. If he or she happens to err or say something inappropriate, try and divert his or her attention to something positive.
- Crying loud, veiling, sobbing, self-harming etc. should be avoided at all times. It increases the pain of the soul departing the body.

### AFTER THE SOUL DEPARTS:

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Once the journey of this servant of Allah ﷺ is complete, the soul leaves the body, the death occurs and he or she is confirmed to have met their Lord, those present should do the following:

1. Shut the eye lids of the deceased saying:

<sup>7</sup> بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ وَعَلَىٰ مِلَّةِ رَسُوْلِ

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<sup>7</sup> 'In the name of Allah and upon the tradition of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ'

## Bismillahi wa-‘alā millati rasool-illah

If possible the following can also be recited,

اللَّهُمَّ يَسِّرْ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرَهُ وَسَهِّلْ عَلَيْهِ مَا بَعْدَهُ وَأَسْعِدْهُ بِلِقَائِكَ  
وَاجْعَلْ مَا خَرَجَ إِلَيْهِ خَيْرًا مِمَّا خَرَجَ عَنْهُ<sup>8</sup>

**Allahumma yassir ‘alaihi amrahu wa-sahhil  
‘alaihi mā ba’dahu wa-as’idhu biliqāika, waj’al  
mā kharaja ilaihi khairan mimma kharaja ‘anhu.**

2. The first task is to bring the body to a natural state of being in straight lying down position. This is easy immediately after the death, but may become difficult later, as the body temperature drops.
3. Close the deceased’s jaws, if they are found to have dropped, and fasten them, if necessary, with a small piece of cloth.<sup>9</sup>
4. Place the deceased’s feet together, keeping them straight. Fasten the toes of both feet together with a string or a small piece of cloth, if necessary.
5. Turn the head of the deceased to the right.

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<sup>8</sup> ‘O Allah! Make his matter easy for him and make what is to follow smooth for him and make him fortunate through meeting You, and make the world that he is heading to better than the one he has left behind’

<sup>9</sup> Shāmi, *Chapter on Salat-ul-Janazah*

6. Cover the body with a shroud.
7. Until it is carried away, sit besides the *mayyit* (the corps) and pray for the deceased's forgiveness, if it is safe to do so.
8. It is strongly recommended not to delay the Janāzah Salāh and the burial.

Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم arrived when her husband Abu-Salamah رضي الله عنه had just passed away. He صلى الله عليه وسلم saw that the eye lids of the deceased were wide open. He صلى الله عليه وسلم closed them and said, 'when the soul leaves a body the eyesight follows it too'. Then he صلى الله عليه وسلم heard the cries of the relatives, [who apparently had started to veil and say things condemning their own lives after the death of sayyidunā Abu-Salamah رضي الله عنه in utter anguish] so he صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'do not ask for yourselves except what is good, because the angels are saying ameen to all your prayers'. Then he صلى الله عليه وسلم prayed for the deceased saying, '*O Allah! forgive Abu-Salamah, elevate his ranks amongst those who were guided, take care of those whom he has left behind, forgive us and him O Lord of the worlds, expand his grave for him and illuminate it for him*'.<sup>10</sup> (Muslim)

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<sup>10</sup> This *du'ā* in Arabic is included at no. 4 in the list of '*supplications for the bereaved family*' on page 16.

## TAKING CARE OF THE FAMILY:

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It is often very difficult for a family to accept and come to terms with a tragedy at home. It becomes the responsibility of friends and the relatives to show consideration and provide vital emotional support.

So before the mayyit is taken care of, one needs to take care of the family. This can be a frustrating time and emotions can spill over in different shapes and forms. So taking care of the close family members and keeping them together at this difficult time is the first challenge.

You may find some information given in the final part of this booklet useful to encourage everyone to exercise patience by reminding them of the rewards and the virtues.

## A FEW SUPPLICATIONS FOR THE BEREAVED FAMILY:

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The Prophet ﷺ said, 'when a person passes away then the [bereaved] family should pray for him [and should utter only good words] because the angels say Ameen to whatever they pray for'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Muslim

It is important to remember that the death does not mark the end of a person. It simply pushes him to the next phase of life. It is possible to draw an analogy between a baby coming to this world from the womb of his mother, and then from the womb of this world the person is transferred to the 'waiting lounge' (barzakh) for his or her eternal abode. The condition in this (transitional or the final heavenly) life has a lot more to do with a person's behavior and conduct in this worldly life. But the shortcomings on the part of an individual may be supplemented by the efforts of his or her relatives.

As the parents and relatives of a newly born baby take care of his needs, equally those in this world are able to do something for the ones who are gone. The best favour that the living can do to the dead is to pray and make du'ā for them. The bond of brotherhood between Muslims demands fulfilling this much needed aspect of post death phase. Allah ﷻ says: "Seek forgiveness for your sins and for the believing men and women."<sup>12</sup>

The Qur'an mentions du'ās of many prophets who supplicated on behalf of their people. Noah ﷺ said: "My Lord! Forgive me, my parents, all who enter my house in faith, and the believing men and women."<sup>13</sup> Prophet Ibrahim a said, 'Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and (all) the believers on the Day when the reckoning will be established'<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Al-Qur'an 47: 19

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qur'an 71: 28

<sup>14</sup> Al-Qur'an 14:41

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever asks forgiveness for the believing men and women, he will have a good deed written to his credit for each and every believing man and woman."<sup>15</sup>

The dead do earn much benefit from such actions of the living that are intended for them. Praying for the dead, asking forgiveness for them and giving charity on their behalf are some of the things that one can perform to help the dead in their graves, which if accepted by the Almighty ﷻ do make a difference at their end.

There are numerous ahādith about this. Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda ؓ once asked the Prophet ﷺ 'My mother's soul departed suddenly and had she been able to speak she would have given alms. Would it bring benefit to her if I did it on her behalf?' 'Yes!' he ﷺ replied. So Sa'd ؓ dug a well (for people to take water from) and said: 'This is on behalf of Sa'd's mother.'<sup>16</sup>

In another Hadith it is narrated that a man said to the Prophet ﷺ: 'O Messenger of Allah! My parents have died, is there anything left for me to do which may be good to them?' The Prophet ﷺ replied:

'There are four things:

- praying and asking forgiveness for them,
- carrying out their promises,

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<sup>15</sup> Majma' al-Zawā'id

<sup>16</sup> Abu-Dawood

- being good to their friends, and
- giving proper attention to those kinship bonds which could have only be attended to by them.'

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Were it not for the living the dead would have been doomed'; in other words, they are rescued because of the prayers of those living and begging pardon on their behalf, for which they receive mercy. He ﷺ said, 'My *ummht* is an *ummht* covered with the mercy. Its members enter their graves with sins like unto the mountains, and leave their graves having been forgiven because the living have asked forgiveness for the dead.'<sup>17</sup>

It is related that the gifts of alms, prayers, and Qur'anic recitation sent by the living to the dead reach them carried by the angels on plates of light and adorned with silk handkerchiefs, and they say to them: 'This is a gift from so-and-so', and in this way they find joy and delight.

A dead man was once seen in a dream and upon being questioned about his state, said that he had been greeted by an angel who attempted to burn his face with a flame held in his hand. But one of the living said: 'O Allah! have mercy on so-and-so' -and the flame went out.

Following is a list of supplications for the bereaved. These could be said at any time, especially during the moments when struck with the pain of loss. These are included in here to demonstrate the prophetic model of supplication for the deceased:

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<sup>17</sup> Tabarani

1. إِيَّاكَ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ. اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرُنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا<sup>18</sup>

*To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return. O' Allah grant me reward for this affliction and in return grant me what is better than what is taken away.*

2. اللَّهُمَّ يَسِّرْ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرَهُ وَسَهِّلْ عَلَيْهِ مَا بَعْدَهُ وَأَسْعِدْهُ بِلِقَائِكَ وَاجْعَلْ مَا خَرَجَ إِلَيْهِ خَيْرًا مِمَّا خَرَجَ عَنْهُ . اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تَقْتِنَا بَعْدَهُ.<sup>19</sup>

*'O Allah! Make his matter easy for him and make what is to follow smooth for him and make him fortunate through meeting You, and make the world that he is heading to better than the one he has left behind. O Allah! Do not deprive us of the reward [of this loss] and do not place us in any trouble after him'.*

3. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ وَعَافِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ وَأَكْرِمْ نُزُلَهُ وَوَسِّعْ مَدْخَلَهُ وَاعْسِلْهُ بِالْمَاءِ وَالتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ وَنَقِّهِ مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا يُنْقَى

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18 Muslim

19 المنتقى شرح موطأ مالك

السُّؤْبُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ وَأَبْدَلُهُ دَارًا خَيْرًا مِنْ دَارِهِ وَأَهْلًا  
خَيْرًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَزَوْجًا خَيْرًا مِنْ زَوْجِهِ وَأَدْخِلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَاعْذُ  
مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَ مِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ.<sup>20</sup>

*O Allah, forgive him, have mercy on him, pardon him, grant him security, provide him a nice place and spacious lodgings, wash him (off from his sins) with water, snow and ice, purify him from his sins as a white garment is cleansed from dirt, replace his present abode with a better one, replace his present family with a better one, replace his present partner with a better one, make him enter paradise and save him from the trials of grave and the punishment of hell.*

4. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لـ [..the deceased's name here...] وَارْفَعْ دَرَجَتَهُ فِي  
الْمَهْدِيِّينَ وَاخْلُقْهُ فِي عَقَبِهِ فِي الْعَابِرِينَ وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهُ يَا رَبَّ  
الْعَالَمِينَ وَافْسَحْ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَتَوَزَّرْ لَهُ فِيهِ.<sup>21</sup>

*O' Allah! forgive ...[the deceased's name]....., elevate his ranks amongst those who were guided, take care of those whom he has left behind, forgive us and him O Lord of the worlds, expand his grave for him and illuminate it for him'.*

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<sup>20</sup> Muslim

<sup>21</sup> Muslim

5. اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ [....the deceased's name here... ] فِي ذِمَّتِكَ وَحَبْلِ  
جِوَارِكَ فَتِهِ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْقَبْرِ وَعَذَابِ النَّارِ وَأَنْتَ أَهْلُ الْوَفَاءِ  
وَالْحَقِّ. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.<sup>22</sup>

*O Allah, [the deceased's name] is under Your care and protection so protect him from the trial of the grave and torment of the Fire. Indeed You are faithful and truthful. Forgive and have mercy upon him, surely You are The Oft-Forgiving, The Most-Merciful.*

6. اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبُّهَا<sup>23</sup> وَأَنْتَ خَلَقْتَهَا وَأَنْتَ هَدَيْتَهَا إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَ  
أَنْتَ قَبَضْتَ رُوحَهَا وَأَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِسِرِّهَا وَعَلَانِيَتِهَا جِئْنَا شُفَعَاءَ  
فَاعْفِرْ لَهُ.<sup>24</sup>

*O Allah, you are the Lord of this soul, you have created it, and you have guided it towards Islam, and you have taken out his soul and you know best about its secret and open deeds. We have come as intercessors, so forgive him.*

7. اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ لَنَا سَلَفًا وَفَرَطًا وَذُخْرًا وَآجْرًا.

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<sup>22</sup> Abu-Dawood

<sup>23</sup> (إى النسمة)

<sup>24</sup> Abu-Dawood

*O Allah, make him a preceding reward, a prepayment and, a stored treasure and a recompense for us.'*

8. اللَّهُمَّ عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ أُمَّتِكَ اِحْتِاجَ إِلَى رَحْمَتِكَ ، وَأَنْتَ عَنِّي عَنْ عَذَابِهِ، إِنْ كَانَ مُحْسِنًا فَزِدْ فِي حَسَنَاتِهِ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُسِيئًا فَتَجَاوَزْ عَنْهُ.

*O Allah, Your servant and the son of Your maidservant is in need of Your mercy and You are without need of his punishment. If he was righteous then increase his reward and if he was wicked then look over his sins.*

9. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَعَائِدِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرِنَا وَآثِنَانَا. اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ<sup>25</sup>.

*O Allah, forgive our living and our dead, those present and those absent, our young and our old, our males and our females. O Allah, whom amongst us You keep alive, then let such a life be upon Islam, and whom amongst us You take unto Yourself, then let such a death be upon faith.*

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<sup>25</sup> اللَّهُمَّ Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu-Dawood. Some narrations also add  
لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تَقْتُلْنَا بَعْدَهُ

## WHO NEEDS TO BE INFORMED?

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The following persons should be informed as early after the death as possible:

- **The family Doctor:** This is not necessary where death took place in a hospital, and the deceased was admitted as a patient for some time before death.
- **The relatives:** The family members and friends. It is important that the close family members are consulted prior to finalizing the burial plan. It is also worth noting that the relatives residing in other cities and towns will need to be looked after – food, tea, a warm place to stay etc. – when visiting for the funeral or for offering condolences. Though such guests should be looked after by the friends and the neighbours, it is nevertheless important that you keep this in mind and where possible make necessary arrangements. The Masjid team may be able to offer you further advice on this subject if needed.
- **The local Mosque or the Imām:** This needs to be done to make arrangements for the funeral preparation. If you call a mosque, inform them that you have a *mayyit* and that you want to speak to the person who is in charge of *Janāzah* (funeral) arrangements. The contact details of the Mosques in major Scottish cities are as follows:

Aberdeen:           01224 493764

Dundee:             01382 228374

Edinburgh	0131 667 7474
Glasgow:	0141 429 3132
Lanarkshire:	01698 730650
Stirling:	01786 474324

*It is worth noting that the burial procedure; the transfer of the mayyit, shrouds and the burial in a cemetery etc. normally has a cost. It is not normally free. So if that is going to be an issue it is worth asking about such costs and ensuring that you have means to pay these bills.*

*If you feel that you may need help towards meeting these costs then discuss your concerns with the person dealing with you from the mosque as early as possible. For further assistance refer to the section below titled, 'The Costs'.*

- **The Registrar Office:** To register the death. Further details on this are given below.
- **The deceased's solicitor:** If the deceased had a solicitor, it is important that he/she is informed about the death as soon as possible. This will help find out if the deceased had prepared a will that may also contain information about any possible preference that the deceased had for his funeral etc.
- **Debtors or Creditors:** People that might have had some dues or debts on or of the deceased. They should be re-assured that the heirs now take the responsibility of settling them as soon as possible. For more details on this subject please refer to part 6 of this booklet, under 'Paying off dues'.

- **The community:** informing the general community about the venue and the time of Janāzah prayer. This is *mustahab* (meritorious). The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘if a Muslim passes away and forty men who associate no one with Allah ﷻ stand over his bier, Allah ﷻ will accept them as intercessors for him’<sup>26</sup>. Following should be born in mind when considering this:
  - It is better done after that the time of the Janāzah Salāh and its venue is confirmed.
  - It usually is done through making announcements in Mosques and putting up small posters (available from Mosques) in the community shops and other public places. Social media websites have also proven useful in terms of spreading the message.
  - Spreading the word about a funeral not only gives everyone an opportunity to take part in the funeral and earn huge rewards, in many cases it also increases the honour of the deceased.
  - Such announcements should be plain and simple and must not contain prolonged introduction of the *mayyit*. Dramatising the tragedy in such announcements is forbidden.
  - In cities like Glasgow, such announcements on the community radio stations may also be

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<sup>26</sup> Muslim

useful. Glasgow Central Mosque also sends Janāzah alerts via text messaging.

- **The HMRC and the benefits agency:** it is also recommended by the government that the families inform the tax revenue department and other benefit agencies about the death.

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## THE COSTS

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In Muslim lands, costs of burial are minimal, except for the actual *kafan*; burial shrouds, as burial service is mostly voluntary and the grave space usually donated. Elsewhere this is not the case.

In Scotland, individuals or their families have to pay for the cost of the burial, which includes the land price, the digging of the grave. Usually the washing of bodies within Masjids and the shroud is done free of charge, however, occasionally there may be a small contribution required, which you should verify with the Masjid concerned.

In Edinburgh, the average cost<sup>27</sup> of a burial is around £3000 depending on the coffin size and the day of the week. When the mayyit is of a child the cost is less than of an adult. This bill is due and payable after the burial, as early as possible. It is normally the immediate relatives of the deceased that are asked to pay. If they fail to pay then the mosques may

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<sup>27</sup> This figure is for the year 2012-2013

ask the person making arrangements on behalf of the family to arrange for the payment of this bill as well.

Some financial assistance may be available from the Social Security if the deceased or the succeeding relatives are on benefits, pension or are disabled. Details of who qualifies for this assistance and how to apply may be in Appendix 1A, at the end of this booklet.

**Please note:** It is negligent to leave one's burial costs in limbo or as a burden on the Masjid. In shariah, Masjid funds cannot be used to cover burial costs.

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## THE REGISTRATION OF DEATH

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This means to inform the Office of the Registrar that a death has occurred and to acquire Form 14 (consent to bury). The contact details of your local registrar's office are available online. For general guide some contact details are given in *appendix 2A*. When going to the Registrar, you are required to take the Certificate of Death issued by the GP or the Hospital with you. **Deaths must be registered within 8 days.**

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## THE DEATH CERTIFICATE

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The GP of the deceased issues the death certificate if the death occurred at home or at a care home. You may contact the concerned doctor's surgery to acquire this document.

If the GP refuses to issue a death certificate, which explains the cause of death, then the authorities (Prosecutor Fiscal / Crown Prosecuting Service and the Police) become involved. This may happen in sudden deaths, accidents, or in absence of any previous illness.

If the death occurred at a hospital (or in an accident and the body was brought to a hospital) then the hospital authorities will issue the death certificate.

### Q: WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO TAKE WITH ME TO THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE?

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**A:** Try taking with you as many of the following as possible (original documents if possible):

- Medical Certificate of the cause of death, issued by the GP or the hospital (essential)
- Any letter or book related to any of the public funds (pension etc.) that the deceased was in receipt of.
- NHS medical card, if available
- The birth or the marriage certificates of the deceased.

The Registrar may also want to know:

- The date, time and the place of death
- The full name, occupation and postal address of the deceased and his or her country and date of birth.
- If the person was married at the date of death, the date of birth of surviving widow or widower.
- The full names and occupations of the deceased's parents.
- The name and the address of the deceased's GP.

## Q: HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE REGISTERED THE DEATH PROPERLY?

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Upon registration of the death you will be issued with two documents:

**The death certificate:** This is for the family to retain and use for general purposes.

**The Form 14:** This is required for the burial and is passed to a responsible member of the Masjid's funeral team, who will forward it to the cemetery concerned. Please note that this is an important document which the cemetery administration needs to keep in their records.

During the weekends, when the Registrar Office is closed, it is normally possible to bury a mayyit without this document only if the hospital or the GP issue the cause of death certificate and

the Masjid team feels satisfied. In theory, however, it is possible that the cemetery refuses permission to bury a mayyit without the form 14.

Deaths that occur in Scotland may be registered at any registration office in Scotland.

**Remember:**

If you want to arrange the burial straight away – when the Registrar’s office is closed during the holidays – the law provides, in theory at least, for the funeral to take place before the death is registered, i.e. to have the funeral first and register the death later. This is only possible when there is no suspicion about the cause of the death, and a medical certificate stating the cause of death is issued by the GP or the hospital.

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## PART 2:

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### **Preparing the body for the burial**

*The burial procedure should be initiated as soon after the death as possible. It is not appropriate to delay this unnecessarily.*

The Prophet ﷺ said,

*'It is not appropriate for a Muslim mayyit to be held back amongst its family'*

(Sunan Abi-Dawood)

## BURIAL PREPARATIONS

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In Scotland, the procedure of laying a Muslim body to rest in a cemetery begins with transferring the *mayyit* to the Masjid for the essential pre-burial preparations.

These involve:-

1. Transferring the *mayyit* to the Masjid for preparation.
2. Initiating grave preparation.
3. Giving the *mayyit* a wash.
4. Putting kafn (shroud) on the *mayyit*.
5. Performing the Janāzah Salāh (the funeral prayer).
6. Taking the *mayyit* to the burial site in a cemetery.
7. The actual burial.

## TRANSFERRING THE MAYYIT TO A MASJID

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The local (or the nearest) mosque, that provides burial facilities should be contacted. Masjids that offer this service usually have dedicated teams who will arrange this transfer. They will send, or arrange, a driver with a hearse to transfer the body to the Masjid. Alternatively, arrangements can be made privately with the funeral directors who can organise this on behalf of the deceased's family.

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## FROM HOME

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If the death occurred at home, the masjid team will require to see the Cause of Death Medical Certificate (or the Death Certificate) before they can collect the deceased's body. It is against the law to remove a body from where the death occurred unless the cause of the death is established and recorded. The GP must feel satisfied to issue a death certificate without involving the police, otherwise it becomes necessary for the police to investigate the cause of death.

It might also be worth asking the GP to express his or her consent to the Masjid team or funeral directors to collect the body.

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## FROM A HOSPITAL

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Where death of a patient occurs at a hospital the hospital staff declare the death and the *mayyit* is then transferred to the hospital mortuary. Usually it is the doctor in charge of the ward who issues the Cause of Death Certificate. Thereafter the Masjid team can collect the deceased for burial preparations.

Occasionally this transfer (from the ward in hospital to the mortuary) is delayed for reasons like porters not being available. In such situations the Masjid team can do nothing other than to wait for this transfer to take place.

Mortuaries also have their hours of 'business'. They may not allow the collection of a body during certain hours. If you are there then you may take note of the contact details of the

mortuary (the co-ordinator) holding the body, in order to help the Masjid team liaise with them and speed up the transfer.

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### AN IMPORTANT NOTE

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In situations where the cause of death is not known, or where the police or the Prosecutor Fiscal / Crown Prosecution Services become involved, the collection of the body depends on when they allow the removal of the *mayyit* from the home or the mortuary. In such situations it is against the law to remove the body from where it is kept unless authorized.

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### THE POST MORTEM

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Sometimes the authorities express desire to carry out a post mortem to establish the cause of death. This normally happens if the death occurred in circumstances that cause suspicion. However, it is also possible that such request is made even when the cause of death is not clear enough. It is hence important that we look into this subject in a little detail.

At the time of death, the soul departs from the body. But even after its departure from the body, there yet remains some connection between the two. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Breaking the bone of a deceased is similar to breaking it when he (the *mayyit*) was alive'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Mālik, Abu-Dawood and Ibn-Majah, on the authority of Sayyida A'aisha ﷺ.

With regards to the commentary on this Hadith Imām al-Teebi رحمته الله states that the deceased should not be disregarded or treated with disrespect. Ibnul Malik رحمته الله states that the Hadith points to the fact that the deceased also feels the pain. Ibn Hajar رحمته الله states that this Hadith alludes to the fact that the deceased also enjoys and takes comfort from those things that a living person does.

Even in this worldly life, we see that the body is connected to the soul. Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته الله writes that we see such examples frequently in our daily lives. A person sees himself eating in a dream and when he wakes up, finds the taste of the food, etc. in his mouth. The effect first was on the *rooh*, the soul, which then is passed on to the body.<sup>29</sup>

For this very reason it is recommended that the body of a deceased is given full respect and is not mistreated in any shape or form.

Having understood the above, the issue of post mortem becomes easy to understand. Since post mortem leads to the body being fully exposed to many individuals unnecessarily and it also involves cutting and opening of the skin and flesh, hence it is best avoided as much as possible.

It should only be allowed in situations where the benefit of performing a post mortem is so great that it clearly overrides the right of the *mayyit* to be treated with the utmost respect. Even then, where possible, the *mayyit* should not be exposed to the people that it is not needed to. And those performing the post mortem should be requested to not cut the skin or pierce

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<sup>29</sup> Kitāb al-Rooh pgs.56, 80

knives un-necessarily, but do so only where necessary and only as much as necessary.

There will be situations where individuals will find themselves helpless before the requirements of the law. In such situations, from the *shari'a* perspective, the burden of decision will not be on the shoulders of these individuals and they stand excused. It nevertheless remains their responsibility, along with their fellow Muslims in the community (*fardh kifāyah*<sup>30</sup>), to work with the local authorities to be allowed to bury the Muslim *mayyits* as stated and required by the teachings of the Muslim Faith.

A possible alternative to post mortem is CT scan, which is practiced in some UK communities and is approved by the coroners in those regions. It is an alternative that the Muslim communities should try to opt for when ever and how so often possible.

It is also possible, in fact recommended, that a person suffering from a terminal illness, or otherwise, discusses it with his or her GP and requests the GP to issue the death certificate upon his or her death and to not ask for any post mortem report. However the GP will exercise his or her discretion upon the death, but will take into account the person's wishes, which may render an ad hoc post mortem unnecessary.

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<sup>30</sup> A communal responsibility, *fardh kifāyah*, from the Shari'a perspective are tasks that the Muslim community as a whole stands responsible for. The examples include building Masjids, preparing a mayyit for burial and funeral prayer etc.

A person can also add instructions in their will that they do not wish a post mortem performed on them after death. However the law will prevail (i.e. authorities can insist on a post mortem) but they are likely to give due consideration to the wishes of the deceased and if possible forego it.

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## DELAYING THE JANĀZAH OR BURIAL

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Arrangements should be made to bury the *mayyit* as soon after the death as possible. To delay the burial of a Muslim *mayyit* is not permissible. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘it is not appropriate for a Muslim *mayyit* to be held back amongst its family’<sup>31</sup>.

Ali ؑ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘O Ali, do not delay three things, a daily prayer when it’s time begins, the funeral prayer when the *mayyit* becomes ready and the *nikah* of a girl when a suitable match for her becomes available’<sup>32</sup>.

Abu-Hurairah ؓ narrates from the Prophet ﷺ that he ؓ said, ‘hasten with the Janāzah, [because] if the *mayyit* was a righteous person than what you are taking him to is better for him – i.e. the *Jannah* – and if he was otherwise, you should still hurry. That is better for you because you will then be able to discharge this burden sooner.’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Sunan Abi-Dawood

<sup>32</sup> Tirmidhi

<sup>33</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal رحمته الله says that one way of honoring a *mayyit* is to carry out its burial promptly without any delay<sup>34</sup>. Hence every effort should be made to avoid any unnecessary delay in the Janāzah and burial.

## TRANSFERRING THE MAYYIT TO ANOTHER COUNTRY

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Upon the demise of the Prophet ﷺ, when his companions differed over the location of his final resting place, Abu-Bakr رضي الله عنه said: ‘I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: ‘a prophet is buried where he passes away’.<sup>35</sup>

After the battle of *Uhud*, the second major battle in Islam, the martyrs, who had fallen only a few miles from their homes in Madina were not brought back to their home town for burial. They were all buried where they fell. This was done by a command of Allah ta’ala.

Hence, it is not difficult to understand that burying a *mayyit* in a cemetery that is the nearest from where it passes away has more virtue and is recommended for Muslims. It is viewed as a sign of nobility for a *mayyit* to not be transferred to distant lands for the burial.

The notion that this transfer is necessary because the land of non-Muslim countries is not fit for a Muslim burial and that

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<sup>34</sup> Al-Mughni v. 2, p. 308

<sup>35</sup> Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah

only the Muslim lands are clean and pure is not true and is false. This is invalid and contradicts the Islamic teachings.

Allah ta'ala says in the Qur'an, '*Have we not made earth a receptacle (like a container that collects and comprehends) the living and the dead*'<sup>36</sup>. In this verse there is no distinction between the lands that are populated by Muslims or non-Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'my Lord has granted me certain qualities by which I am placed higher than the other Prophets. He then stated that these were the following:

- the chain of prophet-hood was completed with him,
- that he was made a prophet to the entire creation of Allah, and also
- that the earth in its totality was made, for him and for his *ummah*, a place fit for prostration and a source of purification (i.e. *tayammum*).<sup>37</sup>

The above quotations are very clear in establishing that the entire land is clean and pure. Is it not the case that *tayammum* is permissible regardless of where you are, in a Muslim or a non-Muslim country? The very soil that is capable to purify you to be able to stand in worship before your Lord for *Salāh* is also clean enough to be one's final place of rest.

Furthermore, the transfer of *mayyits* involves a post mortem, i.e. removal of its certain internal organs e.g. intestines etc. then injecting embalming fluids into the body, which may

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<sup>36</sup> (Al-Qur'an 77:25-26)

<sup>37</sup> Muslim

contain impurities. This process also causes un-necessary delay in burial etc. and these components of the transfer are not permissible at all.

For these reasons many scholars are of the opinion that a mayyit should be buried in the nearest cemetery and not transferred to another country at all. Demise in a non Muslim country or burial is not a curse or a sign of some sort of a misfortune, in fact totally the opposite.

Abdu'āllah b. 'Amr رضي الله عنه said that when a man who had been born in Madina died there, the Prophet ﷺ prayed at his funeral and said, 'Would that he had died somewhere else than in his birthplace!' On being asked why he had said so he replied, 'when a person dies somewhere else away from his birthplace a space will be measured for him in paradise equal to the distance between his birthplace and the place where he died.'<sup>38</sup>

The *mayyits*, during the time of the Prophet ﷺ were not usually transferred from the place of their death. Hence the place of death here implies the place of burial too. Being buried far away from the place of birth, in the light of this hadith, is a virtue not a stigma. Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه related another reward promised to people who pass away while abroad. He says that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Dying abroad is treated as martyrdom.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Nasai, Ibn-Majah

<sup>39</sup> Ibn-Majah

The majority of *fuqaha'* are of the opinion that it is not permissible to move the deceased for burial to a land other than the one in which they died, unless it is for a valid reason such as the fear that his grave may be violated if he is buried where he died, or that it may be mistreated. In this case mayyit must be moved to a place where the grave will be safe.

Transferring a *mayyit* to its homeland so that his family will feel better and are able to visit the grave could have been permissible if there was no fear of the above mentioned concerns.

In the UK the law requires a special preparation of the body and a body cannot be just sent in its original state. It involves draining out the blood and pumping in another liquid which comprises of components that are not pure. Hence, it is not possible to overrule the sanctity and the honour of the mayyit for the sake of the wishes of the relatives. So in these circumstances transferring the *mayyits* from the UK will not be permissible.<sup>40</sup>

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## THE GRAVE PREPARATION

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Edinburgh has a Muslim cemetery, which is shared by Muslims from all schools of thoughts. This is currently situated at the following address: **Craigmillar Park Cemetery** 47 old Dalkeith road, Edinburgh, EH16 4TE

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<sup>40</sup> Fatawa Uthmani, v. I, p. 569/570

The Iqra Masjid has the facility to make the burial arrangement on behalf of the relatives of a *mawayit*. The Masjid administration, when asked, can make necessary arrangements to ensure that the grave is ready after the funeral prayer before the body reaches the cemetery.

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## GRAVE TYPES

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There are two types of graves that are common amongst Muslims. One is called *lahad* and the other is *shiq*.

**Lahad** is the type of grave where after digging straight down, you then dig an enclave; a niche, the *lahad*, at the bottom, on the Qiblah side of the wall to hold the *mawayit*. This model is most desired but is only practical where the soil is firm. The body is placed in the recess or enclave, which is then covered neatly using timber or unbaked bricks/tiles.

**Shiq** is the other type of grave, which is what we have in Scotland. Here a shallow trench is dug in the centre of the main pit of the grave. Where the soil is not firm enough to accommodate a *Lahad*, as the case here in Scotland, *Shiq* is the only option. The body is placed in the shallow trench and then covered by unbaked bricks, strong tiles or timber neatly cut to the size.

## THE GHUSL (OR THE BODY WASH)

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In Masjids around Edinburgh and in Scotland there are experienced men and women available to oversee this task. Each Masjid, where this facility is available has a core team of volunteers who are experienced. It is nevertheless worth remembering a few points in brief:-

- Only a male can wash a deceased **male**,
- Only a female can wash a deceased **female**,
- For a married person, the wife **may** perform the washing, but it is not preferred. It is not permissible for the husband to wash his deceased wife<sup>41</sup>.
- For a minor child, either males or females may do the washing.

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<sup>41</sup> Shāmi. The *nikah* of a married person ends with the demise of his wife. The wife's death marks the end of their nikah concerning matters related to this world. The wife on the other hand, if the husband passes away, remains entitled to claim expenses from his assets (in addition to the inheritance) due to her being in *iddah* (the mourning period). Hence, she has the permission to touch her husband even after his death, because the effects of the nikah continue for another four months. The concept of *Iddah* is discussed in part 5 of this booklet.

The other key points are as follows:

- The pre-burial washing (*Ghusl*) of a body is *wajib*. A body buried without a *ghusl* (ritual wash) is a sin on the shoulders of the whole community.
- The *ghusl* may be performed by anyone. However, it is recommended that only the close relatives (people with concern and compassion for the *mayyit*) and trustworthy pious individuals carry this out<sup>42</sup>.
- During the *ghusl*, if any faults are noticed in the *mayyit*, they should strictly be kept private and must not be disclosed to anyone. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘one who washes a mayyit and connives at something odious Allah ﷻ shall forgive him forty times’<sup>43</sup>. In another narration it is stated that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘such a person is made as a clean of sins as he was the day he was born’<sup>44</sup>.
- The *sunnah* model of *ghusl* should also be followed in this final wash. i.e. start with cleaning and wiping any apparent impurity, followed by a *wudhu* and completed with the wash of the entire body. The water should be poured over the body three, five or seven (odd numbers) times. The right side of the body should be washed before the left side. During the *wudhu* rinsing the mouth and nostrils is not necessary.

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<sup>42</sup> Musnad Ahmad, Baihaqi

<sup>43</sup> Riyadh us-Salihin, quoting Mustadrak of Hākim

<sup>44</sup> Musnad Ahmad

- It is *mustahab* (preferred) to use soap or another appropriate detergent during the wash.
- All the participants should be clean and pure i.e. in the state of *wudhu*. In the case of ladies women attending the *ghusl* must not be in menses or in post natal bleeding. Anyone in a state that necessitates *ghusl* must not take part in washing of the *mayyit*.
- An utmost effort should be made to keep the *mayyit's* *satr* (the private area of the body) covered. While cleaning this area the person carrying out this task must wear thick and heavy duty gloves or wrap such a cloth around the hand.
- If any impurity is discharged after the *ghusl* is completed, like blood, puss or excrement then the *ghusl* should not be repeated. Just cleaning the affected area or wiping is sufficient.
- After the *ghusl* is completed it is recommended that some kafoor <sup>45</sup>(camphor, a white volatile crystalline substance with an aromatic smell) is put on those parts of the body which are used in prostration (*sujood*) during *Salāh*. They are palms, toes, knees, forehead and the tip of the nose.

Some Jurists have also stated that when bathing a *mayyit*, water should not be too hot or too cold as the *mayyit* also feels just as the living feel<sup>46</sup>. As with regards to hearing, many *Ahādith* confirm this, but it should be understood that Allah

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<sup>45</sup> Bukhari

<sup>46</sup> This was discussed in part in part 2, under the heading 'Post mortem'.

*ta'ala* allows the *mayyit* to hear what He ﷺ may choose, i.e. a person cannot hear of his own free will.

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## THE KAFN (SHROUD)

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The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘when anyone from amongst you takes responsibility of giving *Kafn* to a (Muslim) brother (or sister) of his, he should try giving the best’<sup>47</sup>. In another narration it is reported that he ﷺ also said, ‘this is because the dead shall be raised in these shrouds and that they visit each other (in the hear-after until the day of Judgment) in these *kafns*’<sup>48</sup>.

A shroud should be of good quality but not extravagantly expensive. For example it is not permitted for a man or a woman to be buried in a silk shroud, as this is extravagance. Ali ؑ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘do not buy expensive shrouds’<sup>49</sup>.

The shroud or its price may be taken from the wealth of the deceased even if that is the only wealth he or she had. If there is no money left by a *mayyit* the responsibility then first falls

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<sup>47</sup> Muslim, Abu Dawood

<sup>48</sup> Kanz ul-Ūmmāl

<sup>49</sup> Abu-Dawood

on the relatives according to the proportion of what they were to receive from his assets if s/he were to leave behind any.<sup>50</sup>

If there are no relatives, or the relatives are poor too, then the responsibility transfers to the public treasury. If even this is not possible, then the community as a whole has the responsibility to raise funds to cover the cost of the burial.

Money donated to a Masjid for its maintenance cannot be used to cover the costs of the burial of the poor.

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## PREFERABLE PRACTICES IN SHROUDING<sup>51</sup>

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The shroud should be relatively comfortable, clean and large enough to cover the entire body. A shroud should be white, as this is the recommendation of our beloved Prophet ﷺ.<sup>52</sup> The shroud should also be scented and perfumed. It should, where possible, be three wraps for a man and five wraps for a woman.

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## MEN'S SHROUD

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A man's shroud consists of three parts:

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<sup>50</sup> Further details on this may be found in part 5 under 'the Meerath'.

<sup>51</sup> The terminology in this section about the 'kafn' is borrowed from the 'fi-sabilillah publication, 'what to do when a Muslim dies'.

<sup>52</sup> Tirmidhi, Abu-Dawood

1. **Izar / Loin Cloth:** a sheet of cloth to cover the lower part of the *mayyit*, which serves as the loin cloth.
2. **Qamis / Kurta:** another sheet of cloth to serve as the long shirt to cover the upper part of the body. A long sheet of cloth is folded in half and from the centre a T shaped cut is made for the neck front region without sleeves.
3. **Lifāfah** – this is the largest sheet of cloth that covers the entire body of the mayyit, from the head to toe.

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### WOMEN'S SHROUD

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A woman's shroud consists of five layers. Three as listed above and the remaining two are described below:

1. **Scarf (or chādar):** another medium sized sheet of cloth which serves as a scarf to cover the hair of a female mayyit.
2. **Sina'band:** is the chest wrap, almost similar to the size of the *scarf* above that is gently wrapped around the chest of a female mayyit.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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- It is useful to have three stripes of cotton material, usually cut from the main shroud (*kafn*) material, to tie around the mayyit to ensure that the shroud remains in place and does not fall off.
- If a Hājjī (someone who is travelling to Makkah for a pilgrimage and is in the state of *Iharām*) dies, he is to

be washed in the same way as the ordinary *mawayit* but he or she should be shrouded in the clothes of the Ihram<sup>53</sup>. Male Hājjī's head should not be covered, nor should any perfume be applied to such a *mawayit* because the restrictions of *Ihram* still apply to them.

## A CHILD'S SHROUD

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If an immature (non-bāligh) child passes away then if s/he has grown up in height to be like those who have reached the age of puberty s/he should be treated as the one fully grown. Such a boy shall receive shroud as a man and such a girl should be shrouded as a woman.

If a child dies much younger then it is permissible for such a boy or girl to be given a shroud similar to a man or a woman, i.e. three pieces for a boy and five for a girl. However, it is also permissible that such a young boy is given shroud consisting only of one piece and a girl in only two pieces.

An infant that passes away soon after the birth, should also be washed and shrouded.

A still birth child should be washed but is not given a full kafn. Instead they are wrapped in a piece of cloth and buried. Such still-born babies do not even require a funeral prayer. However, giving them a name before their burial is recommended.

Early still birth where the fetus has not fully formed the shape of a baby (i.e. where the body parts are not recognizable) does

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<sup>53</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

not require any rituals. It should simply be wrapped in a cloth and buried.

## THE METHOD OF SHROUDING:

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### First:

- Place **three** thin strips of cotton material for tying the shroud. Tape them outside the coffin to keep them in position.
- The stripes must be placed, one near the head, one in the middle point of the body and one near the feet.
- Spread the **Lifafah** (the outer sheet) in the coffin.
- Spread the **Sina'band** (chest piece) from the shoulder position.
- Spread **Izar** (the loin cloth) from the feet and upwards.
- Spread the back of the **Qamis** (shirt) and roll up the front and keep it near head end, from neck down to feet.
- Leave the **scarf** (the chādar) on one side which will be put on last.

### Then:

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- Lower the body gently on to the Kafn / shroud. Cover the top part of the body up to the calves with the folded portion of **Qamis**.
- Remove the sheet used for covering the body after ghusl.
- Rub **camphor** mixture on places of Sajdah Forehead, nose, both palms, knees and forefeet.
- The hair should be divided into two parts and put onto the right and left shoulder over **Qamis**.
- Cover the head and hair with the **scarf**. Do not fasten, but tuck in properly.
- Fold the **Izar** the left flap first and then the right over the Qamis and scarf.
- Now close the **Sina'band** (chest cover) in the same manner as above.
- Close the **Lifafah**, the left flap first then right.
- Lastly fasten the ends of the Lifafah at the head-side, Then the feet and then around the middle with the strips of cloth, to keep the complete kafn in place. These knots should be opened if the burial is to take place inside the coffin before closing the lid.

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### PROHIBITIONS IN OR ON THE KAFN:

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*A mayyit* usually disintegrates in the grave. It is also likely to decompose and decay after a few days causing discharge of

impurities from the body. So in order to ensure total respect to the Qur'an and the name of Allah it is prohibited:

1. to enclose any charter, or verses of the Holy Qur'an or any *du`ā`* in the *kafn*.
2. or to write *with the pen or ink* the *Kalimah*, or any other *du`ā`* on the *kafn* or chest of the dead person.

### PLACING THE MAYYIT ON A DISPLAY

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It is customary that after being shrouded the mayyit is brought out and placed in an open place for the relatives, friends and the well wishers to have a glance at their loved one for the one last time. In order to ensure compliance with the *sunnah*, the following points should be observed:

It is recommended that the funeral *Salāh* and the burial must not be delayed unnecessarily. Hence, the above practices should not be allowed to cause any delay to the funeral prayer.

Secondly, it is sometimes possible that some signs of the afterlife destination appear on a mayyit as it moves closer to its final place of rest. We often hear about such experiences. May Allah ﷻ forbid, it is possible that these effects are undesired.

Hence, to save Muslims from such embarrassments it is better that this practice is avoided where possible.

Thirdly, the ruling of not looking at and not being seen by *non-mehrams* or strangers remain applicable even after the death.<sup>54</sup> It is a responsibility of the people looking after a *mayyit* to ensure that these guidelines are followed. Where there is a fear of a possible wrong doing, everyone is obliged to state in their will asking the appointed executer of the will to ensure that respect is shown to the commands of Allah ﷻ regarding Halāl and Harām.

While sitting beside a *mayyit*, after the *ghusl* is performed, it is better to recite the Quran or to engage in du'ā. Some of the du'ās are also included in part 1 of this booklet under the heading 'A few supplications for the bereaved family'.

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### THE FINAL TRIBUTES BY THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

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In Islam, there is no custom of praising a *mayyit* at the time of its funeral. The new emerging trend of holding a session of moaning before or at the end of the Janāzah Salāh, where friends and family members stand up and pay tributes to the *mayyit* was unheard of in the early days of Islam.

The Janāzah of a relative or a close friend is a time for reflection and to engage in unnecessary social meetings is viewed as inappropriate. Hasan Al-Basari رضي الله عنه was once asked, as he accompanied a *mayyit* for Janāzah, about the *mayyit*. He was asked, 'whose Janāzah is it?' He replied, 'Yours! and if that offends you, mine.' What he meant was that this is not a time to engage in idle talk. This is time to

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<sup>54</sup> The funeral of Sayyida Fatima رضي الله عنها, the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ is one such example.

ponder over the untrustworthy nature of life, the death and its aftermath.

The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘the death is enough of a reminder’<sup>55</sup>. i.e. you need no reminders, khutba or talks at the time of funerals.

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## THE CARRIAGE OF THE MAYYIT

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Before a mayyit is laid to rest, it is moved from one place to another (like hospital, home, Mortuary, to be washed and shrouded, and then for *Janāzah*, and burial etc). There are etiquettes that involve one being gentle and respectful throughout this process.

Walking in front of a people carrying the mayyit is viewed as disrespectful and *makrooh*. People present should pay utmost respect to such transfers and help it run smooth. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘do not raise your voices with *zīkr* at the time of carrying a mayyit. Do not carry fire with a mayyit and do not walk in front of a mayyit (while in procession).’<sup>56</sup>

After placing the deceased in the coffin, it should be carried on the 'shoulders' from all four sides and everyone must keep changing so that all present have the opportunity to help in carrying the deceased to the graveyard. They should walk at a

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<sup>55</sup> Baihiqiy

<sup>56</sup> Abu-Dawood, Ahmad

relatively fast pace while carrying the Janāzah but not so fast that the mayyit starts to shake<sup>57</sup>.

If the cemetery or grave yard is at a distance that cannot be walked to, then to carry the mayyit on a vehicle to the graveyard is also permissible.

While carrying the coffin, the deceased's head must be towards the front, this is the *sunnah* method. As for the people accompanying the mayyit, it is better for them to proceed behind the Janāzah, but owing to the crowd or considering the space for the people, only if necessary, it is permissible to proceed [i.e. to walk or be in a transporting vehicle] in front of the Janāzah or to the left and right sides of it too.

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### POINTS TO CONSIDER

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- It is permissible to carry the corpse of a deceased child, an infant or a small child in one's arms, individually by different persons.
- The people escorting the Janāzah should remain silent. They must not engage in worldly talk or discuss any such affairs. It is *Makrooh* to *raise one's voice* with a Du'ā or any other form of *zīkr*. But it is *Mustahab* (preferred) for them to recite لا إله إلا الله softly and to ponder in their hearts over the death, its aftermath and whether or not they feel prepared to witness or face this natural phase of life<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Hidāyah

<sup>58</sup> Tahtāvi

- It is *Makrooh* to sit in the graveyard before the *mayyit* is brought down the shoulders.
- When praying the Janāzah Salāh, the *mayyit* is placed before the Imām in such a way that when he stands facing the Qibla, the head of the deceased is to his right and the feet to his left.
- If the *mayyit* is of a neighbor, relative or a pious God-fearing person then to accompany the *mayyit* to a cemetery carries more merits than engaging in *nafl* Salāh.<sup>59</sup>

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## PART 3:

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### The Funeral Prayer (Janāzah Salāh)

*'The first gift given to a believer by the Almighty after his death is that whoever attends his funeral is granted forgiveness.'*

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<sup>59</sup> Alamgiri

## THE VIRTUES OF ATTENDING A FUNERAL PRAYER

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The Janāzah Salāh is *Fardh kifāyah* for all Muslims. Fardh kifāyah are acts that bear a communal responsibility. The community as a whole must ensure that the Janāzah and burial duties are performed properly. Even if a small section of the community carries it out the entire community will be relieved before the Almighty ﷻ.

There is nothing that pleases Allah ﷻ more than being obeyed in matters that He ﷻ declared to be obligatory (fardh) upon mankind. The Prophet ﷺ has reported the Almighty ﷻ as saying that ‘no act of piety on the part of my servant pleases me more than what I have prescribed for him as a duty’<sup>60</sup>. Hence participating in a funeral prayer is better than performing all the charitable acts in the world, which are not *fardh*.

The Prophet ﷺ also said, that one who prays the Janāzah Salāh, will earn the reward of one *Qeerāt* (one *Qeerāt* is equal to the mountain of *Uhud*<sup>61</sup>) and when he goes to the graveyard and stays there until the burial is completed, he will earn the reward of two *Qeerāt* of heavenly reward.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bukhāri

<sup>61</sup> The largest mountain in Madina, Saudi Arabia

<sup>62</sup> Sunan Abi-Dawood

The Prophet ﷺ also said that ‘the first gift given to a believer by the Almighty after his death is that whoever attends his funeral is granted forgiveness’<sup>63</sup>.

## WOMEN’S ROLE IN FUNERALS:

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*Janāzah Salāh* is not *wājib* (a duty) on women; however, if a woman *happened to be* present at a funeral and she performed *Janāzah Salāh*, it will be valid.<sup>64</sup> It is not permissible for women *to accompany* a mayyit whether for *Janāzah Salāh* or to the cemetery.<sup>65</sup> Hence women should not hold gatherings in the Masjid prior to *Janāzah Salāh* nor should they attend a Masjid especially for *Janāzah Salāh*.

Once the Prophet ﷺ saw a group of women sitting. He asked them for the reason of their get together. ‘We are waiting for a *Janāzah* O Prophet of Allah’, they replied. He asked, “Do you intend to wash (give *ghusl* to) the *mayyit*?’ Their reply was in negative. He ﷺ then asked, “Are you going to carry the mayyit to the graveyard?’ ‘No’, again was the reply. He further enquired ‘So you will be burying the mayyit, along with men?’ hinting to something that was clearly not permissible. ‘No, O Prophet of Allah’, they responded in unison. At this point the Prophet ﷺ instructed them, ‘then

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<sup>63</sup> Al-Bazzār, as is stated in *Kanz ul-Ūmmāl*

<sup>64</sup> Shāmi

<sup>65</sup> Shāmi

return back to your houses with a burden of sin on your shoulders'.<sup>66</sup>

The burden of burial is on the shoulders of men. Women are spared from this duty. They are given private space and time to reflect and come to terms with the tragedy. Also women may find it difficult to control their emotions and may end up expressing these emotions in ways that are not permissible. This would make the task of burial even more difficult for those involved. Hence the Prophet ﷺ has asked women to stay at home. They should engage in du'ā. They should turn their thoughts to Allah ﷻ pleading before Him to forgive, grant Jannah and show mercy to the deceased.

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Your Lord is noble and generous, he feels embarrassed sending someone who raises his [or her] hands in supplication before Him, empty handed'<sup>67</sup>. So the most appropriate act for women to engage in is to remain focused at their Creator, Allah the Almighty, seeking strength for themselves and forgiveness for the deceased.

The women's role in funeral is primarily to bereave with dignity and to engage in supplication on behalf of the deceased. This is an important task that carries many virtues and is of great benefit. For further details on the importance and benefits of making du'ā for *mawayyits* refer to part 1, where you shall also find a list of du'ās for the deceased.

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<sup>66</sup> Sunan Ibn Mājah.

<sup>67</sup> Tirmidhi, Abu-Dawood

Imām Bukhāri رحمته الله has recorded a Hadith of Umm Atiyyah رضي الله عنها that she said, 'We (women folk) were prohibited from following the Janāzah, i.e. to the graveyard.<sup>68</sup> '. So as women are asked not to accompany a mayyit, whether for Janāzah Salāh or for the burial, the burden of the burial and preparation is also not placed on their shoulders.

As for women visiting a grave yard after the burial is completed, let us ponder over this subject in a little details, as the reports on this matter and the views of Muslim scholars are different.

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'May Allah ta'ala curse women who visit the graves.'<sup>69</sup> This Hadith totally prohibits women from visiting the graveyard, even at times other than funerals. However, Abdullah ibn Mas'ood رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'I had prohibited you from visiting the graves, but (as of now) you all should visit graveyards for it serves as a reminder of the life here-after.'<sup>70</sup> This Hadith is general and includes males and females.

Some scholars are of the opinion that women should also be allowed to visit graveyards. However, they stress that this visit should be allowed only if it is certain that the women will be able to hold their emotions and won't fall into the forbidden territory, e.g. moaning aloud, tearing their cloths, showing disrespect to the decree of God, kissing and embracing the

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<sup>68</sup> Bukhari

<sup>69</sup> Tirmidhi

<sup>70</sup> Muslim

graves, etc. No example in the age of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions can be found of a woman visiting the graveyard in order to supplicate or to pray. In fact many were of the opinion that women are prohibited from visiting the graveyards altogether.

Imam Bukhari r.a. has reported an interesting story about the family of *sayyiduna* Hasan b. Ali ؓ. His son passed away. This tragedy left his daughter in law, the deceased wife, in such a state of distress that she put a tent over his grave and stayed there for a whole year. She then moved back to her house and removed the tent.

As she left the grave to move back to her house she heard one shouting and saying, who could not be seen, 'Have they found what they lost?' and another replied, 'No, they have given hope and gone away'.

This incident as it portrays a beautiful picture of femininity and futile ways of expressing devotion it also points out that no one forced her to leave the grave yard and they gave the lady time and space to overcome her emotions.

We find another similar even in the life of the Prophet s. Anas d reports that the Prophet s passed by a woman who was weeping at a grave. He s said, 'Fear Allah and remain patient'. She not recognizing the Prophet s replied, 'Go away! For you have not been afflicted as I have'. She was later told that he was the Messenger of Allah s. So she hurried to his door, and finding no doorkeepers there she said, 'I did not recognize you'. He s replied 'Sabr (the endurance) is shown only at the first blow'.<sup>71</sup> What he meant that time heals the wounds any

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<sup>71</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

way. Everyone has to come to terms with the reality of death one day. So a believer should try restraining his or her emotions when first hearing about the tragedy.

## THE METHOD OF FUNERAL PRAYER:

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The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘when you pray (Janāzah) upon a dead person supplicate for him sincerely’<sup>72</sup>. Hence it can be said that the essence of the funeral prayer is not *Ibādah* (worship) but is *du’ā* (supplication).

In another narration he ﷺ said, ‘when one of you supplicates he should begin with praising his Lord and glorifying Him, then he should pray for the Prophet ﷺ – durood-shareef – and finally he should supplicate for whatever he may wish’.<sup>73</sup>

The Janāzah Salāh consists of four *takbeers*, *thanā* (praising the Almighty), durood (sending peace and blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ) and a *sunnah du’ā* for the deceased. The *Salāh* is concluded with two salāms. All these are said silently by both the Imām and the Muqtadies (the people behind the Imām in *Salāh*). With the exception that the Imām should call out the *takbeers* and salām aloud.

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<sup>72</sup> Abu-Dawood

<sup>73</sup> Abu-Dawood, Tirmidhi, Nasa’iee

## WHO LEADS THE JANĀZAH SALĀH?

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The Imām of the local mosque normally leads the funeral prayer.<sup>74</sup> If for any reason he is not going to be present at the Salāt ul-Janāzah then the closest relative of the mayyit has the authority to move himself to the front and lead the funeral prayer, only if he is fully conversant with the proceedings of the funeral prayer.

Generally Imams encourage the relatives, or the closest relative, to lead the Janāzah Salāh. This has many benefits. Some scholars are of the opinion that the closes relative has more right to lead the funeral prayer, if he is fully conversant with the matters of *deen*.

Others argue that since the deceased was happy to pray behind the Imam of his local Masjid in his life he would surely be happy for his Janāzah Salāh to be lead by the same Imam.

Many Jurists point out that the Imām of the local Masjid, especially if he is learned and devoted to *deen*, is given preference to lead the funeral prayer in the absence of the Caliph or his deputy. However, if the closest relative of a mayyit is also pious and devoted to *deen* then it is also permissible for him to lead the funeral prayer.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> فذكر في الأصل أن إمام الحي أحق بالصلاة على الميت (بدائع الصنائع، كتاب الصلاة، فصل في بيان من له ولاية الصلاة على الميت: كذا في المحيط البرهاني

<sup>75</sup> وذلك أن تقديم الولاية واجب وتقديم إمام الحي مندوب فقط بشرط أن يكون أفضل من الولي (البر المختار)

## THE OBLIGATIONS (FARADH ACTS) IN JANĀZAH SALĀH

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1. To perform the *Salāh* while standing up straight.
2. To recite all the four *takbeers*.

## THE SUNNAH MANNER OF PERFORMING THE JANĀZAH SALĀH

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- The body of the deceased is placed at the front, in the Qiblah direction with the head on the Right side of the Imām, as he stands facing the Qiblah.
- It is *mustahab* (preferred) to make an odd number of rows of the funeral congregation. The Prophet s said, ‘if a Muslim passes away and three rows of Muslims pray over him it will assure him [of Paradise].<sup>76</sup> He s also said, ‘verily Allah is *watr* (the One) and He likes *al-watr* (the odd number)’.<sup>77</sup>
- The rows for Janāzah Salāh should be close to one another, because there is no *Sajdah* (prostration) to be made.
- As for the shoes, if the shoes do not have any *najāsah* (impurity) on them, which normally is the case with many, then there is no need to remove them, particularly during the cold weather, when there is fear of becoming ill if the

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<sup>76</sup> Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi

<sup>77</sup> Muslim

shoes are removed. Otherwise, if there is a *najāsah* on the shoes, then removing them is necessary.

- Bringing the mayyit into Masjid is *makrooh* (disliked). Same applies to situations where only the mayyit is placed outside the Masjid.
- After the rows are straightened it is beneficial, like in all the acts of worship, to renew one's intention. 'I am performing the Janāzah Salāh for Allah ﷻ behind this Imām'.
- The funeral prayer does not have any *rukoo'* (bowing down) or *sujood* (prostration). It is a *du'ā* which is said while standing up and with four *takbeers*<sup>78</sup>.

## THE PROCEDURE OF JANĀZAH SALĀH

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As mentioned earlier there is no *rukoo'* (bowing down) or *sujood* (prostration) in the Janāzah prayer. Imām and the Muqtadies (people praying behind the Imām) stand facing the Qibla while the mayyit is placed in front of the Imām. Imām calls *takbeer* (Allah u Akbar) four times and *muqtadies* follow him.

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<sup>78</sup> A consensus amongst the Sahābah ﷺ was reached during the time of Umar ﷺ on this. (Kitāb ul-Āthār of Imām Muhammad)

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## THE 1ST TAKBEER

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After standing up neatly in rows hands should be raised up to the ear lobes, and the Imām should say loudly,

الله أكبر

Allāhu akbar

*Allah is the Greatest*

and the *Muqtadies* softly. Then they should fold their hands under the navel similar to other daily prayers. Then recite the thana, (below) softly:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ وَجَلَّ ثَنَاؤُكَ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا عَيْزُكَ

Subhānaka allāhumma wa bihamdika wa tabārak-asmuka wa ta'āla jadduka wa jalla thanā-uka wa lāl ilāha ghayruka

### **Translation:**

*Glory be to You Oh Allah, and praise be to You, and blessed is Your name, and exalted is Your Majesty, and there is none to be served besides You.*

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## THE 2ND TAKBEER:

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The Imām will then recite the Takbeer (Allāhu akbar) aloud and the *Muqtadies* softly for the second time. The hands should

not be raised when saying this and all subsequent Takbeers<sup>79</sup>.  
The Durood e Ibrahimi should now be recited:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ. اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ

Allāhumma salli alā Muhammadin wa alā āli Muhammadin  
kamā sallayta alā ibrāheema wa 'alā āli ibrāheema innaka  
hameedun majeed. Allāhumma bārik 'alā Muhammadin wa  
'alā āli Muhammadin kamā bārakta 'alā ibrāheema wa 'alā āli  
ibrāheema innaka hameedun majeed.

### Translation:

*Oh Allah! Shower Your mercy upon Muhammad ﷺ and the followers  
of Muhammad ﷺ, as You showered Your mercy upon Ibrahim ﷺ  
and the followers of Ibrahim ﷺ. Behold You are Praise worthy,  
Glorious. Oh Allah! Shower Your blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, and  
the followers of Muhammad ﷺ as You showered Your blessings upon  
Ibrahim ﷺ and the followers of Ibrahim ﷺ. Behold You are Praise  
worthy, Glorious.*

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### THE 3RD TAKBBER:

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Thereafter the Takbeer should be said for the third time, and  
the following *du'ā* is recited for an adult male or female:

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<sup>79</sup> Dār Qutny v. 2, on the authority of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَعَائِبِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرِنَا وَأُنثَانَا.  
 اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ<sup>80</sup>

Allāhumma ighfir lihayyinā, wa mayyitinā, wa shāhidinā, wa ghā-ibinā, wa sagheerinā, wa kabeerinā, wa dhakarinā wa unthānā. Allāhumma man ahyaytahoo minnā fa ahyihee 'alal islām wa man tawaffaytahoo minnā fatawaffahoo 'alal iemān

### Translation:

*Oh Allah! Forgive those of us that are alive and those of us that are dead; those of us that are present, and those of us that are absent; those of us that are young, and those of us that are old, and our males and our females. Oh Allah! Whomsoever of us You keep alive, let him live as a follower of Islam, and whomsoever of us You cause to die, let him die as a Believer.*

For a child who has not reached the age of puberty the following *du'ā* should be recited after the third takbeer:

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### DU'Ā FOR A BOY:

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اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ لَنَا فَرْطًا وَاجْعَلْهُ لَنَا أَجْرًا وَذُخْرًا وَاجْعَلْهُ لَنَا شَافِعًا وَمُشَفَّعًا

Allāhumma ij'alhu lanā faratan, wa j'alhu lanā ajran wa dhukhran wa j' alhu lanā shāfi'an wa mushaffa'an.

### Translation:

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<sup>80</sup> Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu-Dawood

*O Allah, make him a means for our salvation, and make him a reward and treasure for us in the Hereafter, and make him an intercessor for us, one whose intercession is accepted by you.*

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### DU'Ā FOR A GIRL:

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اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْهَا لَنَا فَرْطًا وَّاجْعَلْهَا لَنَا اَجْرًا وَّذُخْرًا وَّاجْعَلْهَا لَنَا شَافِعَةً وَّمُشَفَّعَةً

Allāhumma ij'alhā lanā faratan, wa j'alhā lanā ajran wa dhukhran wa j' alhā lanā shāfi'atan wa mushaffa'atan

### Translation:

*Oh Allah! make her a means of our salvation; and make her a source of reward and treasure for us; and make her an intercessor such that her intercession is accepted.*

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### THE 4TH TAKBEER:

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The Imām should say the fourth Takbeer and thereafter recite the Salām aloud twice, first while turning his face to the right and second while turning his face to the left. The *Muqtadies* should follow their Imām by saying the Takbeer and Salām softly.

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### IF YOU ARRIVE LATE:

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When a late comer fears that if he tried to go for wudhu, he may miss the *Janāzah Salāh*, then it is permissible for him to perform *Tayammum* and join the *Jama'at*. This concession applies only to the *Janāzah Salāh*. The method of *tayammum* is given on the following pages. However, it is worth mentioning that with this *tayammum* he cannot pray any other *Salāh*.

One who arrives late at a funeral and finds the prayer to be already in progress should wait until the Imām calls a takbeer, which may be the 3<sup>rd</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup>. If the Imām is found to have just called the first takbeer the latecomer should join the prayer without any hesitation.

If the Imām is found to have already called the 2<sup>nd</sup> takbeer too, or the 3<sup>rd</sup> one as well, the latecomer should wait until the Imām calls the following takbeer at which point this person should join in the prayer with the congregation and continue thereafter until the Imām calls the final takbeer leading to salam.

When Imām finishes the Salāh this latecomer should continue with the prayer and perform what he has missed, starting from the thana, the opening recitation, and calling out the missed *takbeers*. He should try to complete his prayer without any delay and make it brief.

When Imām finishes the prayer, the mayyit is likely to be carried away by the people soon after. It is important that all those catching up with the missed *takbeers* complete their *Salāh* before the mayyit is removed from in front of the congregation. If one is unable to recite any du'ā he may not recite any and should simply call the missed *takbeers*.<sup>81</sup>

If the Imām has completed the fourth *Takbeer* then, the latecomer should join (before the Imām says the Salām) and

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<sup>81</sup> Fath ul-Qadeer

complete all the missed *Takbeers* in the manner described above<sup>82</sup>.

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### SOME KEY NOTES:

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Salāh will be valid if the four *takbeers* are recited in a standing up state, but if any *takbeer* is missed then the Salāh will be void. The Du'ās that are recited in Janāzah *Salāh* are *sunnah*. Hence it is important that these du'ās are learnt and memorized by heart.

One who has already learnt how to perform their daily prayers should not find it difficult to learn the Janāzah Salāh. We recite Thana and Durood Ibrahimī in every Salāh. Therefore the only du'ā that remains to be learnt is the one that is after the third *takbeer*, which is not very difficult to memorize. What is our worth, if we are not even able to honour our dead, and loved ones, with the last rites of du'ā for them!

If one has been buried without a valid Janāzah Salāh, then Janāzah Salāh must be performed by the deceased's grave within 3 days. It is also said that the Janāzah *Salāh* has to be performed before the body begins to decompose in the grave<sup>83</sup>. This duration would differ from climate to climate. In colder climates this process should start relatively later.

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<sup>82</sup> Fatawa Ālamgiri

<sup>83</sup> Shāmi

## TAYAMMUM

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A pre-requisite for *Salāh* is purity and cleanliness of the body, the place and the clothes. Where water is not available or not accessible or is harmful (due to ill-health etc.) an alternative model of the ritual purity is prescribed by the Almighty Allah ﷻ in the Qur'an. This alternative model is called *tayammum*, which has a lot more common with showing humility than cleanliness as the term is commonly understood.

The method of *tayammum* is as follows:

- First strike both hands on clean earth or dust.
  - Then dust the hands and blow off the excess dust or earth on the hands.
  - Rub both the hands over the complete face without leaving a hair's breadth of space.
- Again strike both hands on the ground.
  - Then dust the hands and blow off the excess dust.
  - Rub the left hand over the complete right hand all the way up to and including the elbow (the area washed in a wudhu).
  - Rub the right hand over the complete left-hand in a similar way.
- If one is wearing a ring it is necessary to remove it or at least revolve it.

Further details about *tayammum* can be learnt from the books of Fiqh.

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# PART 4:

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## The Cemetery

## TRANSFERRING THE MAYYIT TO THE BURIAL SITE IN THE CEMETERY

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As the funeral prayer is completed the *mayyit* becomes ready to be carried to the cemetery. This should be done straight away without any delay.

It is worth remembering that a *mayyit*, as it slowly progresses towards its final abode, often begins to display the signs of what is going to be its destination; Jannah or Jahannam. Many incidents are reported where individu'āl *mayyits* were seen having a smile on their faces etc. Many talk about the beautiful fragrance that emerged out of coffins. May Allah forbid, it is possible that signs of punishment may also appear for the wrong-doers.

It is hence strongly recommended that after the Janāzah Salāh is performed the *mayyit* is immediately taken to the cemetery. A common mistake at this point is that relatives want to see their loved one for one last time. While everyone appreciates such requests, it is nevertheless better for the *mayyit* not to be opened after the Janāzah Salāh. Opening it for 'one final glance' may be a desire of the family but it may disturb the peace that the *mayyit* is enjoying.

Furthermore, if there are some unfortunate signs, it may lead to unnecessary gossip in the community, which at times may totally be untrue, as the Most Merciful Lord often grants the *mayyits* what the relatives and the people hope and pray for.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, the Paradise is promised for that believer for whom three rows of Muslims pray at the funeral. (*Abu-*

As the *mayyit* is lifted from in front of the Imām and is carried to the cemetery there is no specific du'ā or the prayer that is recommended here. This is time for reflection. Hasan Al-Basriyy was once asked about a mayyit that was being carried to a cemetery that who it was. He replied, that is you being carried for burial. After a short pause he said, 'or it is me'. He in fact was saying that this is not a time to indulge in vain talk. This is time to reflect as that is the destiny that awaits us all.

Upon arriving at the cemetery people should recite the du'ā when entering the Muslim section of the graveyard. This is as follows:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ, وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ  
 اللَّهُ لَلْآحْفُونَ, أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ لَنَا وَلَكُمْ الْعَافِيَةَ<sup>85</sup>

Assalāmu alaikum Ahlad diyār minal mu'mineen wal  
 muslimeen wa innā Inshā Allahu lalāhiqoon, as'alullaha lanā  
 wa lakumul 'āfiya.

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*Dawood*) The companion of the Prophet ﷺ who narrated this Hadith had since a habit that he would make people stand in at least three rows at the funeral even if they were not so many. (Tirmidhi)

85 Muslim

*Peace be upon you, O believers and Muslims dwelling in these abodes. Behold, if Allah wills, we shall meet you. We beseech from Allah safety for us and for you.*

The *mayyit* should be brought and placed besides its grave, on the Qibla side of the pit.

## THE BURIAL:

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The Prophet ﷺ gave the following instructions when laying to rest those Muslims who fell in the battle of Uhud, ‘Make the grave pits spacious, dig them deep and give the best burial.’<sup>86</sup>

The following should be observed when performing the burial:

- It is recommended that the body is lowered into the grave from the Qiblah side. So upon arrival at the grave the body is first placed at the edge of the pit on the Qibla side and from there it is lowered into the grave.
- The closest relatives should be given preference when lowering the *mayyit* into the pit of the grave.
- With women *mayyits* care should be taken that these are not exposed to the *non-mehrams* (men that are not close relatives).
- Ensure that the base of the grave pit is dry and suitable for the placement of the *mayyit*. If the soil is wet, or

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<sup>86</sup> Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu-Dawood,

where the base of the grave is watery, fill the base with a few layers of dry sand to make it neat and dry.

- Lower the mayyit gently in to the grave pit.
- The following du'ā<sup>87</sup> should be recited when lowering the body in to the grave:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَبِاللَّهِ وَعَلَىٰ مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

*In the name of Allah and with His aid and on the Madhab (deen) of the Rasul of Allah [I place him in the grave]*

- Open any knots that were tied on the shroud.
- During the burial metal or material baked in the fire, e.g. bricks etc should not be used.
- The closest relatives of the mayyit, who have more compassion and regard for the mayyit, should perform this task where possible.
- Ensure that the body is facing the Qibla when laid to rest in the grave. For this purpose the mayyit should be placed turned to the right, facing towards the Qibla. Merely turning of the head to the right is not sufficient.
- If the grave is spacious, the body should be placed as close to the wall towards the Qibla as possible.
- A solid cover, wood panels etc. should be placed above the *mayyit* to ensure cleanliness and respect, and to protect it from being covered with the dust.

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<sup>87</sup> Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah

- Participants should take part in pouring the sand, to fill the grave. Everyone should try pouring a handful of dust three times, and recite the following:

(from earth did we create you) مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ

(and in to it shall we return you) وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ

(and from it shall we bring you out again) وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى

- Having filled the grave the outwardly appearance of the Qabr should be of oval shape, not rectangular or square. There should also be a hump of sand, not taller than one hand span.
- If it is not raining, small quantities of water should be sprinkled over the Qabr.
- It is recommended for the relatives and the close associates to stay besides the Qabr after the burial for some time, making du'ā for the mayyit and to recite the Qur'an for him or her.

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### POINTS TO CONSIDER:

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Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'when a Muslim passes away do not hold his mayyit back and take him to his *Qabr* without any delay. Recite the opening verses of *Surah al-Baqarah* besides his head [after the burial], and the last few verses towards his feet'.<sup>88</sup> This has also been

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<sup>88</sup> Baihaqi

the practice of our Ulama.<sup>89</sup>

It is established from the *Sunnah* that after the burial, you should make du'ā for the deceased's steadfastness, because at this stage the mayyit faces questioning.

Stay a little while at the grave side and pray for the forgiveness of the deceased and make du'ā that the mayyit remains confident and well composed and does not panic at the time of questioning by the angels.

It is mustahab to lift ones hand when making du'ā at the graveyard<sup>90</sup>.

The *sunnah* manner is to stand facing the qibla and lift one's hands in du'ā, however to make du'ā in any other way is also permissible. One should however, avoid adopting a posture that may give onlookers an impression that one is worshipping the grave or is asking his needs from the inmate of that grave.<sup>91</sup>

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## HOW SHOULD A GRAVE LOOK LIKE?

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The Prophet ﷺ did not only teach us how to bury but he also gave us clear instructions about how the graves should look.

- A grave should appear to be of oval shape with a hump not taller than a hand-span.

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<sup>89</sup> Shāmi

<sup>90</sup> Ahsanul Fatawa Vol.4

<sup>91</sup> Fatāwa Rahimiyyah

- The grave should be kept simple and must not be plastered with cement or gypsum.
- No construction should be erected on top of the grave.
- After the burial is completed it is permissible to place a mark to identify the grave with, but there must not be any extra writings.
- There is a misconception that writing a few verses of the Qur'an on the head-stones adds blessings for the mayyit. This is not true at all. In fact this is a violation of the sanctity of the word of Allah ﷻ.

Below are given some narrations from the Prophet ﷺ to elaborate these points:

- Sufyān رضي الله عنه says that he saw the blessed grave of the Prophet ﷺ slightly raised.<sup>92</sup>
- Sa'd b. Abu Waqqās رضي الله عنه during his illness of which died, said, 'Make a niche for me in the side of the grave, and set up bricks (of clay) over me as was done with the Prophet ﷺ'.<sup>93</sup>
- The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Do not sit on graves, and do not pray facing towards them'.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Bukhari

<sup>93</sup> Muslim. 'The making of niche' refers to the concept of *Lahd*, that was explained earlier under the heading, 'types of graves'.

<sup>94</sup> Muslim

- ‘Dig graves, make them spacious and deep and do it well’, the Prophet ﷺ instructed his companions after the battle of Uhud when preparing to bury the martyrs of the battle<sup>95</sup>.
- The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘It is better that one of you should sit on live coals which burn his clothes and his skin than that he should sit on a grave.’<sup>96</sup>
- Ali ؑ said to a companion, ‘I am sending you on the same mission as the Prophet ﷺ sent me. Do not leave an image without obliterating it, or a high grave without levelling it’.<sup>97</sup>
- Jabir ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ forbade that graves are plastered with gypsum, that any building is constructed over them and that people sit on them<sup>98</sup>.
- Jabir ؓ says that the Prophet ﷺ forbade that graves should be plastered with gypsum and that something is written on them and that they are walked over.<sup>99</sup>
- After the burial of Uthman b. Maz’un ؓ the Prophet ﷺ himself carried a stone and placed it at the head side of his grave saying, ‘I am marking my brother’s grave with it, and I shall bury beside him those of my family members who die.’ The narrator of this Hadith said, ‘I still seem to see the whiteness of the forearms of the

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<sup>95</sup> Abu-Dawood, Tirmidhi

<sup>96</sup> Muslim

<sup>97</sup> Muslim

<sup>98</sup> Muslim

<sup>99</sup> Tirmidhi

Prophet ﷺ when he rolled up his sleeves to carry the stone.<sup>100</sup>

- A'isha ؓ showed her nephew the graves of the Prophet ﷺ and his two companions. This nephew says that she showed him the graves which were neither high nor low, but were spread over with soft red pebbles in an open space<sup>101</sup>.

## FLOWERS ON THE GRAVE AFTER BURIAL

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It is established from the Ahādith that the Prophet ﷺ placed two branches of a palm tree on two graves and thereafter said that these two *mawayits* are being punished in their graves and for as long as these two branches don't dry up, the punishment of the Qabr for these people will be lightened. This was the effect of the du'ā and the blessed touch of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ hands.

If this action was general and meant for everyone, then the Sahāba ؓ would have definitely done the same because they were eager followers of the Prophet ﷺ and did everything that the Prophet ﷺ did.

In order to understand the Prophet ﷺ, we look towards the Sahāba ؓ for guidance. Their actions are an explanation of

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<sup>100</sup> Abu Dawood

<sup>101</sup> Abu Dawood

the actions of Rasulullah ﷺ. These companions of the Prophet ﷺ never placed flowers on the graves of their loved ones.

The custom of placing flowers on the graves after the burial cannot be established from the Shari'ah<sup>102</sup>. This is because of the following:

- a) Often it is claimed that placing flowers is a '*sunnah*' practice. We have explained above that such claims are unfounded. So to associate something to the prophet ﷺ falsely is a major sin.
- b) Contrary to being a *sunnah* model, there is no doubt that this is the part of funeral customs of some non-Muslims, like the Hindu community. It may hence become imitating the customs and practices of non-Muslims, which is almost equal to altering the pure prophetic traditions.
- c) Charity and fulfilling the needs of destitutes has more virtue and reward than spending money in a way that is void of a heavenly reward. Hence, an effort should be made to donate as much money for charitable purposes as possible, with the intention that this reward is given to the deceased. So the one passed away benefits as well as those living in this world.

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<sup>102</sup> Ahsanul Fatāwa

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# PART 5:

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After the burial

## TA'ZIYAT:

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When a person passes away, it is an act of worship and great reward to attend his funeral. The moral obligation to attend his funeral and to console his or her family will be according to the relationship with the deceased.

In Islam, there is no established or set words for *ta'ziyat*. The essence of *ta'ziyat* is to say something that makes the bereaved feel better. This can include a short summery of the rewards promised for patience and forbearance or a prayer for the deceased to be granted high ranks in the hear-after or both.

Abu-Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah the Almighty says that I do not have a reward, except Jannah, for a faithful servant of mine that when I take away someone whom he loved he yet remains hopeful and steadfast.'<sup>103</sup>

Abu-Musa al-Ash'ariy رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about a parent who remains stead fast upon losing his or her child that Allah the Almighty instructs the angles to erect for him or her a house in Jannah and call it '*bait ul-Hamd*' [the house of praise].<sup>104</sup>

It is probably appropriate to include here a letter of condolence from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which he صلى الله عليه وسلم wrote to sayyidunā Muā'dh bin Jabal رضي الله عنه upon hearing the news of his son's death.

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<sup>103</sup> Bukhari

<sup>104</sup> Tirmidhi, Ahmad

He ﷺ wrote:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

من محمد رسول الله الي معاذ بن جبل

سلام عليك

فإني احمد اليك الله الذي لا اله الا هو ,

أما بعد فأعظم الله لك الأجر والهمك الصبر ورزقنا وإياك الشكر  
فإن أنفسنا و اموالنا واهلنا من مواهب الله الهنيئة وعواريه المستودعة  
متعك الله به في غبطة وسرور وقبضه منك بأجر كبير . الصلوة والرحمة  
والهدى ان احتسبته , فاصبر ولا يجبط جزعك أجزك فتندم .  
واعلم أن الجزع لا يرد ميتا ولا يدفع حزنا وما هو نازل فكان قد .

والسلام

**Translation:**

In the name of Allah the Most-Beneficent and the Most Kind.

From Muhammad (ﷺ), the Prophet of Allah, to Mu'ādh bin Jabal. Peace on to you. I first praise for you Allah, the one that there is no God but Him. Later I pray that may Allah grant you great reward and instill patience in your heart, and grant us ability to be grateful to Him.

Remember, our lives, our wealth and families are all blessed gifts of Allah and His trusts, entrusted upon us, – so was your son – which for as long as He wished He allowed you to enjoy and please yourself with him. And when He saw right He took him away from you in exchange of a huge reward. The glad tidings of special favours, mercy and guidance is for you if you remain hopeful of such rewards.

So be patient and do not let your restlessness ruin your reward, as you would then regret. And remember the restlessness does not bring the dead back nor does it eliminate the grief. And what was to come your way has already come.

Was-salām

The best time for ta'ziyat is immediately after the burial. Before then the bereaved family is usually occupied with the proceedings of burial. However, once that is complete, the pain of separation really strikes. Hence to offer condolences at this time is most comforting.

*Ta'ziyat* means 'to offer condolence, to give comfort and solace or to offer sympathy'. According to the teachings of our Prophet ﷺ *ta'ziyat* carries a lot of reward. He ﷺ said, one who offers *ta'ziyat* receives a reward equal to the one who has been afflicted by the loss.<sup>105</sup> Another *hadith* states that 'one who consoles the mother of a dead child shall receive a shawl in *Jannah*'.<sup>106</sup>

It has become a common practice that the bereaved family sits for three days in the deceased house (or somewhere nearby convenient) to receive condolences. It must be noted that this practice is not compulsory. The period of mourning should be kept to a minimum. The maximum period for the families (except widows) is three days. It means that the relatives and the well-wishers *can* offer ta'ziyat for 'up to' three days.

Raising of hands to supplicate for the forgiveness of the deceased is permissible only when such supplications are genuine, not customary and also when it is done voluntarily without any coercion and fear. So the common model of shouting *fātiha* upon arriving at and when leaving the 'ta'ziyat gatherings' is a mere custom and not a religious observance. It is important that the true teachings of faith are preserved. The

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<sup>105</sup> Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah

<sup>106</sup> Tirmidhi

prophetic model is to console the bereaved in a way that lifts his or her moral and boost his or her trust in God.

Abdullah b. Umar رضي الله عنه was present at a funeral where someone said loud, ‘pray everyone for the forgiveness of your deceased brother!’ Having heard this Sayyiduna Abdullah b. Umar رضي الله عنه said to the one who had made this call, ‘May the Almighty Allah does not forgive you’<sup>107</sup>. By saying so he made it very clear that Muslims should make their utmost effort to stay within the customs of funeral taught by the Prophet ﷺ. Similar incidents are also reported about Abdullah b. Masood رضي الله عنه<sup>108</sup> and Saeed b. Jubair رضي الله عنه<sup>109</sup>.

Below we give some tips to remind the readers how best to perform this task.

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### THINGS TO DO:

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- Offer solace and sympathy to the bereaved families. You can do this to every member of the house. When dealing with non-*mahr*ams, care should be taken not to violate the laws of Hijab.
- Make the *ta'ziyat* visit as early after the burial as possible.

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<sup>107</sup> Suyyuti

<sup>108</sup> Al-Madkhal, li-ibn-il-Hāj

<sup>109</sup> Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaibah

- Make your *ta'ziat* visits short and brief. Carefully select the words to comfort the pain-struck family. It is an act of charity and *ibādah*. Care should be taken to be efficient and precise.
- Make yourself available to the family, if possible, for any help that they may need.
- It is also recommended to send the cooked and ready to eat food to the household of the deceased.
- Gently remind them, where possible, of the Islamic teachings and guidance on mourning.
- A *ta'ziyat* visit can also be made to a non-Muslim, one of whose loved one passes away. This would mean that comfort and solace offered to them is done in a manner that they can relate to and that is appropriate. Giving glad tidings of *Jannah* etc. would be inappropriate. It may even not make sense to them and would merely make a mockery of *deen*.
- Taking part in the rituals of non-Muslim funeral is not permissible. This is because rituals of funerals often involve acts of worship, or phrases in praise of the deities worshipped by them. This amounts to shirk (worshipping gods other than Allah ﷻ), which is the biggest sin in Islam.
- Be respectful to the bereaved family's feelings. Do not raise your voice in laughter or engage in worldly idle talk.
- The widow or the women folk (daughters / sisters etc.) of the deceased need to be shown care in a way that does not lead to the evil whispering of *Satan* or *nafs*.

Such families should be looked after through a female relative, like through one's mother, wife or a mature sister.

- There is a lot of reward promised for taking care of the orphans. If there are orphans who may be in further need of help, make a regular routine of staying in touch with them to support and take care.

### THINGS TO AVOID:

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- Do not stay at the bereaved family's house for too long. Give them space and time to mourn privately.
- Do not delay your *ta'ziyat* for more than three days.
- Do not make mockery of *du'ā* or any other practice or teaching of *deen* at the time of *ta'ziyat*.
- Try not to force them to do anything. Suffering a bereavement is a very difficult time so remain sensitive to their preferences.
- Do not moan about the struggles and challenges in life. This may further demoralize the bereaved family.
- Do not abandon the family after the *ta'ziyat*. If the family becomes vulnerable as a result of this death show community and *deeni* responsibility by remaining in touch with them regularly.

According to the *Shari'ah*, the period of mourning is only three days. One may console and express condolences to the bereaved family as soon within the three days as possible. It is not permissible to mourn for more than three days. However,

it is permissible for those who were absent to do *ta'ziyat* upon their return, even if this was well after the three days.

The practice of mourning the death by reciting the Holy Qur'an as a custom on Thursdays or the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> day after death, etc. cannot be traced back to the Prophet ﷺ. This was not done for him nor was it done for any of his companions ﷺ nor did he ﷺ mention any special reward for doing it on specific days after the demise of a person. To consider it to be compulsory or a *sunnah* or sign of being on the *sunnah* path (being a *summi*) is certainly exaggeration and a total violation of the truth.

However, it is advisable for people close to the deceased, friends and relatives to individu'ally read as much as possible for the deceased and to pray to the Almighty for their reward to be forwarded to their *mayyit*. There is more *ikhlās* and sincerity in that. A detailed discussion on this subject – titled *Isāl e sawab* – is included separately in this booklet.

It is permissible and *jāiz* for a pregnant woman to offer condolences at the death of a loved one or to visit a bereaved family for *ta'ziyat*. The belief of miscarriage, etc. is mere superstition and has no basis in Islam.

It is incorrect to wear only one shoe or cloths of black colour during the period of mourning. For the purpose of displaying dignity and grief, wearing white is recommended. As the prophet ﷺ chose this colour for the mayyit's shroud.

The *du'ās* that were mentioned on page 14 under the heading 'du'ās for the bereaved family' can be repeated at this occasion too.

## SORTING OUT THE *MAYYIT'S* AFFAIRS

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As a believer passes away the following are the responsibilities of his or her fellow believers, which fall upon the shoulders of the next of kin to begin with. In the absence of a family the responsibility is transferred to those who were close to him or her:

- To bury the *mayyit* in an appropriate manner.
- To sort out his or her financial dealings.
- To distribute the assets justly.

We have explained the procedure of burial in much detail. The following needs to be remembered regarding the payment of loans and recoveries:

### THE FINANCIAL DEALINGS:

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Loans and debts are an important part of a person's liability which are not waived even after death. Islam teaches Muslims to be dutiful to one another (and to non-Muslims as well) and honour their commitments and the financial undertakings.

The assets of a deceased, after recovering the burial costs, are firstly used to settle his or her debts before being looked at for the purpose of distribution amongst the heirs. It is only after the payment or settlement of all these loans that the assets can be passed over to the successors of a deceased as prescribed in Shari'a.

More details on this subject are discussed under the heading 'settling the debts' in the final part of this booklet.

As for now let us look at the Islamic Law of Inheritance:

## **MEERATH; DISTRIBUTION OF THE ASSETS**

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*Meerath* is the inheritance, i.e. the assets left behind by a person who passed away. Settling the *meerath* is a compulsory arrangement and **must** be complied to. Allah the Almighty laying out the details of the heirs' portions in *Meerath* has started with the words '*Allah commands you ...*' and concluded the verse with the following words,

فريضة من الله

'*Ordained by Allah*'<sup>110</sup>,

This means that complying with this arrangement is compulsory for the Muslims. However, the heirs, having received their shares, then have the choice to voluntarily give these to one-another.

The quantity of each share is specified by the Al-Mighty in the Holy Qur'an. Even the *mayyit* does not have the authority to amend these shares. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Allah has given each [inheritor] his fixed due right, therefore a will for an

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<sup>110</sup> Al-Qur'an 04:11

inheritor [whose share is prescribed in the Qur'an] is not [needed, nor is it] valid.<sup>111</sup>.

This is because, in the words of the Qur'an, '*you know not which of them [heirs, whether your parents or your children] are of most benefit to you*'<sup>112</sup>, hence complying to the size of each heir's share as set by Allah ﷻ is an obligation.

In order to fully appreciate this principle, ponder over the verses that follow the verses of Meerath (7 to 14 of surah An-Nisa', (the women):

*'These are statutes of Allah, those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted into gardens with flowing streams. They abide therein forever and this is the greatest triumph. As for those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress his laws, Allah will admit them into Hell forever; they have deserved humiliating retribution.'*<sup>113</sup>

These verses are quite clear in stating that violating the laws of Meerath is a sin that leads to the punishment in the hereafter.

The relatives for whom a specific portion of the assets is prescribed are as follows:

1. The father of a mayyit
2. The father of the father of a mayyit,
3. The mother of a mayyit,

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<sup>111</sup> Abu-Dawood, Tirmidhi, Nasa'iee, Ibn Mājah

<sup>112</sup> Al-Qur'an 04:11

<sup>113</sup> Al-Qur'an 04:13-14

4. The mother of the mother of a mayyit,
5. The mother of the father of a mayyit,
6. The husband/wife of a mayyit,
7. The daughter of a mayyit, (the son of a mayyit also receives a share but its amount is not specified)
8. The grand-daughter of a mayyit, (like the sons of a mayyit, the share of the grand-sons is not specified)
9. The sisters of a mayyit, (the brothers also receive a share but, like sons, their share is not specified)

It is worth noting that these relatives may not always receive a share. Even the amount of each share varies from a situation to situation. For example a wife shall receive a quarter (25%) of everything that her husband leaves behind if he had no children. However, if he left behind children her share shall reduce to  $1/8^{\text{th}}$  (12.5%).

Similarly if a *mayyit* left two or more daughters without a son they both stand to receive two thirds of all the assets. But if the *mayyit* also left a son behind then the share of the daughters shall be reduced. As the responsibility of these two daughters' well-being is transferred to their brother – as he will have to provide for their food, clothing and shelter etc – he will receive twice as much of what is passed on to one of his sisters. If this brother happens to be younger or incapable, the guardian shall be expected to use this wealth to pay for the expenses of these girls.

It is also possible that some of the relatives mentioned above do not receive anything at all, because someone else from amongst them is alive who is more close to the *mayyit*. For example, in the presence of sons the brothers and sisters of a *mayyit* do not receive anything. Similarly when the father of a *mayyit* is alive the grandfather does not receive anything.

It is also worth noting that relations not mentioned in the above list may, in certain situations, also be entitled to a portion from the assets, for example the children of one's daughters and the father of one's mother etc.

This division of the assets should take place immediately after the death of a person, or as soon after it as possible. To use the inheritance wealth without the true consent of each inheritor is not permissible. The consent of young children (under the age of puberty) is invalid.

The elders in the family or those with a sense of responsibility are encouraged to play an active role to enable every deserving heir to receive his or her entitlement. There is strong emphasis placed on such individuals to fulfil their obligation. The following is the translation of the *Qur'anic* verse in this regard:

*... and let those (executors and guardians) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own, if they had left weak offspring behind. So, let them have Taqwa of Allah and speak truthfully.*  
(04:09)

If a meeting takes place to work out the shares of each inheritor and during the meeting it is discovered that some family members present are not entitled to anything, the Qur'an has given the following advice to those present:

*... If the relatives (who are not heirs) and the orphans and the needy are present at the time of distribution, give them some of it, and speak to them in fair words. (04:08)*

It is important that the heirs respect the feelings of one another and avoid making such remarks or behaving in such a manner that may upset the others. The kindness and being polite, even to those who are below in rank, is the recommendation of the Almighty.

The Ulamā and Imāms in Masjids who are qualified can be consulted to work out the exact amount of what each heir is entitled to. Ideally each Muslim living in a society where his or her religious beliefs do not prevail, should establish a mechanism to ensure that his or her heirs do not suffer. Serious effort should be made to ensure that the assets are divided in a just and Godly manner.

Writing a will, with the help of the professionals, Imāms and Lawyers, is recommended to all those who are in possession of some valuable items, like cash, property, a car or some jewellery etc.

People who consume the assets of a deceased in an unjust manner should take heed from the following verse:

*Verily, those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, they eat up only a fire into their bellies, and they will be burnt in the blazing Fire'. (04:10)*

## **THE 'IDDAH: (MOURNING PERIOD FOR A WIFE)**

For the wife of a deceased there is an extra provision in Islamic law for support and help. The wife of a deceased person is provided for and looked after – at the expense of her late husband – for a minimum period of four months and ten days (normally 130 days).

During this time she is entitled to being provided a secured accommodation and all her expenses are paid. These expenses are given preference over the entitlement of anyone else. This is to the extent that if the late husband left money that is barely enough for the *Iddah* expenses of this wife, no other relative would receive any share.

During this period of 130 days, she is expected to not leave the dwelling she lived in with her husband. She cannot be approached with any marriage proposals and should be left alone to mourn and get over her grief. In order to not attract unwanted attention she is obliged to not adorn herself in any shape or form.

Allah *ta'ala* says in the Qur'an: *If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days: When they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner. And Allah is well acquainted with what you do*<sup>114</sup>.

The Prophet ﷺ said, 'A woman must not observe mourning for one who has died for more than three nights, except for the four months and ten days in the case of her husband, and she must not wear a dyed garment except one of the type made of

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<sup>114</sup> Al Qur'an 2:234

dyed yarn or apply collyrium (kohl), or touch perfume except for a little costus or azfār<sup>115</sup> when she has been purified after her courses<sup>116</sup>, or 'apply henna.'<sup>117</sup>

He ﷺ also said, 'one whose husband has died must not wear garments dyed with saffron or red clay, or jewels, and she must not apply henna or kohl'<sup>118</sup>.

Following are the key requirement pertaining to *Iddah* (or *Iddat*):

- The duration of *iddah* for a woman when her husband passes away is four months and ten days if the death occurred on the first date of the lunar month. If the death occurred on another date than she will be completing 130 (30x4+10) days.
- A woman does not have to sit in a confined section of the house. She is free to move around in the house.
- It is not *Jāiz* (permissible) for her to adorn herself in any shape and form. This includes wearing jewellery or Kohl, applying oil, combing or straightening hair, applying henna or wearing silk, colour or material that attracts attention. She should wear simple cloths that

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<sup>115</sup> A certain odoriferous substance resembling finger-nails, used in incense.

<sup>116</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

<sup>117</sup> Abu-Dawood

<sup>118</sup> Abu Dawood and Nasa'iee

are not normally worn for portraying oneself in a good manner.

- It is permissible for her to shower or to take bath. She is allowed to use medicine even if it results in adding beauty to her appearance, as long as this is done away from the eyes of strangers, like such medicine being applied during the nights only.
- A woman during the *iddah* should not be forced out of where she lived with her husband, nor is she allowed to go out of this dwelling. However, if she has no means to meeting her expenses due to poverty etc. then she is allowed to go out to work during the days. Nevertheless she must return to this dwelling straight after she finishes work and she must not spend the nights outside.
- It is not permissible for her to visit friends or other relatives during the *iddah*. It is the responsibility of her relatives and friends to look after her with affection and care, during this troubled time in life.
- If she becomes unwell, it will be permissible for her to visit a physician, GP or the hospital.

This arrangement was prescribed to ensure that a woman is not wrongly targeted because of remarrying too quickly after the demise of her husband. It also gives a bereaving wife a private space to mourn quietly and not be troubled with marriage proposals that may cause hurt and offence. Since four and a half months is half the length of a normal pregnancy it also ensures that any offspring is given the true lineage.

A woman came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, ‘Messenger of Allah! My daughter’s husband has died and her eye is

troubling her, so may we apply kohl to it?' He ﷺ said, 'no' twice or thrice, saying only 'no' all the time. Then he ﷺ said, 'it is only four months and ten days, whereas in the pre-Islamic period none of you women threw away the piece of dung (as was the custom of moaning in the days of *Jahiliyyah*) till a year had passed.'<sup>119</sup>

This Hadith in addition to emphasising the ruling on *iddah* also points out to the strength of norms and cultures prevailing. If something is practiced as a local custom or tradition, everyone in that society adopts it without much struggle even if it has no benefit. Many examples can be given from the customs and traditions of marriage and bereavement. *Iddah* is a commandment of Allah, which in addition to having spiritual benefits, also assures several securities as pointed out earlier.

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### **ISĀL-E-SAWĀB; CARING AFTER THE BURIAL:**

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*Isāl-e-Sawāb* means to give the heavenly reward, promised to one for his godliness, to another person. A person can perform an act for which Allah, the Almighty, has promised a reward in the hereafter, with the intention of that reward to be given to someone else. This act can be anything of a charitable nature, or a *Nafl Salāh*, a *Nafl* fast or some recitation of the Qur'an. And the reward can be intended for a deceased as well as a living person, and for any number of persons.

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<sup>119</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

In essence the validity of *Isāl-e-Sawab* cannot be denied. The problem nevertheless is with some customary practices within the society. No one wants to discourage anyone from reading the Qur'an, however, people do need to know that holding the Qur'an recitation gatherings after the demise of a loved one is not essential.

Some scholars encourage holding these *majālis*, because this they say is the only opportunity for many to come directly in contact with the Qur'an for an hour or two out with the month of Ramadhan.

Mufti Ibrahim Desai, a famous Muslim Scholar from South Africa answering a question on this issue wrote a detailed reply. Therein he has quoted several *Ahādith* and the opinions of early day scholars. He starts the article with the following words

***Isāl-e-Sawab* is not only permissible but in fact it is *Mustahab* (meritorious).**

He quotes the following references to prove his point:

- The Messenger of Allah ﷺ slaughtered sheep during his farewell Hajj and made intention for himself and all those (alive, deceased and to come) who have faith on his prophet-hood.<sup>120</sup>
- Abdullah ibn Abbās ؓ says that Sa'ad ibn Ubādah ؓ was away when his mother passed away. When he returned, he asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, 'Will it

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<sup>120</sup> Bukhari

be of any benefit if I give charity on her behalf?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied in the affirmative.<sup>121</sup> Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalāni *r.a.* states in his commentary on this Hadith that ‘this Hadith proves the permissibility of charity on behalf of the deceased and that the reward will reach him.’<sup>122</sup>

- Abdullah ibn Abbās ؓ reports a man once asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ‘O Prophet of Allah! My father has passed away and he did not perform Hajj, can I perform Hajj on his behalf?’ The Prophet ﷺ enquired of him, ‘If your father had any debt, would you have paid it?’ The man replied, ‘Yes.’ Upon this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘In that case, the dues of Allah *ta’ala* are more important.’<sup>123</sup>
- A separate incident of a similar nature has been recorded by Imām Bukhari ؓ in his Sahih. Hafiz Ibn Qayyim ؓ, the famous student of Ibn Taymiyah ؓ, after quoting the above Ahādith, states: ‘These quotations all concur with the fact that when the living carry out any deed on behalf of the deceased, the reward will reach him (benefit him).’<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Bukhari

<sup>122</sup> Fath al-Bāri vol.5 p. 477

<sup>123</sup> Nasa’iee

<sup>124</sup> Kitāb Ruh p. 161

- Al-Lajlaj ؓ, a companion of the Prophet ﷺ, had asked his son that after he leaves this world, [the son] should recite the beginning and the end of Surah al-Baqarah at the head side of his grave. Sayyiduna al-Lajlāj ؓ then mentioned that he heard this from Rasulullah ﷺ<sup>125</sup>.
- Such has also been recorded to be the practice of Abdullah Ibn Umar ؓ.<sup>126</sup>

Shaykh Abud ur Raheem, the Hadith ustādh (lecturer) of Darul Uloom Bury has also quoted the following references in his article on the subject of Iesāl-e-Sawab<sup>127</sup>:

Here are some proofs:

2. Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal ؓ narrates in his Musnad from Abdullah ibn Amr ؓ that his father A'ās ibn Wāil had made a vow during the days of Jāhiliyyah to sacrifice 100 camels. However, he died a mushrik without being able to fulfill his vow. His non Muslim son Hishām ibnul A'ās sacrificed 50 and Amr ibnul A'ās (who had embraced Islam) asked Rasulullah ﷺ about this, i.e. Is he allowed to sacrifice his share of 50? Rashulullah ﷺ said:

'أما ابوك فلو اقر بالتوحيد فتصدقت و صمت عنه نفعه ذلك'

“If your father had testified to the Oneness of Allah and then

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<sup>125</sup> al-Mu'jamul Kabeer of Imām Tabrani

<sup>126</sup> Sunan al-Kubra of Imām Bayhaqi

<sup>127</sup> [www.tafseer-raheemi.com/dr-zakir-naik-isaale-thawaab/](http://www.tafseer-raheemi.com/dr-zakir-naik-isaale-thawaab/)

you gave charity on his behalf or you fasted for him, it would have benefitted him”

3. Imam Darqutni رحمته الله narrates that a sahbābi (companion of the Prophet ﷺ) asked Raslullallah ﷺ “Ya Rasullallah! I had parents whom I used to serve during their lifetime. Is there any way in which I can show my duty to them after their death?” He ﷺ replied:

ان من البر بعد البر ان تصلي لابويك مع صلوتك وتصوم لهما مع صيامك  
“Surely it is part of duty after being dutiful that you perform salāh for your parents with your salāh and you fast for them with your fast”

4, The Hadith regarding the mother of Sa’d Ibn ‘Ubādah رضي الله عنه. She died in her sleep and sa’d enquired as to whether his Sadaqah for her can benefit her. Rasullallah ﷺ replied “Off course it will benefit her” so he gave one orchard, freed one slave and dug out one well for her.

5, The Hadith of when Ibn Adam dies, his deeds are cut off except from 3; Sadaqah jaariyah, knowledge from which people are benefitting, pious child praying for him/her.

6, Abu Bakr An Najjaar narrates from Sayyiduna Ali رضي الله عنه that Rasullallah ﷺ said, “Whosoever passes through the graveyard and recites ‘Qul Huwallahu Ahad<sup>128</sup>..’ 11 times, and then gifts the reward to the dead, will be given a reward according to the amount of the deceased people.” (Narrated also by Darqutni, as quoted by al-Ayni in Sharh Bukhari, and by Abu Muhammad As-Samarqandi in ‘Fadhaail Qul Huwallahu

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<sup>128</sup> Al-Quran: Surah 112

Ahad' as quoted by Suyuti in Sharhusaudoor, Al-It'haf quoted it from Nasai and from Ar-Raifi'ee's Taareekh.)

7, Anas رضي الله عنه reports from Rasulullah صلى الله عليه وسلم that he said, "Whosoever enters a graveyard and recites Surah Yaseen<sup>129</sup>, Allah lightens the burden upon them and he (the reciter of the surah) will accumulate hasnaat (good deeds are recorded for him) equivalent to those in that graveyard". (Narrated by Abdul Aziz student of al Khallal, as quoted by Suyuti in Sharhusaudoor and by al Maz'har and by Abu Bakr an Najjaar .)

8, Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whosoever goes in the graveyard and recites Surah al Fātiha and Qul Huwallahu Ahad and Alhākumut-takāthur<sup>130</sup>, and then he says, 'O Allah! I present whatever I have recited from your words to those believing men and believing women who are in this cemetery – then they will intercede for him to Allah". (Narrated by Abul Qāsim Sa'd Ibn Ali Az-Zanjaani in his Al-Fawaaid, as quoted by Suyuti in Sharhusaudoor and by Mazhari.)

9. Abu Bakr As Siddique رضي الله عنه reports that Rasulullah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever visits the graves of his parents or of one of them and recites Surah Yasin, will be forgiven." (Narrated by Abu Bakr An Najjar in As Sunan, as quoted by al Ayni in Sharh Bukhari. Also narrated by Ibn Adiy in Al Kaamil as quoted by Suyuti in al Jame' as Sagheer, however Suyuti has indicated that it's da'eef.)

10, Aamir as-Sha'bi reports,

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<sup>129</sup> Al-Qur'an: Surah 36

<sup>130</sup> Al-Qur'an: Surah 102

كانت الأنصار إذا مات لهم الميت اختلفوا الي قبره يقرؤون له القران

“When someone among Ansaar would die, they would go to his grave frequently and read Qur’an for him.” (narrated by Al Khallal as quoted by Ibn al Qayyim in Ar-rooh, and by Suyuti in Sharhussudoor. Shaykh Yunus Jaunpuri Saheb damat barakatuhum says, “This shows that this was a general practice among the Ansaar” Al Yawaaqet p139.)

11. Ibn Umar radiallahu anhu says that Rasulullah ﷺ said, “When someone among you dies, don’t hold him back, take him to his grave quickly, and recite by his head side the opening of Surah al Baqarah and by his feet side the ending of Surah al Baqarah.” (Narrated by al Bayhaqi in Shu’abul Iman who then commented that the correct version is that it’s Mawqoof upon Ibn Umar. See also: Mishkatul Masabeeh p149.)

12. Ibn ul Qayyim narrates in Kitāb ar-Rooh that al Khallal says Hasan Ibn Ahmed Warrāq informed me that Ali Ibn Musa al Haddad (who was a sadooq i.e trustworthy) said, “I was in a janāzah with Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Muhammad Ibn Qudamah al Jawhari. When the deceased was buried, a short sighted person sat near the grave and began to recite Quran. Imam Ahmed said to him ‘Dear fellow! Reciting near a grave is bid’ah!’ Ali b. Musa says, when we were about to exit the cemetery, Muhammad Ibn Qudamah asked Imam Ahmed, ‘What is your opinion regarding Mubashshir al Halabi? He replied, “He is reliable.” He asked, “Have you narrated any Hadith from him?” Imam Ahmed replied in the affirmative.

He said, “Then Mubashshir informed me from Abdur Rahman Ibn al Alaa’ Ibn al Lajlaaj from his father [a companion of the Prophet ﷺ] who left a will that after his burial, the opening

and ending verses of al Baqarah should be recited by his grave and he said he heard Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه make this will”

So Imām Ahmed said to Ali, “Go back, and tell that man to keep reciting!” (Kitab ar-Rooh p17 al Yawaaqeet p139)

13. Hasan Ibn as Sabah Az-za’fraani says, “I enquired from Imam Shafi’ee regarding reciting near a grave and he replied,

لا بأس به

“There is no harm in it.”

Mufti Ibrahim from South Africa has summed up his reply<sup>131</sup> by making the following recommendations to minimize chances of falling into, what some might view as, disputed:

In principle there are two forms of *Isāl-e-Sawab*:

- The conveying of the reward of charitable deeds.
- The conveying of the reward of physical deeds that do not entail wealth, e.g. Salāt, fasting, Zikr, recitation of the holy Qur’an, Tawāf of the Ka’bah, etc.

The first form is unanimously acceptable by the *Ahlu Sunnah* (Sunnies), the mainstream of Muslims. The second form is correct according to the Hanafi and Hanbali Madhab and several Shāfi’ee and Māliki scholars as well.

As for the reward of *du’ā* (which is separate from the above), there is also unanimity of the scholars in its reward reaching and benefiting the deceased.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> www.askimam.org

Hafiz ibnul Qayyim رحمته الله states that if one accepts the charitable form of *Isāl-e-Sawab* and refutes the physical form, it would be said to him: ‘what is the proof to show that the reward of reciting the Holy Qur’ān does not reach the deceased?’.

Imām al-Qurtubi رحمته الله states, ‘Just as the reward of charitable deeds benefit the deceased, similarly, the recitation of the Holy Qur’ān, *du’ā* and *Isghtifār* also do the same, because all of these are regarded as *Sadaqah* (charity) in Shari’ah.’<sup>133</sup> He, thereafter, mentioned two narrations recorded in Sahih Muslim which prove that even Salāh and Zikr of Allah *tasbeeh*, *takbeer* and *tahleel*, were all classified as Sadaqah by the Prophet ﷺ.

Hence, there remains no dispute in whether the reward of Qur’anic recital benefits a deceased or not. Hafiz Ibn Hajar رحمته الله stated in a reply to a query on whether the reward of recitation of the Qur’an reaches the deceased, that, it is *Mustahab* (meritorious) for one to do this (form of Isal-e-Sawab) abundantly.<sup>134</sup>

Besides these there are numerous other narrations of this nature. It thus becomes very clear through the abovementioned *Ahādith* that Isāl-e-Sawab is totally permissible in all its forms and is in fact a virtuous deed. This is the view of the

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<sup>132</sup> Al-Azkār of Imām Nawawi

<sup>133</sup> Al-Tazkirah

<sup>134</sup> Tawdeehul Bayān li wusooli thawābil Qur’an of Shaykh Abdullah Siddique al-Ghumariy

overwhelming majority of the classical scholars (Muhadditheen and Fuqahā) of Islam.

If after understanding the above, one still denies the validity of the physical form of *Isāl-e-Sawab*, then the following method can under no circumstance be refuted.

After one carries out a physical form of worship (i.e. Salāh, fasting, recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, etc.), one should make *du'ā* to Allah ﷻ that may He firstly, accept this noble deed and secondly, may He ﷻ thereafter grant the reward to so and so person. In this way, the reward will be conveyed to that specific person alive or deceased. This method has been prescribed by great scholars like Imām Nawawi رحمته الله and Hafiz Ibn Hajar رحمته الله so as to remove all differences of opinion.

We have already mentioned that there is no doubt in the deceased benefiting from the *du'ā* of the living. In a narration of Sahih Muslim, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated that one of the three things that will benefit a deceased is the *du'ā* of his pious children.<sup>135</sup>

Lastly, we would like to remind the readers that the majority of Muslim scholars – as some great names were mentioned earlier – accept all forms of *Isāl-e-Sawab*.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Muslim

<sup>136</sup> Kitab ur- Ruh, of Ibn ul-Qayyim

## POINTS TO CONSIDER:

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As we have discussed that the recitation of the Qur'an for the *Isāl-e-Sawab* is permissible, it is worth dealing with certain myths on this subject too.

- a) Reciting the *whole* Qur'an is not necessary for the *isāl-e-Sawab*. Any part of the Quran can be recited for the benefits of it to be forwarded to a *mayyit*.
- b) Recitation of the Quran is not the only form of *Isal-e-sawab*. The object is to convey the reward to the deceased and this can be fulfilled by doing anything for which a good return is promised in the here-after. The best form of *Isāl e sawāb* is with what is mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ, a charity that people continue to draw benefit from. This includes – and is not restricted to – a charitable well for water, construction of a canal, an inn for travellers where they can take rest, or contributions towards propagating the true understanding of Islam (donating books, serving the students of *deen* etc.) etc.
- c) The recitation of the Qur'an for this purpose can be done at home or in a Masjid.
- d) The common practice of holding Qur'an recitation gatherings for the *Isāl-e-Sawab* of a mayyit is an easy way to do *Isāl e sawāb* but not a requirement. So to view these as necessary and criticizing those who do not hold such gatherings is clearly adding into the religion which is not part of it.
- e) To encourage mourners to read the Qur'an or to turn to Allah ﷻ in prayers and *du'ā* is recommended.

- f) No gathering of the Qur'an recitation took place for the *Isāl-e-Sawab* of our Prophet ﷺ after his demise, nor did any was conducted after the demise of Caliph Abu-Bakr, Umar, Uthman or Ali ؓ. However, it does not mean that no one cared to recite for them. People until today recite for them in fact they also perform Hajj and Umrah on these elders' behalf.
- g) If the family members and friends upon coming together decide to recite the Qur'an or any other form of *zīkr* in a permissible way – e.g. avoiding the mixing of men and women – then such practice is permissible. This in fact is better than wasting time in idle talk.
- h) Ideally, families should be trained to begin the day with the recitation of the Qur'an. This will enable the children to recite for their parents and other relatives to do *Isāl-e-Sawab* for them after they pass away.
- i) To view the recitation of the Qur'an necessary on specific days after bereavement has no substance or validity in Islam<sup>137</sup>.
- j) It is worth noting that making *du'ā* for the forgiveness of a mayyit and for it to be saved from any trouble in the here-after is far more beneficial than *Isasl-e-Sawab*. An analogy given for a mayyit is of a prisoner, who appreciates, his friends and relatives' help to win him freedom far more than receiving gifts and delicious food. Similarly a mayyit, may Allah forbid if ends up in a trouble in the hereafter, shall appreciate *du'ā* and *istighfār* more than just simple *Isāl-e-Sawab*.

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<sup>137</sup> Shāmi

- k) *Isāl e sawab* is *mustahab* where as to perform other duties like *Salāh* and abstaining from *harām* is *faradh* (obligatory). Hence one who misses his *Salāh* or falls into *harām* while pursuing a *mustahab* act is a transgressor who is serving himself more than Allah the Almighty. Such person's actions may carry no weight in the hereafter.
- l) Finally on this subject it is important to remember that one must not put himself in such difficulty for doing *Isāl-e-Sawab* that may render him incapable to carry out what is obligatory upon him. For example using the assets of the deceased before formal distribution or without the free consent of his heirs, borrowing money from the banks, on credit cards etc. in order to give in charity or for holding gatherings of the Qur'an recitation would be a mockery of the whole practice.

*Isāl-e-sawab* can also be done for the living. Imām Muhammad Zakariyya رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, who's influence on contemporary Muslims in Europe is phenomenal, would encourage those close to him to remember him through *isāl-e-Sawab* more than anything else. If anyone sent him a gift or money he would write to them to not do that again, instead he would say,

اگر آپ اس کی بجائے مجھے کچھ ایصالِ ثواب کر دیتے تو مجھے زیادہ خوشی ہوتی۔

*If you had instead done some isal-e-Sawab to me I would have been more pleased.*

This was because the blessings of the here-after are eternal.

The list of what a person can do, which can be the medium of another person gaining reward, is quite long. Even helping someone in need or saying a kind word to the other is an act of

charity. The Prophet ﷺ said, *Each tasbeeh (saying سبحان الله, i.e. saying glory be to Allah), tahleel (saying لا اله إلا الله, i.e. saying 'there is no god but Allah') and takbeer (saying الله أكبر, i.e. saying 'Allah is the Greatest') is a charity.* One who really cares about another would frequently include the other in his prayers and would do *Isāl-e-Sawab* for him as well.

## VISITING THE GRAVEYARD

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It is an act of great merits to visit the graveyards frequently. The Prophet ﷺ said 'visit the graveyard, for indeed it shall remind you of death.'<sup>138</sup>

When one visits the graveyard, one should recite the following:

اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ اَهْلَ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَاِنَّا اِنْ  
 شَاءَ اللّٰهُ لَلْآحِقُّونَ اَسْأَلُ اللّٰهَ لَنَا وَلَكُمْ الْعَافِيَةَ<sup>139</sup>

Assalāmu alaikum Ahlad diyār minal mu'mineen wal  
 muslimeen wa innā Inshā Allahu lalāhiqoon As alullaha lanā  
 wa lakumul 'āfiya

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<sup>138</sup> Abu Dawood

<sup>139</sup> Muslim

*Peace be upon you, O believers and Muslims dwelling in these abodes.  
Behold, if Allah wills, we shall meet you. We beseech from Allah  
safety for us and for you.*

At the graveyard, one could recite, as explained just a few pages earlier, the following Surahs of the Quran:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ  
وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ  
عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَعْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ<sup>140</sup>

آلَمْ، ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ، الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ  
بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَتَّبِعُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ. وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا  
أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ. أُولَئِكَ عَلَى  
هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ<sup>141</sup>

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي  
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ. مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ

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<sup>140</sup> Al-Fātiha (Qur'an: 01)

<sup>141</sup> Al-Baqarah (al-Qur'an: 02:01-05)

مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ مَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَ لَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا  
شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَ لَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ  
الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ<sup>142</sup>

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ. كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ  
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ، لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا  
وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ. لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا  
وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ، رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ  
نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ، وَاعْفُ عَنَّا  
وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا، أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ<sup>143</sup>

One can also recite the following Surahs:

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<sup>142</sup> Al-Qur'an 02:255

<sup>143</sup> Al-Qur'an 02:285-286

أَهْلَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرَ ، حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ، كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ، ثُمَّ كَلَّا  
سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ، كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ ، لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ، ثُمَّ  
لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ، ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ .<sup>144</sup>

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ، اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ، لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ، وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ  
كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ .

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ، مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا  
وَقَبَ ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ .

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ، مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ، إِلَهِ النَّاسِ ، مِنْ شَرِّ  
الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ، الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ، مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ  
وَالنَّاسِ .

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<sup>144</sup> Al-Qur'an 102

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# PART 6:

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Why death?

## A JOURNEY TO NEW HORIZONS:

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كل نفس ذائقة الموت. وإنما توفون أجوركم يوم القيامة (القرآن)

*Each soul is to taste death, and you shall only be paid back in full on the day of resurrection'. (the Qur'an, 03:185)*

Since the day life started on earth, its mortal, unreliable and momentary nature is being witnessed by those to whom this *gift* was granted. One who accepted the attire of existence, could only do so after agreeing to give it up later, whenever asked. No one could stay on. The pious and the sinful, the righteous and the wrongdoer, the good and bad, all eventually had to leave.

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad ﷺ, as he dealt with the false beliefs and the evil customs, had to face the taunting and the snide of pagans, who would sometimes curse him and pray for his death. The Almighty Allah ﷻ responded to this arrogance in the following verse:

*We granted not to any human being immortality before you (O Muhammad ﷺ), then if you die would they live forever?* <sup>145</sup>

They were reminded that everyone who lived had to die, even the Prophets had to surrender their souls and see it taken away. If the pagans wanted the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to die what purpose would it serve them? Death of a man proves nothing. Death is a natural occurrence. It is not a proof of a man's worth, his significance or his deviance. No one has been

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<sup>145</sup> Al-Qur'an 21:34

able to escape the warrant of death. Who can avoid the death warrant?

Everyone, including the Prophets, men of wisdom, philanthropists and philosophers, leaders and reformers, everyone, regardless of his or her contributions to the welfare of mankind, and regardless of his services had to leave when the angel of death knocked at his door. Perhaps they did not want to stay. They probably did not want to avoid death. Perhaps they appreciated death knocking at their door? Who knows? The wise, despite the natural desire to live on, probably did not find the divine [or nature's?] decree to end the worldly life detestable. And even if some wished to stay the plan of nature did not allow them to do so.

Imagine if death did not exist and everyone lived on earth forever, how much space would it leave? Although Allah by His Power can sustain any numbers, anywhere in any form, like in Heaven or Hell, upon earth, the people would have struggled to share.

Consider, if there was no death, the competition for food, water, clothes and other basic necessities. Who would be willing to give up their bedroom? How often would they allow their piece of bread to be taken by the others? Think for a moment the kind of atmosphere this would have created within the families? Even amongst the closest of relatives, like parents and children, brothers and sisters and so on?

Imagine how many aunties and uncles, grannies and grandpas, nephews and nieces, cousins and relatives you would then have had to put up with. Why would they share their resources with their children and relatives? Why would anyone care to educate and train their children when there was every

possibility that the very trained and educated may rise and turn against the trainers and the teachers? Would children not rebel against parents in a competing world if no one died and everyone lived on and on?

Put your thinking caps on and stretch your imagination to work out what may have happened on earth if no one ever died.

Why would people then want to avoid wars? The stronger would subject the weak to utmost suppression to make sure that the weak was never able to rise again, and this would have been rationally justified. After all, they could argue that, since the earth was their permanent abode they had to make sure that they could amass enough for their coming generations.

How could they understand the value of life when there was no death, bearing in mind that anything that is available in abundance loses its value. Think for a moment the concept of supply and demand. Instead of cherishing life, people would be working out how to put up with its never ending challenges.

Why would anyone then care about peace, if there was no death and no fear of losing life? Wars would have caused pain; the suffering that had no end. Whereas the weak and the poor after such wars would end up losing even the little they had, and the strong and the wealthy would become even stronger and wealthier. Will that be a better situation?

The more you contemplate the more you begin to appreciate that death adds to the beauty of life, though in a way that can be painful. Life without death would be a huge chaos and a big mess. The more you ponder the more you begin to value the need of death, for the sake of life on earth to be comfortable, colourful and vibrant.

The Almighty Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

*'Everyone is going to taste death, and we test you with evil and with good, and to us you all shall be returned'. (21:35)*

Another question to consider is what if we could choose to die at a time of our pleasing? Let us ponder over this aspect too. Imagine if we were allowed to choose when to die. How many tyrants and dictators would opt for death? Why would the powerful who have all the resources want to leave? On the other hand the God-loving men would want to return to their Lord at their earliest opportunity. The earth would be filled with dishonesty and evil, with little room for good values like compassion, forgiveness and generosity.

Consider those that are weak, disabled, terminally ill or those born on lands with little or no opportunities? What would happen to them? Why would they want to live even when they could not *see* a single ray of hope (not forgetting that opportunities arise even when there is absolutely no hope)? And who would allow the terminally ill to live even if they did?

There is a story reported about Prophet Dhul-Kifl ؑ which illustrates another consequence to having the choice on when to die. He was chosen to convey the divine commands to his people, but the people refused to listen to him until God the Almighty granted them their wish. They did not want God to extract their souls without taking their approval first. Their wish was granted.

Hence they listened to the messages conveyed and they obeyed. As they lived on, they grew old and old and increased

in number. Their ailments prolonged and the space within their houses became extremely busy and constrained.

They were in much pain and trouble, however, it was an outcome of their own doing. They themselves had asked for the decision on when to die to be left in their hands. . It was too difficult for many to choose the end of life. They were living in misery and unbearable pain, until they decided to retract their wish. They pleaded to their Prophet ﷺ to turn to their Lord and seek pardon for their mistake. They now had understood that such matters were best left in the hands of God.

Prophet Dhul-Kifl ؑ prayed for them until they were granted pardon. They surrendered to the will of Allah and felt relief as the responsibility of choosing the end of life was taken away from them.

The choice of when to die and when to depart from this world would put an unbearable strain on people, if this was left to them. The pressure a terminally ill person would be under to exercise his 'choice', if the cost of his treatment and care was being afforded by another person can only be imagined. Also, how frequent is this in medical science that an incurable disease becomes curable, giving a layer of hope to all those suffering.

Let us not forget that some of those terminally ill may have something unique to give to the wider society or to someone who is an asset to the wider society. Also consider the debates and issues of euthanasia and old people's homes. Who would then volunteer to pay for the care of the elderly?

The tools of coercion and pressurizing are many. Some are intangible as others are vague. How would we distinguish when the choice of taking away one's life is voluntary and not forced?

This is despite the fact that death sets many free from a life full of sorrow and pain and gives them the much needed relief that they deserved, which is especially true for those who believe in the Creator and truly hand themselves to His will.

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### UNTIMELY DEATH?

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Sometimes the death of a close relative seems so untimely that the relatives find it difficult to come to terms with it. This for example is the death of a young baby, a father or mother of young children or of someone who just completed their study or was recently married etc.

Before commenting on this subject ponder over the story of Sayyiduna Musa ؑ and Sayyiduna Khidr ؑ, which is found in the Qur'an (18:60-82). A brief summary of this story is as follows:

Musa ؑ was a very wise and knowledgeable person, but there were things which he did not know. He ؑ was instructed to seek out a servant of Allah, who would give him further knowledge. He ؑ was told to travel along the sea shore to a place where 'the two seas come together', and take with him a fish which would come to life and jump in the water upon him reaching the place where he is to find that teacher.

Musa ﷺ vowed to his servant, as he set out on his journey, that he would travel to the place where the two seas met, or would spend many years traveling, in search of this teacher. When they at last reached the junction of the two seas, the fish which they had been carrying slipped away into the water and swam off. Musa ﷺ did not see this happen and the servant, who had seen the fish's escape, forgot to mention this to Musa ﷺ.

They started their journey and sat off. Musa ﷺ felt tired and he called for an early meal. It was then that the servant remembered to inform Musa ﷺ that the fish was gone. Musa ﷺ realized that this was the sign for which he had been waiting. They retraced their steps to the place when the fish had slipped away and there they found the teacher, Khidr ﷺ.

Musa ﷺ asked Khidr's permission to spend time with him, in order that Musa ﷺ might learn some of the greater knowledge which Allah had bestowed upon Khidr ﷺ. Khidr ﷺ agreed, on a condition that Musa would be patient and would not question anything which he saw happen until Khidr chose to speak about it.

They boarded a boat, and while they were in it, Khidr ﷺ made a hole in it so that it would not be seaworthy. Musa ﷺ was concerned at such an action and asked Khidr ﷺ if he was trying to drown everybody. Khidr ﷺ reminded Musa ﷺ of his promise not to ask questions and Musa ﷺ apologized for forgetting himself.

They continued on until they met a boy, whom Khidr ؑ killed. Musa ؑ could not remain silent upon witnessing this cold blooded murder and questioned why an innocent person had been killed. Khidr ؑ asked what had happened to the patience which Musa ؑ was supposed to be exercising. Musa ؑ realized his mistake so offered an apology saying that if he was to repeat this mistake then Khidr ؑ would have right to dismiss him.

They entered a town and asked for food, but no one offered them any hospitality. In spite of this shabby treatment, Khidr ؑ repaired a wall which was on the verge of falling down. Musa ؑ, forgetting himself once again, exclaimed that at least Khidr ؑ should have asked for some food for fixing it. At this third infraction of their agreement, Khidr ؑ declared that it was time for them to part, but first he would explain his actions to Musa ؑ.

The boat, he explained, belonged to men who needed it to earn their living. But a king was about to seize it from them by force, so al-Khidr ؑ damaged it to keep it out of the king's grasp. Later it could be repaired and put to use again by its rightful owners.

The young man who was killed was the son of a righteous parents, but he himself had gone astray. In order to spare his parents the grief of seeing their son go bad, Khidr ؑ killed him, knowing that the parents would have another son who would be more loving and obedient.

As for the wall, it belonged to two young orphans in the inhospitable town. The orphans were the children of a righteous man. Beneath the wall was a buried treasure, which would now be safe, under the strengthened wall, until the orphans were old enough to claim their inheritance.

Thus Musa ﷺ learned how limited was his human knowledge. What had appeared to be the loss of a possession had actually been the preservation of it. What had seemed to be the loss of a son had been an act of mercy on behalf of the Creator ﷻ. The rebuilt wall had not been merely a generous act for undeserving recipients, but rather insured that justice would be done to deserving orphans.

Only Allah has the full knowledge to understand the seemingly unfair aspects of human life and human suffering. We must accept that all that is good and all that is bad comes from Allah. In his infinite wisdom and mercy, Allah knows what is best for us.

Further ponder over the fact that how our Prophet ﷺ became orphan even before he ﷺ was born. He ﷺ yet excelled to such peaks through the grace of the Almighty Allah ﷻ where no one can even imagine to reach. His mother passed, when he was only six years away almost 400 kilometers away from Makkah as he ﷺ was travelling with her back home. His grandfather passed away when he was only eight years of age. He grew up with his cousins at the house of his uncle.

Sayyiduna Ibrahim ﷺ at the age of 99 was asked to offer the sacrifice of his only child who was barely in his early teens. This was a test and he was granted abundant favors in return for his willingness to comply. Sayyiduna Hussain ﷺ, the

grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, was ruthlessly martyred along with 72 members of his family, yet they did not mourn or complain. The aggressors and the culprit soon regretted their conduct and were thrown out of the office for their aggression. The victims earned their respect and were increased in honor.

Same applies to anyone who is put through a test by the Almighty if s/he exercises patience. Their needs are taken care of by the Almighty Allah ﷻ, and they are placed in a special protection by Allah ﷻ.

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## THE END OF A TEST

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The life of this world is a test. Death can be viewed as a blessing because it marks the end of it. Remember that one sitting in a test does not have the choice of when to end it, otherwise he or she would fail.

Many ask why did we have to go through this when we never had asked for it? In actual fact, we did volunteer for this test. Questions of 'how and when' are answered, along with many others, as soon as we begin to see beyond the horizon into the worlds that are called hereafter.

When the next dimension opens and we realize our true status, as the most privileged creation, and we recall that we did indeed volunteer for this trial and that our afterlife is nothing but the result of our deeds and intentions in the world before death.

The test entails using the senses of good and evil that are rooted deep in the human-beings by their Creator in their spiritual DNA. Everyone is able to understand the concept of dignity, morality, decency, respect and good manners, etc. We may not define these characteristics using the same words, but we all understand what these terms refer to.

The prophets were an additional display of mercy by the Creator *to reinforce* these natural instinctive senses. From Adam ﷺ to Muhammad ﷺ, including Nooh (Noah) ﷺ, Ibrahim (Abraham) ﷺ, Ya'qoob (Jacob) ﷺ, Yusuf (Joseph) ﷺ, Musa (Moses) ﷺ, Dawood (David) ﷺ, Sulaiman (Solomon) ﷺ and Eisa (Jesus) ﷺ were all prophets that came to remind mankind of their duty to their Creator; Allah, the Almighty God.

As the prophets reminded mankind about their true status in the universe, they also pointed to the need of surrendering to the will of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. They reminded mankind of *the absolute truth*; the existence of God, which became the central most important point of their call, and, as many refused to listen to them, it ultimately became an issue of contention. However, regardless of their response to the prophetic call, mankind agrees that the overall conduct of these Messengers of God – even if their message was ‘disputed’ – suggests that they were righteous men of outstanding character.

Within this message of the prophets was a reminder that mankind had chosen to take the test. Ponder over the following two verses of the Qur’an:

*‘Truly, we did offer Al-Amānah (the trust or moral responsibility) to the heavens and the earth, and mountains, but they declined to bear it*

*and were afraid of it (i.e. afraid of the consequences of failing). But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of its results'. (Al-Qur'an 33:72)*

*'And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed (or from Adam's loin his offspring) and made them testify as to themselves (saying): 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes! We testify,' lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: 'Verily, we have been unaware of this'. (al-Qur'an 07:172)*

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## **REWARDS AND REMUNERATIONS:**

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Having surrendered to the will of God, those who lead a just life deserve to be rewarded, and the opposite also warrant a fitting return. This justice is delivered in the hereafter, where life will have no limits. The immortal life only exists in the here-after. The one who created this world so perfect is aware of our love of life. His compassion does not allow him to keep us in this test for ever. So he takes us back and delivers justice so the wronged and betrayed receive their full share and then lets us live on.

*They [the disbeliever] swore by Allah on solemn oaths: that Allah will not resurrect those who die. Why not? It is a promise on His part, which is due to come true, but most of the people do not know. (He will resurrect all of them), so that He discloses for them what they have been disputing about.<sup>146</sup>*

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<sup>146</sup> Al-Qur'an 16:39-40

## DEATH IS NOT THE END:

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Death is generally assumed to be *the end* of a human being and for obvious reasons it is feared. It is equated to a calamity, a tragedy or a catastrophe, whereas it is the complete opposite. It is a natural occurrence which is necessary for the planet, to retain its beauty and the appeal of life on it. The fear only makes sense if the concept of life beyond death was absent or one is worried about the punishment in the hereafter.

Those Prophets who educated mankind about the life hereafter and the accountability before Allah ﷻ, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, also taught us that He is Most-Kind and Most-Merciful. The Prophets emphasized that respect for one another, tolerance, kindness, modesty and forgiveness are values that make individuals shine above the rest. They also taught that the Creator of the heavens and the earth possesses these qualities in an amount greater than anyone can imagine.

So there is nothing that should deter one from the most kind God. Human beings are encouraged to be the embodiment of these values in the world. Those who possess such qualities are indeed the ones most close to God. Such have nothing to fear as the punishment is reserved for those who rebel against Him. It is the rebels that need to fear. Though even for the rebels the window of opportunity is never closed for as long as they offer repentance in this world

Muhammad ﷺ was the final in the chain of the Prophets. He ﷺ like those before him stressed that fear of punishment must not scare one away from the Most-Compassionate and Benevolent Lord. Explaining the benevolence of Allah ﷻ the Prophet ﷺ said,

“Verily when the Almighty Allah ﷻ created mercy He divided it in to one hundred portions. One portion was sent to earth (in order for the life here to continue) while the remaining 99 were kept by the Almighty for Himself. The one portion that was sent down to earth is enough to let the circle of life continue on it, and because of this one single portion, His creations are merciful to each other, so that even the mare lifts up its hoofs away from its baby animal, lest it should trample on it”.<sup>147</sup>

Once, the Prophet ﷺ saw a woman running about in a battle field searching for her lost child. As the other companions looked on, he ﷺ said to them, ‘do you think that if this woman finds her child she would throw him in a fire?’

‘No, O Prophet of Allah!’ they replied unanimously.

‘Your Lord is even more gracious and kind to His creation than this woman to her child’.<sup>148</sup>

Abdullah b. Umar ﷺ narrates that once we were with the Prophet ﷺ in one of his battles. He ﷺ passed by a tribe and asked, “Who is this tribe?” They replied, “We are Muslims.” There a woman was tending her oven. She also had her son with her. At one point, the flames of the oven shot up, she quickly pulled her son back to protect him from the flames.

Then she came to the Prophet ﷺ. She asked, “Are you the Messenger of God?” He ﷺ replied, “Yes.” She then asked, “I

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<sup>147</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

<sup>148</sup> Bukhari and Muslim

ask you by my father and my mother: Is Allah not the Most Merciful of merciful?" He ﷺ replied, 'Indeed He is.' She asked, 'Is Allah not more merciful to His servants than the mother is to her child?' He ﷺ replied, 'Indeed He is.' She then asked, 'A mother would not throw her child into the fire.' The Prophet ﷺ looked down and began weeping. Then he raised his head to her and said, 'Among His servants, Allah will only chastise the one who is defiant and rebellious, the one who rebels against Allah and refuses to say, 'There is no god but Allah.'<sup>149</sup>

As for the troubles and hardships in this life the Prophet ﷺ said that this is nothing but a test through which divine blessings are bestowed. He ﷺ said, 'this *ummah* [the community] of mine is one that has been shown great mercy. There shall be no punishment for them in the here-after. Punishment of their sins is in this world which takes the shape of sufferings, earthquakes and the mass killings'<sup>150</sup>.

Let us also remind ourselves the story of the man who had killed ninety-nine people. Later, when he regretted his actions, he asked a worshipper among the children of Israel whether he could repent. The worshipper answered him "no", so the man killed the worshipper too, thus completing his one hundred.

Then he asked one of their scholars whether he could repent. The scholar replied: 'What is stopping you from repenting?' and asked him to go to a town where Allah ﷻ was worshipped. The man set out for the town, but death came to him while he

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<sup>149</sup> Ibn Maajah

<sup>150</sup> Abu-Dawood, Ahmad

was on the way. The Angels of Mercy and the Angels of Punishment disputed over him, so Allah ﷻ commanded them to measure the distance between the two towns; whichever he was closer to was the one to which he belonged.

They found that he was closer to the town he was heading for, so the angels of mercy took him. It was said that when he was dying, he moved himself (towards the town), and Allah commanded the good town to move closer to him and the other town to move away.

It is never too late to turn to Allah ﷻ seeking His mercy. The priority at this stage is about shedding the load; the burden of sins, for which a sincere and true repentance is necessary. This will wash off the dark effects of wrongs committed.

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### **REPENTANCE AND TAUBAH:**

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Repentance means an acknowledgement of having committed a wrong. Without having a sense of guilt repentance loses its value. Repentance also needs to have a sense of regret. The last requirement is a firm resolution to abstain from it in the future. If there is a way how the past can be corrected than a true repentance must be followed by a genuine effort to undo that wrong.

Hence, if you are worried about your past then shedding such burden must not be very difficult. The first thing to do is to realize the mistake and acknowledge it to be wrong. The way forward then is simple.

Where possible such a person should begin with a couple of *rak'ats* of Salāh, with the intention of offering a true repentance; a *taubah*. This is like any other *nafl* Salāh, followed by a humble supplication, which contains an apology to the Almighty, a request for forgiveness and a promise of not ever returning to the sinful activity or activities.

If Salāh for one reason or the other is not possible, then *taubah* should not be delayed, as it can be done at any time with raising one's hands like in *du'ā*, or lowering one's head in shame before the Almighty offering a genuine quite supplication containing all the necessary ingredients listed above.

The readers of this article may pause here for a short moment to reflect on their past and supplicate for forgiveness through offering *taubah*.

اللَّهُمَّ رَحْمَتِكَ أَرْجُو فَلَا تَكِلْنِي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي شَأْنِي كُلَّهُ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

Allahumma rahmatoka arjoo falaa takilni ilaa nafsee Tarfataa 'ainin wa'aslih lee sha' nee kullahoo laailaha illaa anta.

*O Allah! Your mercy is what I hope so do not hand me over to my nafs even for a slightest of moments and reform all my affairs for me. There is no God but You.*

It has been reported from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, if you ever face a situation where you need help, in a matter of faith or the worldly life, whether it has something to do with the Creator or His creation you should perform *wudhu* thoroughly,

then perform two *rak'ats* of *Salāh* - like any other *nafl* *Salāh* – and supplicate with the following words:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْحَلِيمُ الْكَرِيمُ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ  
رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، أَسْأَلُكَ مُوجِبَاتِ رَحْمَتِكَ، وَعَزَائِمَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ، وَالْغَنِيمَةَ مِنْ  
كُلِّ بَرٍّ وَالسَّلَامَةَ مِنْ كُلِّ إِثْمٍ لَا تَدْعُ لِي ذَنْبًا إِلَّا عَفَفْتَهُ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ  
وَلَا هَمًّا إِلَّا فَرَجْتَهُ وَلَا حَاجَةً هِيَ لَكَ رِضًا إِلَّا قَضَيْتَهَا يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

laailahaila-allahul-Haleemul-kareem, subHaanallahi rabbi l-  
a'rshil-adheem, alHamdulillahi rabbi l-a'lameen, as-aluka  
moojibaati raHmatika, wa-a'zaaima maghfiratika, wal-  
ghaneemata min kulli birrin was-salaamata min kulli ithmin,  
laatada' lee dhanban illaghafartahu yaa arHamar-raaHimeen,  
wala hamman illaa farrajtahu, wala Haajatan hiya laka  
riDhan illaa qaDhaitahaa yaa arHamar-raahimeen.

*There is no God but Allah, the Most-Benevolent and the Most-Kind.  
Glory be to Allah the Great Lord of the throne. All praises to Allah the  
Sustainer of the worlds. I seek from You what leads to Your mercy and  
what ensures forgiveness from You, and a share from good of all kinds.  
I beg You to save me from falling into sin. Forgive all my mistakes O  
the Most Merciful. Remove all my worries and fulfill all my needs –  
that you approve – O the Most Compassionate.*

By doing so *insha'allah* the *duā's* will be answered and the needs fulfilled.

## PAYING OFF DUES

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As for the mending of the wrongs committed in the past there is no doubt that if there is a genuine desire to undo their effect it is not very difficult. The wrongs, in term of *shari'a*, violating the standard of behaviour set by the Almighty Allah ﷻ, are of two types:

- Concerning Allah ﷻ, The Creator, and
- Concerning fellow human beings, the creation.

The first relates to matters such as the daily prayers, the prescribed actions (e.g. restricting oneself to Halāl and abandoning *Harām* i.e. alcohol, fornication etc.) and the obligations like fasting during the month of Ramadhan, fulfilling the oaths undertaken with Allah ﷻ, *Zakah* (the alms-giving) and Hajj.

The second type of wrongs, which relates to the unfulfilled rights of the fellow human beings are like failing to pay debts or to return borrowed items, stealing, slandering, backbiting and not keeping trusts etc. These types of wrongs require an apology to the person/people who were wronged.

This apology must be such that is acceptable and should, where relevant, also be accompanied by returning the unlawfully acquired items. In the case of causing harm to the others reputation, the apology should be such that restores the loss and is sufficient to make the victim happy and satisfied.

The Prophet ﷺ, emphasizing the need of remaining dutiful to the people said,

‘He who has done a wrong affecting his brother must ask his brother for forgiveness today before this world ends, when he will be left without any gold or silver coins. Then in order to compensate if he shall have any good deeds the like amount of his wrong will be taken of him and given to the one wronged. And if he had no good deeds he will be burdened with the evil deeds of the one he wronged in the same proportion’<sup>151</sup>.

He ﷺ also said,

‘Allah decrees the Fire of Hell and debars Paradise for one who usurps the right of a believer by taking a false oath, even if it may be for the twig of a wild-berry tree’<sup>152</sup>.

Therefore, one should make an utmost effort to somehow make those wronged happy in one way or the other. Where this is not possible, for example because it is not possible to reach out to the people who were wronged, or where there is a fear of deepening the grievances or making matters worse the following dua is recommended:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ لَكَ عَلَيَّ حُقُوقًا كَثِيرَةً فِيمَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ، وَحُقُوقًا كَثِيرَةً فِيمَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خَلْقِكَ. اللَّهُمَّ فَمَا كَانَ لَكَ مِنْهُ فَاعْفِرْهُ لِي وَمَا كَانَ لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ خَلْقِكَ فَتَحَمَّلْهُ عَنِّي وَاقْضِهِ عَنِّي. وَاقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

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<sup>151</sup> Bukhari

<sup>152</sup> Muslim

Allahumma inna laka alayya huqooqan katheeratan fee maa bainee wa-bainaka, wa huqooqan katheeratan fee maa baini wa-baina khalqika. Allahumma famaa kaana laka minhu faghfirhu lee, wa-maa kaana li-ahadin min khalqika fataHammalhu ‘annee waqDhihee ‘annee, waqDhi ‘anni-daina yaa arHamar-raahimeen.

*‘O Allah! Indeed I owe you so many of your rights, which I failed to fulfil. I also owe your creation plenty of their rights which I did not perform. O Allah! What I owe you please forgive me and show mercy to me. And what I owe to any of your creation please you pay it off on my behalf. Please pay off my debts O The Most Merciful’.*

Where possible a will should also be prepared requesting the successors of a deceased instructing them to pay off dues before the assets are divided between them. According to *shari’a*, debts of a mayyit must be settled first before the assets of a mayyit are divided amongst the heirs. Paying off debts and the dues has precedence over everything except the burial costs.

As for the undoing of the first kind of wrongs, which concerns the ties with the Creator, the following *hadith* explains the concept:

*A woman asked Sinan bin Salamahd to ask the Prophet ﷺ about her mother who had passed away and had not been able to perform Hajj. She wanted to know whether she could perform Hajj on her behalf. The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘yes’. Say if her mother had a debt on her and she [the daughter] was to pay it*

*off wouldn't that suffice? So she should perform Hajj on her mother's behalf.* <sup>153</sup>

This is not the only *Hadith* which draws an analogy between fulfilling the commands of Allah ﷻ with the debts and loans. Similar incidents are reported to have taken place with other people. They came to the Prophet ﷺ enquiring about what to do for someone who had been unable to fulfill a particular duty of God. The Prophet ﷺ would ask them to treat such failure by performing a prescribed act of worship as if it was an obligation towards another living being.

During the Battle of the Ditches, one day whilst the Prophet ﷺ was engaged in Jihad with the enemies, he was unable to perform four prayers on their prescribed time.<sup>154</sup> However, as soon as he was able to free himself he went back and performed every single prayer he had missed.<sup>155</sup> In fact he specifically commanded Muslims that if anyone forgets a prayer or sleeps through one then he should perform it straight after he realizes his mistake.<sup>156</sup>

Hence, in order for the repentance to be truly valid, a genuine attempt should be made to undo the committed wrong. In terms of *ibādah*, a terminally ill person should start on a course of performing the *qadhā* of all the missed *ibādah*. However, if

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<sup>153</sup> Nasa'iee

<sup>154</sup> Tirmidhi

<sup>155</sup> Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasa'iee

<sup>156</sup> Muslim

he or she is unable to complete it, the intention and the effort put into the repentance will serve as an evidence to prove their genuine guilt and struggle to undo the wrong at the time of meeting their Creator. Like the situation of the one who had killed 100 people but started mending his ways and made the effort towards it, but did not get enough time.

If one is unable to perform all the prayers missed during his life time then it is recommended, according to Imam Abu-Hanifa's school of thought, that one also pays *fidyah* for each missed prayer, including the *witr* Salāh<sup>157</sup>. This *fidyah* is similar to *sadaqa-tul-fitr*<sup>158</sup> (1.59kg of wheat or its market price of the day when it is paid for each missed prayer).

In the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ has stated regarding the fasts of Ramadhan, 'those who can keep it with hardship the redemption is the feeding of a poor person'<sup>159</sup>. This states the inability to fast can be compensated for by feeding the poor. This concept is also applied to Salāh, which is higher in rank, in order to complete the *taubah*, (a true repentance).

If the relatives of a deceased wish to consider praying on behalf of him or her, then the *hadith* mentioned earlier<sup>160</sup> draws a parallel between the rights (*huqooq*) of Allah ﷻ and the rights of His servants and suggests that an effort should be made to

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<sup>157</sup> Shami, (v. 5) baabu-Qadha-il-fawait

<sup>158</sup> Mabsoot, of Imam Sarakhsiy

<sup>159</sup> 02:184

<sup>160</sup> Nasa'iee,

pay off what remains on the deceased's shoulders. The only difference, in the context of Salāh, is that the concept of praying Salāh on someone else's behalf does not exist in Islam. Hence the only available remedy would be, where possible, to pay *fiḍyah* instead.

It is narrated by Abdullah bin Umar رضي الله عنه that no one should offer Salāh on behalf of someone else and no one should fast on behalf of someone else either. However, if one wants to do something then he should do *sadaqah* (charity) on the other person's behalf.<sup>161</sup>

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## WRITING A WILL

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For those who have not been able to conclude their dealings, writing a will is compulsory.

Abdullah b. Umar رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'It is not permissible for any Muslim who has something to write a will about to stay for two nights without having his last will and testament written and kept ready with him.'<sup>162</sup>

Others who are fortunate enough to not have any burden on their shoulders, i.e. they do not have any debts or loans on them nor anything to return to anyone etc. for them writing a will is an act of great merits.

A *compulsory* will should contain the names and contact details

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<sup>161</sup> إعلاء السنن ج 9 ص 159 برواية مصنف عبدالرزاق و الزيلعي وقال رجاله رجال صحيح الا عبدالله فانه من رجال مسلم والاربعة وهو مختلف فيه

<sup>162</sup> Bukhari

of those to whom something is owed or they owe something. The details of the owed items should also be recorded. In addition, if there is some compulsory *Ibādah* (e.g. *Salāh*, *Sawm*, *zakāh* etc.) which was missed its details should also be listed. The heirs should be asked to consider, where possible, to make arrangements for its compensation.

The second type of will is voluntary, though recommended. This is to advise the heirs and other relatives to remain steadfast on the path of the Qur'an and *sunnah*. It may also contain the lessons learnt through life-long experience, some words of advice, and also the details of how the assets be distributed according to *shari'a*.

Furthermore, where one has a reasonable ground to believe that post his or her death the relatives may involve in rituals that are contrary to *shari'a* – e.g. self-beating, crying out loud, delaying the burial, prolonging the grieving session for more than three days, observing *bid'ah* practices – then to instruct the heirs to abstain from such unlawful practices is compulsory. Recording such advice in a written will ensures that burden of responsibility for such transgression no longer remains with the deceased.

The following points may be born in mind while preparing a will:

- The loans or debts owed have priority over everything else.
- The assets left behind should be distributed according to the teachings of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.
- The prescribed shares of the relatives nominated by the *shari'a* – father, grand-father, mother, grand-mother, husband, wife, children, sisters, brothers and grand

children<sup>163</sup> – cannot be altered through a will. Such wills are considered void.

- Anyone person, group (or cause) other than those relatives who are nominated to receive a share may be assigned a certain percentage of wealth in the will, as long as this portion is less than one third of the total. This also applies to the charitable causes.
- If there is a concern about the local customs to hinder the division of assets, especially those living in non-Muslim societies, according to *shari'a*, to write a will instructing the heirs to adhere to *shari'a* is *wājib* and compulsory.
- If there are close relatives who do not qualify for receiving anything from the assets, but remained very close to the patient, then to assign a small portion for such people in one's will is also recommended. e.g. for brothers or sisters when the dying person had male offspring.

Professional advice should be sought to prepare a compatible will. A Glaswegian brother has prepared a template of the will, which is available from the link given below. The Scottish legal frame work, we are told, has been born in mind during its preparation:

[http://www.servemuslims.com/will/ServeMuslimsWill\\_Tariq%20163.pdf](http://www.servemuslims.com/will/ServeMuslimsWill_Tariq%20163.pdf)

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<sup>163</sup> These are called '*dhawi-ul-furoodh*' and it must be born in mind that not every single one of those listed here always receives a share. In fact the presence of one of these may act as a barrier for the others to qualify. For example if the deceased left a son the sisters or the brothers will not qualify for anything.

As for those living in England or Wales a template for such a will is available at the following web page:

<http://www.1stethical.com>

We do recommend that the readers take their own independent legal advice before choosing either of these two templates.

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### FOR FURTHER ADVICE

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Though every effort was made to answer your questions and provide as much information as necessary, it nevertheless is more than likely that you come across issues that may not have been dealt with in this booklet. In such case you can contact the Imam of your local Masjid or contact the Imam of Central Masjid Glasgow through the contact details updated on the website.

It would be appreciated if you also notify us of any errors or lapses in this publication so it could be amended appropriately in the next addition.

Remember, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘the wise person is the one who keeps himself under control and strives for the life after death, and the weak is the one who continues to follow his whims and desires and dreams on about Allah fulfilling his dreams’.

*Say (to them): “Verily, the death from which you flee will surely meet you, then you will be sent back to (Allah), the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will tell you what you used to do.” (Al Jumua 8)*