

# What to do when someone dies

## A practical guide to death and burial in Islam

Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Edited by Ayesha Khan



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*In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind  
Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds  
Peace and benediction upon our master, Muhammad, all his family and his Companions and  
all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day.*

## Introduction

### *About this booklet*

This booklet is based on the course, The Fiqh of Janaza, delivered by Shaykh Haytham Tamim. It covers the Islamic (fiqh) rulings of burial (janaza). There is a theoretical aspect and there is a practical aspect, and insha'Allah we will combine both.

The main aim is to prepare ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually.

### *Why preparation matters*

This preparation is very important. A person may be spiritually aware, but practically they may have no idea what to do when death occurs. Many of us have little or no experience in this area, and when the moment comes it can shock us twice: firstly, because we have lost someone we love; and secondly, because we do not know what to do.

Therefore, it is good to prepare ourselves. As with every act of worship, we need to study and learn. The rulings and etiquettes related to death and janaza are matters we all need to know, because only Allah knows when we will die.

### *What this booklet covers*

Insha'Allah, we will go through the importance of remembering death, and the approach of the Prophet ﷺ in preparing himself and his companions for this reality.

We will discuss what to do and what to say if we witness someone passing away. Then we will move to the practical side: how to wash the body, how to prepare the body, how to deal with the necessary certificates, the coroner, the medical procedures, the pink certificate, and the other practical matters involved.

After that, we will look at the janaza prayer: how to pray it, what is recited, and what the rulings are. Then we will discuss the burial and what should be done after the janaza prayer.

### *Sunnah, culture and scholarly differences*

In every section, insha'Allah, we will also pause to address misconceptions. People may say, "Do this," or "Do that," but we need to ask: is this from the Sunnah? Is it an innovation? Is it simply cultural? Can it be done, or should it be avoided? Ultimately, we have to do our best to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

We will also discuss the ethics of grieving, how to offer ta'ziyah, how to visit someone for condolences, what to say, and what not to say. Sometimes strange, inappropriate, or even innovated practices appear at times of death and mourning. Some of these are cultural, and some are misunderstandings. We need to distinguish between what is Islamic, what is cultural, what is Sunnah, and what is innovation.

At the same time, we should be careful not to rush in judging everything unfamiliar as an innovation. Sometimes there are valid differences of opinion among the scholars. A person may follow one school of thought and be unfamiliar with another opinion, so when they see someone acting differently, they assume it is wrong or an innovation.

However, if that practice is based on an authentic opinion within one of the recognised schools, then we should not be ignorant of it, nor should we fight people over it. Insha'Allah, we will pause at some of these differences and explain why some scholars said one thing and others said something else.

As long as an opinion is authentic and based on a recognised school of Islam, it may be followed.

### *Other rulings*

We will also address the question of visiting graves, especially the issue which often arises regarding women. Are women allowed to visit the graveyard? Is it permitted or prohibited? Is it sinful for them to go? What is the reality of the matter? Insha'Allah, we will discuss this in detail.

There are also other rulings related to death, such as the 'iddah of a woman whose husband has passed away. What is required of the widow? What does the period of four months and ten days mean? What if she is pregnant? These matters will also be covered, insha'Allah.

### *How to use this booklet*

This booklet may be read from beginning to end as a study text, or used as a reference when a particular issue arises.

In practical situations, refer especially to the sections on what to do when death occurs, washing the deceased, shrouding, the janaza prayer and burial.

Where valid scholarly differences are mentioned, follow a recognised opinion and seek guidance from a trusted scholar or your local Muslim funeral service when needed.

## Part one: Preparing for death

### *Remembering death and preparing for the akhirah*

We begin by asking: how did the Prophet ﷺ, who is our role model, prepare his companions and himself for death?

We start with the Qur'an, then we move to the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

Allah Almighty says:

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

*“Every soul will taste death. And you will only be given your full reward on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted into Paradise has truly succeeded. And the life of this world is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion.”*

*(Surah Aal ‘Imran, 3:185)*

We could spend the whole session on this one verse, because it is very comprehensive.

Allah tells us that every soul shall die. But He does not simply say that every soul will die. He uses a very specific word: taste.

Every soul shall taste death. Why does Allah mention tasting death? Because death has a taste. It has a bitterness. It has its own reality which every soul will experience.

This is part of our preparation. We must know that this day is coming and we must be ready for it.

### *The reality of returning to Allah*

The Prophet ﷺ would seek Allah's help and protection from the agonies and bitterness of death, the sakarat al-mawt. Death is not an easy moment, and the believer prepares for it by remembering it, learning its rulings, and turning back to Allah before that moment arrives.

The real life is the life of the akhirah. This dunya is not the true life; it is a place of test, delusion and temporary enjoyment. Therefore, we prepare ourselves for the true life of the hereafter and protect ourselves from the Fire.

Allah Almighty says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

*“Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and good as a trial, and to Us you will be returned.”*

*(Surah al-Anbiya, 21:35)*

Again, this is a reminder for every single one of us. To Allah we belong, and to Allah we shall return.

The Prophet ﷺ would begin his day with this reality. When he woke up, he would say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ

*“Praise be to Allah who gave us life after He caused us to die, and to Him is the resurrection.”*

*(Bukhari)*

This supplication sets the tone of the day. Every day begins with the reminder that we will return to Allah.

This belief protects a person from evil. If this reality is alive before our eyes every morning, then we will remember that we will meet Allah with everything we do.

I will meet Allah with my relationship with my parents. I will meet Allah with my relationship with my wife. I will meet Allah with my relationship with my children. I will meet Allah with my relationship with my boss, my employees, my students, my teachers, and everyone else.

From the beginning of the day, I should remember: I will meet Allah with everything I am doing, saying, or planning to do. This sets the rhythm of the whole day.

It is very simple, and we repeat it often, but we need to go deeper into its meaning. We need to visualise it and understand that this is how we prepare ourselves to meet Allah Almighty.

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*Before I say something or do something, I should ask myself: am I happy to meet Allah with this word? Am I happy to meet Allah with this action? Am I happy to meet Allah with this relationship and the way I am treating this person?*

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If yes, then do it or say it. If not, then remember: you will meet Allah with it.

Allah Almighty says in Surat al-‘Ankabut:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

*“Every soul will taste death. Then to Us you will be returned.”*

*(Surah al-‘Ankabut, 29:57)*

And in Surat al-Kahf, which we recite on Fridays, Allah Almighty says:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

*“So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.”*

*(Surah al-Kahf, 18:110)*

Whoever hopes to meet Allah should prepare for that meeting. He should worship Allah alone and do righteous deeds.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ

*“Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him.”*

*(Bukhari and Muslim)*

There are people whom Allah loves to meet, and there are people whom Allah does not love to meet. Therefore, the believer should live in a way that makes him pleased to meet Allah, and makes Allah pleased to meet him.

When the Prophet ﷺ was on his deathbed, he was given the choice between remaining in this world and going to the hereafter. As Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated, she understood that he had chosen the akhirah when he looked upwards and said words indicating his longing for the Highest Companion.

She knew that the Prophet ﷺ had chosen the akhirah over the dunya, because he loved to meet Allah.

Allah Almighty says:

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُشِيدَةٍ

*“Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you are in fortified towers.”*

*(Surah al-Nisa, 4:78)*

Death will reach us wherever we are. A person should not say, “I am still young,” or “It is not my time yet.” Death does not wait for old age. It comes when Allah has decreed.

Allah Almighty also says at the end of Surat al-Mu’minun:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

*“Did you think that We created you without purpose, and that you would not be returned to Us?”*

*(Surah al-Mu’minun, 23:115)*

We were not created without purpose. We were created to worship Allah, and to Him we shall return.

There are many verses in the Qur’an about death, the remembrance of death, and preparation for death. These verses have been selected to remind us of this great reality.

### *Remembering the destroyer of pleasures*

Now we look at the practical application from the Prophet ﷺ. How did he prepare himself and his companions for death?

The Prophet ﷺ said:

أَكْثِرُوا ذِكْرَ هَانِمِ اللَّذَاتِ

*“Remember often the destroyer of pleasures.”*

*(Tirmidhi)*

Meaning: death. The Prophet ﷺ did not simply say, “Remember death.” He said, “Remember often.” This remembrance should not be occasional. It should be frequent, because it protects the person from evil.

When you remember death, it helps you reduce the useless things in your life. It helps you prioritise.

Imagine you had one hour to live. What would you do?

Imagine you had one day to live. What would your priorities be?

Imagine you had one week, one month, or one year.

Your priorities would immediately shift. You would see what really matters and what does not.

It is narrated from Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him):

*“Work for your dunya as though you will live forever, and work for your akhirah as though you will die tomorrow.”*

This sets the balance. It teaches us to organise our worldly life responsibly, but never to forget that death may come at any moment.

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*Remembering death helps a person prioritise their life and ask: what should I do? What should I leave? What is worth my time? What will benefit me when I meet Allah?*

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### *Living with limited time*

Remembering death helps a person refrain from sins, useless things, wasting time, and wasting life. Why? Because we realise that our time is limited.

Out of His wisdom, Allah Almighty has kept the length of our life and the time of our death hidden from us. No one knows when they will die. This encourages us to work hard, remain alert, and make the right choices.

A person may live for one hundred years. One of our shuyukh passed away at the age of 111, rahimahullah. I witnessed some of his life. Every day, he lived as though that day could be his last. Whenever you sat with him, he would remind you of Allah. He would weep often, but in a positive sense, not a negative one. His heart was alive. You felt as though he was ready to die at any moment. Yet Allah granted him 111 years.

Another person may live a very short life. The point is not merely whether life is long or short. The real question is: what did we do during our life?

And if someone is in a very difficult situation, remembering death can make things easier for him. He remembers that this hardship is temporary, that this world is passing, and that the real life is the hereafter.

This is the balance taught by the Prophet ﷺ.

### *Tears at the grave*

It is mentioned that the Prophet ﷺ once followed a janaza. He stood at the edge of the grave and cried until his tears wet the ground. Then he said:

*“O my brothers, for this prepare yourselves.”*

So, are we allowed to weep and cry? Yes, of course. Crying is allowed. What is not allowed is wailing, shouting and screaming. This is a different matter, and we will discuss it later, insha’Allah.

Crying is a mercy placed in the heart. You cannot simply stop it. If a person witnesses a janaza or a death and is not moved at all, then there may be something wrong with the heart. It may be a sign of hardness. The heart should be affected by such events.

Some people find it difficult to cry, especially men, because they think crying contradicts masculinity. But this is not correct. The Prophet ﷺ is the best of Allah’s creation, and he wept. His tears were not weakness. They were mercy, tenderness, and awareness of Allah.

### *The truly wise person*

The Prophet ﷺ was asked:

*“Who are the wisest of people, O Messenger of Allah?”*

He ﷺ replied:

*“Those who remember death most often and are best prepared for it. They are the wise ones. They have honour in this world and dignity in the hereafter.”*

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*The Prophet ﷺ gave honour and dignity a different dimension. Real honour is not wealth, status, image, or position. The truly honoured person is the one who remembers Allah, remembers death, and prepares to meet Him.*

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In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

*“The wise one is he who takes himself to account and acts in preparation for what comes after death. The incapable one is he who follows his desires and merely places hopes in Allah.”*

The wise person observes himself. He holds himself accountable. He looks at what he is doing and prepares for death.

The opposite is the one who wastes his life while relying on empty hopes.

In some narrations, the word used is “weak”, and in others it is “foolish”. This may sound strong, but the Prophet ﷺ is describing the reality of a person who wastes his life. He lives in vain, caught up in useless things, while failing to prepare for the meeting with Allah.

Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

*“Take yourselves to account before you are taken to account.”*

It is easier to review your book now and correct it. It is easier to rectify your actions now.

But when you stand before Allah, you cannot change anything. Your record will already be complete. You cannot erase it, adjust it, or correct it then.

Therefore, we need to be careful about how we spend our lives and how we prepare ourselves to meet Allah Almighty.

It is easy to talk about this. It is easy to read it, memorise it, and repeat it. The difficult part is to live it.

### *Visualising the journey to Allah*

For this reason, in some spiritual practices, particularly in some Sufi tariqas such as the Naqshbandis, there is a daily exercise in which a person visualises their own death.

They imagine themselves dying. They imagine being washed. They imagine being carried to the grave. They imagine being placed in the grave. They imagine the angels coming and questioning them.

This is not mentioned here to assess the validity of a tariqa or to enter into that discussion, but to draw attention to the benefit of this practice. In itself, this kind of reflection is healthy and is in line with the meaning of the Sunnah.

When the Prophet ﷺ began his day by saying:

وَالِيهِ النُّشُورُ

*“And to Him is the resurrection.”*

He was reminding us that we are returning to Allah.

So we should visualise that return. We should think about how we will return to Allah. This reflection inspires a person to do more good and to refrain from evil.

May Allah enable us to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ.

Among the practical ways the Prophet ﷺ prepared us for death is the matter of the will. This is one of the practical issues we now need to discuss.

## Writing a will and settling one’s affairs

Among the practical ways the Prophet ﷺ prepared the ummah for death is the matter of writing a will.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا حَقُّ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ لَهُ شَيْءٌ يُوصِي فِيهِ بَيِّتٌ لَيْلَتَيْنِ إِلَّا وَصِيَّتُهُ مَكْتُوبَةٌ عِنْدَهُ

*“It is not right for a Muslim who has something to bequeath to spend two nights without having his will written and kept with him.”*

*(Bukhari and Muslim)*

In some narrations, it mentions two nights, and in others, three nights. There is no confusion here. Both narrations are authentic. The meaning is that a person should not delay writing their will. It should be ready, because no one knows whether they will live until tomorrow.

This is part of visualising death and preparing for it practically. It brings the reality of death close to you. You write your will and keep it ready, because Allah knows when your time will come.

In this country, there are specific Islamic wills which can be prepared in a way that is recognised legally and also allows the wealth to be distributed according to the Shariah. A person may register the will, keep it with a solicitor, or follow the correct legal process to ensure that their estate is distributed properly after death.

The important point is that this is not something to neglect. A Muslim should make sure their will is written and ready.

### *Giving wealth during one's lifetime*

When speaking about distributing wealth after death, another related issue arises: some people willingly distribute their wealth during their lifetime.

Are they allowed to do this? Yes, they are allowed. It is their wealth. However, they must be careful. Many people, apart from a few rare exceptions, distribute wealth during their lifetime by giving the boy twice as much as the girl. For example, a wealthy parent may give two properties to a son and one property to a daughter, and then say, "This is the Shariah." But this is not the Shariah.

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*The Qur'anic ruling that the male receives the share of two females applies to inheritance after death. It does not apply to gifts given during one's lifetime.*

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During your lifetime, this is not inheritance. It is a gift. And when giving gifts to your children, the gifts should be equal.

This is a very common mistake, and a dangerous one. It can become a form of oppression, even if the person thinks they are following the Shariah. In reality, they may be acting out of ignorance. Such a person needs to be taught: this is not what the Shariah says.

If someone wishes to distribute wealth during their lifetime, although this is not generally recommended without careful thought, then it should be distributed equally between the children. Boys and girls are equal in gifts.

### *Equality between children in gifts*

Someone may ask: why is it considered oppression if it is the parent's own money and they are free to give it as they wish?

The answer is found in the Sunnah. A companion came to the Prophet ﷺ and said that he had gifted one of his children a garden, and he wanted the Prophet ﷺ to witness it.

The Prophet ﷺ asked him whether he had given all his children similar gifts. The companion replied that he had not.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

فَأَبِي لَا أَشْهَدُ عَلَى جَوْرٍ

*"I do not bear witness to injustice."*

*(Bukhari and Muslim)*

The Prophet ﷺ refused to witness such a gift because it favoured one child over the others unfairly.

Therefore, if you give gifts to your children, the general rule is equality. You should not favour one child over another, unless there is a specific and exceptional reason.

There are even books written on the subject of equalising gifts between children. The principle is that gifts should be equal, and one child should not be favoured without a valid reason.

#### *The meaning of two or three nights*

Someone may ask: if we are supposed to remember death every day, why does the hadith mention two or three nights? Why not say that a person should not even sleep one night without a will?

The answer is that the number is not meant as a strict restriction. The point is not that two nights or three nights are the exact limit and nothing else matters. Rather, the Prophet ﷺ is emphasising urgency. In ordinary speech, two or three is often used to indicate a very short period. The meaning is: do not delay. Keep your will ready.

#### *Exceptional cases and family needs*

The general rule is equality between children in gifts, but there may be exceptional cases.

For example, one child may have a genuine need. Another may be struggling financially. One may be carrying the family business on his shoulders, while others are not involved. In such cases, the parent may consider the circumstances. However, these are exceptions and should be treated as exceptions. They should not become the norm.

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*A parent must be very careful, because unequal distribution can create resentment, hatred and disputes after death. The aim is not to make the children fight after the parent passes away. The aim is to preserve love between them, and not to make them resent one another or resent their parent.*

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When it comes to money, many people change. Some people love money more than anything else; more than their parents, and even more than Allah. Therefore, a parent must be very cautious.

If there is a genuine reason to give one child more due to need, then this should be explained clearly. Ideally, the other children should understand and accept it so that it does not create rancour in their hearts.

But the basic rule remains: equality applies to the children, regardless of whether one child is closer to the religion than another. Gifts should not be used to create injustice between them.

### *Disowning children and taking away shares*

In our communities, some parents decide to take away the shares of certain children. They may say, “I have disowned him,” or “She left home, so she has no share.” This is not right.

To disown your own child in this way is not correct. The shares of inheritance are determined by the Shariah. A parent should not use anger, family disputes, or personal disappointment to deny a child what Allah has given them.

This connects to the same issue of giving gifts while one is alive. I have seen cases where parents gave their wealth to their children during their lifetime, and then Allah gave them a long life. The children then became harsh towards them.

This is one of the reasons why I personally do not recommend distributing all your wealth during your lifetime. I have come across genuine cases where children took the wealth and then removed their parents from the home or placed them in a care home.

One of our respected shuyukh once mentioned a real case from Beirut. A man had distributed his wealth to his children. Later, when he became old, his son became frustrated and said, “Enough, I cannot look after you anymore.” So he carried his father on his back to throw him somewhere.

As he was walking, his father said, “If you are going to throw me somewhere, then stop here and put me in this very place.”

The son asked, “Why here?”

The father replied, “Because I threw my own father in this very place.”

It is like a debt. If you are good, goodness returns to you. If you are bad, that also returns to you. Therefore, be careful.

The general rule remains that if gifts are given to children during one’s lifetime, they should be equal. There may be exceptional cases, but they must be treated as exceptions, not as the norm.

### *Islamic shares after death*

When inheritance is distributed after death, it is not based on personal preference. The Shariah has fixed shares.

One person may receive twenty-four shares, another twelve, and so on, depending on the heirs and the circumstances. These shares are calculated according to the Islamic laws of inheritance.

This is why writing an Islamic will is important. A properly prepared Islamic will goes through the details and different scenarios so that the estate can be distributed correctly.

There may also be questions about grandchildren and other relatives. These matters require proper calculation and should be dealt with carefully.

If during one's lifetime a parent wants to forgive a debt owed by one child and turn it into a gift, then they should also consider the feelings and consent of the other siblings. Otherwise, they may feel that the parent treated them unjustly.

The aim is to avoid resentment, hatred, and disputes within the family.

## When death approaches

Now we come to the practical question: what should be done and what should be said when someone is at the point of approaching death?

In Arabic, such a person is described as *مُخْتَضِرٌ*, meaning someone who is near death.

At this stage, talqeen is very important. Talqeen means prompting someone to say something. The word is used in different Islamic sciences, such as hadith and Qur'an. In tajweed, for example, knowledge is conveyed through talqeen: the teacher recites and the student receives and repeats. Here, talqeen means gently reminding the dying person of what they should say. But be careful. If you are present at that moment, do not pressure the person. Do not push them. Do not say harshly, "Say this! Say this!"

Be gentle and kind. The correct way is to raise your voice slightly, in a soft and calm manner, and say:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

*"There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."*

Insha'Allah, they may repeat it after you.

At that moment, avoid talking about dunya. Do not bring up worldly matters, disputes, issues, money, family problems, or anything that distracts them. They are leaving the dunya and moving towards the akhirah. It is a very difficult moment.

May Allah make it easy for all of us.

### *If they say the shahadah*

Once the person says *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ*, stop.

Do not keep prompting them unnecessarily. Do not begin another conversation. Leave them with those words.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَ آخِرُ كَلَامِهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ

*"Whoever's last words are لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ will enter Paradise."*

*(Abu Dawud)*

So if they say لا إله إلا الله, stop speaking and leave them with it. Insha'Allah, they will depart upon those words.

The purpose of talqeen is not to pressure the dying person. It is to gently remind them. They are in a state where they may be struggling, and they need calmness, mercy, and dhikr around them.

### *Signs that death has occurred*

There are signs by which one may realise that the person is passing away or has passed away. These may be seen in the face, skin, eyes and jaw.

The eyes and jaw are often clear signs. Usually, when the soul is taken, the eyes look upwards. The Prophet ﷺ mentioned that when the soul is taken, the eyesight follows it. (Muslim)

So the eyes may remain open, looking upwards.

### *Closing the jaw and eyes*

After death, the jaw should be closed. A small strip of cloth may be placed under the jaw and tied over the head to keep the mouth closed.

Some people use cotton or other methods, but what is established is to close the jaw.

The eyes should also be closed. This can be done gently with two fingers or with the hand. This should be done calmly and respectfully.

### *A common misconception*

One common misconception is that anyone in a state of janabah, menstruation, or postnatal bleeding should not stay in the same room as the deceased. This is not true.

There is no evidence for this. A person in janabah, a menstruating woman, or a woman in postnatal bleeding may remain in the same room. There is nothing wrong with that.

Some people say that a menstruating woman cannot stay near the deceased, but this is not from the Sunnah. It is a cultural misconception. In order to have a ruling, we need evidence. Here, there is no evidence preventing it.

A separate question is whether such a person may wash the deceased, especially if a wife is menstruating and her husband has passed away. That issue has different scholarly opinions and will be discussed later in more detail, insha'Allah.

### *Facing the qiblah when someone is dying*

When a person is approaching death, the process may take a few seconds, or it may take a few days. Allah knows best. We ask Allah to make it easy for all of us.

Some people pass away while they are in salah. Others pass away in different circumstances. When we witness someone leaving this life, there are practical questions that arise.

Should we move the bed so that the person faces the qiblah? If it is possible to do so without causing harm or distress, then it is fine. But usually, this is not easy. The main principle is: do not disturb the muhtadar, the person who is approaching death.

If you can turn them towards the qiblah gently and without harm, then do so. If not, you may place a cushion under the head to help them face the qiblah, if possible. If even that causes discomfort, then leave them as they are.

The same applies to the bedsheets. If they can be clean, that is good. But if changing the sheets will cause harm, discomfort, or unnecessary disturbance, then do not do it.

Anything that can be done gently, do it. Anything that causes harm or difficulty should be left.

It is also good to keep a pleasant scent in the room, whether through perfume, bukhoor, or something similar, for obvious reasons.

### *Reciting Surah Ya Sin*

At this time, it is common to recite Surah Ya Sin. There are narrations which mention:

اقْرؤُوا بِسِ عَلَىٰ مَوْتِكُمْ

*“Recite Ya Sin over your dying/deceased.”*

*(Abu Dawud)*

The narration is not very strong, but it is acceptable according to some scholars. At the very least, it can be regarded as a good practice by those who accept the narration.

However, one must be sensitive. Some people, if they are still conscious, may become upset if others begin reciting Ya Sin around them, because they feel, “I am not dead yet.” If the person becomes annoyed or distressed by it, then do not do it.

This does not mean they dislike the Qur’an. Rather, they may associate this recitation with death and feel uncomfortable because they do not think they are about to die.

So if it brings peace, recite it. If it causes distress, leave it.

## Part two: What to do when death occurs

### *Immediate steps after death has occurred*

Once you are sure that someone has passed away, there are several practical steps to take, especially if the death happens at home.

You need to inform:

1. your family doctor,
2. the undertaker or funeral directors,
3. the local imam, so arrangements can be made for the janaza prayer, and close family members.

If someone dies at home, the process depends on whether the death was expected or unexpected.

### *If the death was expected*

If the person had a chronic or terminal illness, such as cancer or another serious illness, and it was expected that they would pass away, then the process is usually straightforward.

If the doctor had seen the person within the relevant period before death, the family doctor can usually issue the medical certificate stating the cause of death and confirming that there is no reason for further investigation by the coroner.

If your relative is very ill and it seems likely that they may pass away over the weekend, it is sensible to speak to the family doctor before the weekend. The doctor may be able to inform the out-of-hours service, so they are aware of the situation. This is especially important for cancer patients or those receiving end-of-life care.

Once the family doctor has been contacted and the medical certificate has been issued, you can inform the undertaker that the medical certificate is ready and the funeral arrangements can proceed.

This certificate is free of charge.

### *Registering the death*

After receiving the medical certificate, the death still needs to be registered.

The course text mentions that a son or brother should go to the register office, but there is no reason for it to be restricted to a son or brother. It should usually be the next of kin, or someone from the family who is able to attend and provide the necessary information.

The registration is normally done at the local register office, town hall, civic centre, or the equivalent office in your area.

You will need to take documents to verify who you are and who the deceased person was.

The registrar will usually issue two documents. One is the green certificate, which authorises burial. The other is for administrative matters, such as social security and related purposes.

The green certificate is the one needed for the burial to go ahead.

#### *Weekends and public holidays*

Muslims usually want to bury the deceased quickly. If the death occurs on a weekend or public holiday, it may still be possible to contact the registrar for an urgent appointment.

The course material describes this as being for emergencies, and for us, arranging the burial is an urgent matter.

The contact number may be available through the civic centre, but if you do not have it, the local mosque will often know the relevant emergency registrar contact details, because this is a common situation.

A practical point to remember is that burials usually do not take place late in the day, often not after around 3 or 4 pm, depending on the cemetery and local arrangements.

#### *If the death was unexpected*

The difficulty arises when the death was completely unexpected.

If someone dies suddenly and there was no known illness or expected cause of death, the matter may need further investigation.

The police do not always have to be informed. They are usually involved if there is something suspicious about the death. If the person was elderly and there is no obvious sign of anything suspicious, then the police may not necessarily need to be involved.

However, if there is anything doubtful, unusual, or suspicious, then the police may become involved, and the doctor will usually refer the matter to the coroner.

In such cases, the process may take longer, because the cause of death must be clarified before burial can proceed.

#### *When the coroner becomes involved*

The coroner becomes involved in certain situations, especially when the cause of death is not clear.

This may happen if no doctor saw the deceased during the last fourteen days of their life, or if the cause of death is unknown. It may also happen if the death was sudden, violent, caused by an accident, or connected to an industrial disease.

If someone had a known illness, such as cancer, and everyone knew that they were expected to pass away, but no doctor had seen them in the last fourteen days, this does not necessarily mean the process will become complicated. The doctor may simply speak to the coroner and explain that although the person was not seen in that period, the cause of death is clear and expected. In such a case, the matter can often be resolved without difficulty.

The main concern is when the death is uncertain, sudden, violent, accidental, or linked to an industrial disease. In those cases, the coroner will usually need to be more involved.

#### *Post-mortems and the coroner*

Generally, coroners are aware that families may not want a post-mortem. They try to avoid one when possible. However, if the cause of death is unclear, a post-mortem may be necessary.

If the deceased was young, and there is no clear reason for the death, the coroner is more likely to request a post-mortem. If the person was elderly, perhaps in their eighties or nineties, and there is no suspicious circumstance, the coroner may try to avoid a post-mortem and may advise the doctor on how to record the cause of death appropriately.

The system is usually reasonable. A post-mortem is not carried out just for the sake of it. It is done when there is a genuine need to establish why the person died.

Of course, if someone has died and the cause is unknown, it is important to find out why. There may be a medical reason, or there may be something suspicious. This is why the coroner's role exists.

Once the coroner has completed the post-mortem and confirmed that the person died from a clear medical cause, with no suspicious circumstances, the body can be released for burial. The coroner will issue a pink certificate. This is then taken to the registrar's office, where the other certificates can be issued, as discussed earlier.

#### *If an inquest is required*

If the post-mortem does not identify a clear medical cause of death, or if the cause appears suspicious or accidental, the coroner may call for an inquest.

An inquest is an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding someone's death. It investigates how, when and why the person died.

The family may need to consider whether legal representation is necessary, depending on the circumstances. The details of this can be read separately in the course material.

#### *If the death occurs in hospital*

If a person dies in hospital, the process may be slightly different.

Sometimes, even if the person was already in hospital, the doctors may not have clearly established the cause of illness or death. In such cases, they may suggest that a post-mortem would be useful.

This becomes a discussion between the family and the doctor. If the family strongly objects to a post-mortem, they can explain their position. In many cases, the doctors will respect that, unless there is a strong reason why a post-mortem is necessary.

After death in hospital, the body is usually transferred to the hospital mortuary. From there, arrangements can be made to transfer the body to the masjid mortuary or another funeral facility.

It is important to remember that the death must be registered in the borough where the person died.

#### *Mortuaries and practical arrangements*

The body may remain in the hospital mortuary, or it may be transferred to another mortuary, such as one attached to a masjid or funeral service.

If the hospital doctor cannot issue the medical certificate directly because the matter requires coroner involvement, then the doctor will discuss the matter with the coroner. Once the coroner is satisfied, the paperwork can proceed as mentioned.

In practical terms, the process is not as complicated as people may fear. If you do not know what to do, speak to the GP, the hospital doctor, or the relevant medical staff. They will guide you.

Every hospital usually has a patient liaison office or bereavement office where the family can ask about the process and find out what needs to be done.

#### *If death occurs overnight at home*

If someone dies at home overnight, the GP surgery usually has an out-of-hours system.

You can call the GP surgery, and the answer machine should tell you which number to call in an emergency or out-of-hours situation. You then call that number and inform them that your relative has passed away.

A doctor will need to see the body before it can be moved from the home.

Once a doctor has seen the body and given permission, the undertaker can remove the body. Some funeral directors offer a twenty-four-hour service, and if they are available, they can take the body from the home after the doctor has confirmed that this is allowed.

The doctor does not necessarily have to give paperwork immediately. They may simply say that the undertaker can be contacted, and that the family should contact the GP in

the morning to obtain the medical certificate. The paperwork can then continue from there.

The important point is that the body should not be moved from the house without a doctor's permission.

The body is normally moved by the undertaker, not by ambulance.

#### *Questions about paperwork*

Sometimes people worry that the body cannot be moved without the death certificate. In practice, the death certificate is not always needed before the body is transferred to the mortuary. Often, the body may already be in the mortuary before the medical certificate has been issued.

What is needed at that stage is the doctor's permission for the body to be moved. The formal medical certificate can then be issued afterwards.

#### *The widow and registering the death*

A question may arise: if the wife is in her 'iddah after her husband's death, can she go to register the death?

In principle, if someone else can go, then she should not need to go. Since she is in 'iddah, she should remain within the limits of 'iddah. Usually, another family member can register the death.

However, if there is genuinely nobody else who can go, and the burial cannot proceed without registration, then she may have to go due to necessity.

This issue connects more directly to the rulings of burial and 'iddah, and will be discussed later in more detail, insha'Allah.

#### *Post-mortems and necessity*

If there is a genuine medical or legal reason for a post-mortem, then the family may not have a choice. When the cause of death is unclear, suspicious, or connected to a legal investigation, the authorities may require it.

For example, if someone dies within a few days of having an operation, even if they had cancer or another serious illness, a post-mortem may be required. This is because the doctors and authorities need to establish whether the person died because of the operation, because of the original illness, or due to some other cause.

In such cases, the family can explain that, as Muslims, they wish to bury the deceased as quickly as possible and that they would prefer to avoid a post-mortem if possible. Usually, the authorities are aware that Muslims and Jews have religious concerns around delaying burial and performing post-mortems.

However, if the post-mortem is legally required, the family cannot force the release of the body before the authorities are ready. What they can do is remind them gently and respectfully that a quick burial is important in Islam.

### *Organ donation*

Since 2020, the UK has an opt out system, so one is considered willing to donate organs after death unless they have opted out. This means that a person is generally considered to have consented to organ donation after death unless they have clearly registered a decision to opt out on the NHS Organ Donor Register. Although this is the legal position across England, Wales and Scotland, in practice the family of the deceased is still consulted, and their view is often taken into account before any procedure takes place. Organ donation only occurs in specific medical circumstances after death has been confirmed.

From a fiqh perspective, there is a difference of opinion among contemporary scholars regarding organ donation. A number of scholars have permitted it with conditions, particularly where it is done to save life, without any form of sale or commercial gain, and whilst maintaining the dignity and sanctity of the human body. Others have taken a more cautious or prohibitive view. Therefore, a Muslim should make a clear and informed decision in accordance with the scholarly opinion they follow, and communicate this to their family. This is important so that their wishes are known and can be respected at the time of death, especially within a system where consent may otherwise be assumed.

If the deceased did not leave a clear instruction, then permission may be sought from the relatives. The relatives should consider whether the person had ever expressed a view during their lifetime about donating their organs. If the person had clearly said that they wanted to donate, or clearly said that they did not want to donate, then that should be respected.

It is worth noting that a person cannot choose who receives their organs. They may be able to decide whether they want to donate or not, but they cannot control which specific person receives the organs.

### *Registering the death and required documents*

When you obtain the medical certificate and go to the registrar, you will usually need official documents, such as a passport, birth certificate, or other records confirming the identity of the deceased.

In practice, registering a death is usually straightforward. It is rarely complicated, and most people do not experience serious problems. If you take the general records and documents you have, the registration is normally completed on the same day.

### *If someone passes away abroad*

What to do if someone passes away abroad. In that case, the family may need to contact the British Embassy or Consulate in that country. They may need to declare that the person has passed away and provide a letter stating that they are the next of kin.

They will also usually need the passport details of the deceased.

The embassy or relevant authority can then help with the release of the body and the paperwork needed to return the body to the UK, if that is what the family wishes to do.

There are also agencies that can assist with repatriating the body. This may involve insurers, funeral agencies, and local authorities in the country where the person passed away. It can sound complicated, but there are procedures in place to help families through it.

### *Should a person be buried where they die?*

If someone dies in a particular place, should they be buried there? Is it better to bury the person in the land where they passed away, rather than transporting the body elsewhere?

This is an important burial-related question and will be returned to later, insha'Allah, when the discussion moves to the rulings of burial itself.

### *If the body is moved outside the borough*

A question was asked about someone who passes away at home during the night. If the doctor on call confirms that the person has died and gives permission for the body to be removed, but the medical certificate has not yet been issued, does the body have to remain somewhere within the borough?

In general, it is sensible for the undertaker to be local, close to where the deceased lived and close to the GP practice. This makes the process easier, because the GP may still need to be involved and may need to see the body or issue the medical certificate.

If the undertaker is far away or outside the borough, this may create inconvenience, especially for the GP. However, in reality, many Muslim undertakers may be based outside the borough. If that is the only available option, then the GP will need to work with the situation.

The practical point is to keep things as simple as possible. If you can use a local undertaker, that is better. If not, then explain the situation politely and follow the instructions of the doctor, undertaker and registrar.

As for sending the body abroad, this requires additional clearance and paperwork. The case would usually need to be straightforward, with all the relevant certificates and permissions completed first. There may also be coroner involvement, embassy

procedures, and transport arrangements. This will depend on the country and circumstances.

## Preparing the body before washing

### *Returning to the practical steps*

We now return to the practical tasks immediately after death, and then to the washing of the body.

If you are present in the same room when the person passes away, the first thing is to close the eyes gently.

The Sunnah is to say:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَىٰ مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ

*“In the name of Allah, and upon the way and faith of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.”*

We say this hoping that Allah Almighty makes the end of that person upon Islam. Hearts are in Allah’s control, and no one knows how they may change. So we always hope for the best for the deceased.

Then the chin should be gently lifted and the jaw closed, as mentioned earlier. When someone dies, the body is no longer under their control. The jaw may open, and the body may not appear in the best condition. So we try to make the deceased presentable, with dignity and gentleness.

### *Removing jewellery and valuables*

Any rings, jewellery, necklaces, bracelets, or similar items should be removed from the body as soon as possible.

This should be done quickly, because after death the body may begin to swell, and then it can become difficult or impossible to remove rings and other items.

This should be done carefully and respectfully.

### *Trusted people around the deceased*

One very important point is that the people around the deceased must be trustworthy.

This is a very private and sensitive moment. The deceased may say something before death, or something may be seen on the body after death. There may be signs that should not be discussed publicly.

If something good is seen, such as a peaceful face or a radiant appearance, then it may be mentioned as a good sign. But if something distressing is seen, such as darkness in the face or anything unpleasant, then it must not be publicised.

You are there as someone trusted. You keep the secrets of the deceased.

The Prophet ﷺ emphasised that those who wash and bury the deceased should be trustworthy people. This trust is extremely important.

#### *Fake nails, teeth and anything attached to the body*

Sometimes questions arise about things attached to the body, such as fake nails.

If fake nails cannot be removed without harming the body, then they should be left. Anything that harms the body should not be done.

Likewise, some books may mention removing a gold tooth, platinum tooth, or similar item. This should not be done if it involves deforming or damaging the body.

The deceased must be honoured. We are not allowed to mutilate or disfigure the body.

#### *Straightening the limbs*

The limbs should be straightened carefully and gently.

The body should be placed neatly and respectfully. The arms are best placed by the sides, not folded over the chest. This makes it easier when the body is washed later.

As time passes, the body may become stiff, and movement becomes more difficult. Therefore, if the limbs can be gently straightened early on, that is better.

However, do not force anything. If a hand, arm, leg, toe, or joint does not move easily, do not push it. You may break something. If it moves smoothly, then fine. If not, leave it.

The toes may be placed together, and the ankles may be tied if needed.

Before washing the body, those performing the ghusl usually go through the joints gently to loosen them. They may move the fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, knees, ankles and toes carefully, so that the washing can be done more smoothly.

This is done only with gentleness. The body must be handled with honour and care.

#### *Reciting Qur'an while washing the body*

The Qur'an should not be recited during the washing of the body, because this has not been mentioned as the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ in this situation.

Earlier, we mentioned reciting Surah Ya Sin while a person is dying, according to those who accept the narration. Later, regarding reciting Qur'an at the grave, there are two scholarly opinions: some scholars allow it, and others do not.

But during the washing of the body itself, Qur'an is not recited.

#### *Cutting nails and removing hair*

Another issue is whether the nails may be cut or hair may be removed from the body.

There are differences of opinion on this matter.

According to the Hanafi school, the nails should not be cut, the hair should not be combed, and no hair should be removed from the body.

According to the Shafi'i school, it is permissible to trim the nails, comb the hair, and trim the moustache. So this is not an issue where one should immediately accuse others of innovation. It is a valid difference of opinion between recognised schools.

The Shafi'i position is based on the narration regarding the washing of one of the daughters of the Prophet ﷺ, where the women washing her were instructed to braid her hair into three plaits. In order to do this, the hair would need to be combed and arranged. From this, Imam al-Shafi'i understood that combing and arranging the hair of the deceased is permissible.

The Hanafi school, however, takes the view that the body should be left as it is, and that one should not trim the nails, comb the hair, or cut any hair.

Personally, I would prefer not to trim the hair or treat the deceased as though they are being prepared for a wedding, as is found in some other traditions. However, if there is a broken nail, for example, and trimming it would make the body more presentable without harm, then that may be done.

But going through the nails and trimming them as a matter of grooming should be avoided according to the preferred approach here.

### *Supplications during preparation*

Is there any specific supplication from the Sunnah to recite during this process?

There is nothing firmly established from the Prophet ﷺ as a specific du'a to be recited while preparing the body. Some supplications are mentioned by scholars as recommendations, but they should not be believed to be the exact words of the Prophet ﷺ.

For example, a person may say:

*“O Allah, make his matter easy for him and make what comes next light for him.”*

This kind of du'a is good. You may ask Allah to make things easy for the deceased and to have mercy on him or her. But one should not claim that these exact words are from the Sunnah unless there is an authentic narration for them.

### *What to say when death occurs*

When a calamity strikes, including death, the first thing to say is:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

*“To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.”*

Allah Almighty says:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“Those who, when a calamity strikes them, say: To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.”

(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:156)

We also say:

لِلَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ وَلِلَّهِ مَا أُعْطِيَ

“To Allah belongs what He has taken, and to Allah belongs what He has given.”

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Everything belongs to Allah. He is the One who gives, and He is the One who takes.

Another Sunnah du‘a is:

اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرَنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَاخْلُفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

“O Allah, reward me in my calamity and replace it for me with something better than it.”

(Muslim)

This is a powerful du‘a. A person asks Allah to reward them for their affliction, to give them strength to carry it, and to replace what was lost with something better.

Many people are unable to control themselves at the time of death. The shock is heavy. The emotions are intense. But the believer needs to ask Allah for strength and remain within the boundaries of the Shariah.

*The reaction of Umar when the Prophet ﷺ passed away*

This emotional shock even affected the best of people.

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away, Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was outside Madinah. When he returned, he entered the masjid and saw Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) standing and addressing the people.

Umar was saying that the Prophet ﷺ had not died. He said that the Prophet ﷺ had only gone to meet his Lord, just as Musa ﷺ had gone for forty days and then returned. Umar could not accept, in that first moment, that the Prophet ﷺ had passed away.

Abu Bakr told him to sit down, but Umar did not listen. He was overwhelmed.

Then Abu Bakr stood and addressed the people. He said:

مَنْ كَانَ يَعْبُدُ مُحَمَّدًا فَإِنَّ مُحَمَّدًا قَدْ مَاتَ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ حَيٌّ لَا يَمُوتُ

“Whoever used to worship Muhammad, then Muhammad has died. And whoever worships Allah, then Allah is Living and does not die.”

(Bukhari)

Then he recited the verse:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

*“Muhammad is no more than a messenger. Messengers passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heels? Whoever turns back on his heels will not harm Allah at all, and Allah will reward the grateful.”*

*(Surah Aal ‘Imran, 3:144)*

When Abu Bakr recited this verse, everyone in the masjid realised that the Prophet ﷺ had truly passed away.

They said it was as if they had never heard the verse before, as though it had only just been revealed.

This shows how shock can affect people. At such a moment, people need someone to remind them of Allah and bring them back to clarity. They need someone calm, grounded and connected to the Shariah.

#### *Patience at the first strike*

Death is an emotional situation. People may say or do things in that moment which are not pleasing to Allah. They may lose control.

Sometimes you will be surprised. The person you expected to be the strongest may become the weakest, and the person you thought would be the weakest may become the strongest. This is from Allah’s support and help.

The real test is not only what we say with our tongues. It is what appears in our actions.

We say that Allah is the most beloved to our hearts, above everything. But the truth of that statement is tested when something beloved is taken from us.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا الصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ الصَّدْمَةِ الْأُولَىٰ

*“True patience is at the first strike.”*

*(Bukhari and Muslim)*

Patience is not only after a person has calmed down hours or days later. Real patience is shown at the first shock, when the calamity first hits.

That is when the believer holds on to Allah, guards the tongue, and remains within the limits of what pleases Him.

#### *Memorising the du‘a of calamity*

This du‘a is very, very important. When a calamity strikes, the first thing you say is:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.”

The second thing you say is:

اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرَنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

“O Allah, reward me in my calamity and replace it for me with something better than it.”

These two supplications should be memorised by heart.

This is the Sunnah. This is what the Prophet ﷺ taught his companions.

Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) was the wife of Abu Salamah before she married the Prophet ﷺ. When Abu Salamah passed away, the Prophet ﷺ came to her and taught her to say:

اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرَنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

“O Allah, reward me in my calamity and replace it for me with something better than it.”

(Muslim)

When she heard the words, “replace it for me with something better than it,” she wondered: who could be better than Abu Salamah? But Allah replaced Abu Salamah with the Prophet ﷺ.

So this is a very important du‘a. From a psychological perspective as well, it helps keep a person under control. It reminds you that Allah is the Controller of everything, and that Allah can replace what you have lost with something better.

It is not up to us to decide absolutely what is good or bad for us. That belongs to Allah. You may love something while it is bad for you, and you may dislike something while it is good for you. Allah knows, and you do not know.

*Is the du‘a only for death?*

This du‘a is not only for death. It may be said for any musibah, any calamity or affliction.

Whenever a person is struck by hardship, loss, difficulty or distress, they may say:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

and:

اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرَنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

It is a du‘a of surrender, patience and hope.

*Washing spouses*

A question was asked about whether a wife may wash her husband, and whether a husband may wash his wife.

This will be explained later, insha'Allah, with the differences of opinion among the scholars. There are valid discussions on this issue, and we will return to it in more detail.

### *Hair extensions*

If something cannot be removed, or removing it would harm or damage the body, then we do not harm the deceased. You do your best, but without causing injury or disfigurement.

The same applies to hair extensions. If they can be removed easily, then they may be removed. If removing them would harm the body or cause difficulty, then they should be left.

The principle is clear: anything that harms the deceased should not be done.

### *Does the family's crying harm the deceased?*

A question was raised: is it true that if the family cries, shouts or screams, the deceased is punished or finds things harder in the grave?

The answer given here is no, not in that general sense.

Allah Almighty says:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

*"No soul bears the burden of another."*

*(Surah al-An'am, 6:164)*

So a person is not punished for something they did not do.

If the family are grieving, shouting or screaming after someone's death, what does that have to do with the deceased? He or she did not do that action.

The exception would be if the deceased had instructed them to do those things, such as saying, "When I die, you must wail, scream and do this for me." In that case, he has contributed to that wrong action.

There is a difference of opinion among the companions on this matter. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) strongly held that the deceased is not punished for the crying of others, because this would contradict the principle that no one bears the burden of another. This is the stronger view being followed here.

There are narrations which some understood to mean that the deceased may be punished due to the wailing of the family, but that is not the preferred understanding here. The general evidence indicates that a person is not punished for what others do after him, unless he caused it, requested it, or approved of it.

### *Transporting the body to another city or country*

Can we honour the request of someone who wanted to be buried in a particular place?

If the request does not go against the main principles of the Shariah, then it may be honoured.

However, there are two opinions among the scholars regarding moving a body from one city to another. Some scholars said it is allowed to move the body. Others said the deceased should be buried where they passed away.

Both opinions have their evidences. The evidence is not always a direct statement from the Prophet ﷺ saying explicitly that one must or must not move the body. Some scholars relied on the practice of some companions, where bodies were moved from one place to another. They argued that if this had been sinful, the companions would not have done it.

At the same time, this should not become the general norm. In some circumstances, moving the body may be acceptable, but we should not make it the standard practice in every case.

There are also practical concerns. Moving the body may delay the burial, may involve considerable expense, and may require procedures that are not ideal. These issues come together and must be considered carefully.

The Prophet ﷺ instructed us to hasten the burial of the deceased. Therefore, unnecessary delay should be avoided.

If there is a genuine reason and nothing can be done, then we accept the situation and ask Allah to make matters easy. But delaying the burial for several days, or much longer, without necessity is not acceptable.

If the delay is only twenty-four hours for a valid reason, it may be manageable. But delays of several days, or cases where the body is kept for much longer without necessity, should be avoided.

### *The soul and the unseen*

A question was raised about whether the soul remains around the body or the cemetery for a period after burial.

This belongs to the unseen. We do not speak about it except with what has come through authentic narration from the Prophet ﷺ.

To a certain extent, there are narrations that indicate a connection with the body and the grave immediately after burial, especially when the people leave the cemetery and the questioning begins. But beyond what has been authentically transmitted, we do not speculate.

The unseen world is not known to us except through revelation.

## Part three: Washing and shrouding the deceased

### *Washing the deceased: principles and preparation*

The checklist we will use is based on experience. There is nothing in the Sunnah that says a person must follow this exact checklist.

Of course, you need cloth, water and the basic things used for washing the deceased. But sometimes you may not have everything available, and you simply manage with what you have.

If something is missing from the list, it does not mean that the washing is invalid or that it will not be accepted. You do what you can with what is available.

### *The shroud: principles and materials*

The shroud is called كفن in Arabic.

In English, the word “coffin” is used for the box, whereas in Arabic كفن refers to the cloth used to shroud the body. In the Sunnah, the deceased were not placed in boxes as the usual practice. They were wrapped in the shroud and buried.

You can still see this practice in Makkah and Madinah today. When someone passes away, they are usually carried and buried without the type of coffin used in this country.

This does not mean that using a coffin is haram. It may be used where required. The point is simply to understand the Sunnah practice.

### *The shroud for men and women*

For a man, the Sunnah is to use three pieces of cloth.

1. The first is the largest sheet, which wraps the whole body.
2. The second covers the lower part of the body.
3. The third covers the upper part of the body.

So the body is covered in three pieces: the lower part, the upper part, and then the full body.

For a woman, the Sunnah is five pieces.

She has the same basic shroud as the man, but with two additional pieces: one for the chest and one for the hair, like a hijab.

If more is needed, then more may be used. For example, in some circumstances three pieces may not be enough, and five or seven may be needed. If extra cloth is required, then it is better to keep the number odd: three, five or seven.

But beyond what is needed, it becomes excessive and should be avoided.

The minimum, depending on the situation, may be one cloth or two. In some cases, even one complete cloth was not available.

There is a narration about one of the companions who was buried with only one cloth. If they covered his head, his feet were exposed, and if they covered his feet, his head was exposed. The Prophet ﷺ instructed them to cover his head and place leaves over his feet. This shows that when there is hardship, you use whatever is available.

The shroud must be clean and pure, but it does not have to be new.

### *Buying one's own shroud*

There are people who buy their own shroud during their lifetime.

Once, in Madinah, I saw two Yemeni men asking a shopkeeper whether he sold shrouds. He told them that he did not, but that they could find them nearby. This drew my attention. They wanted to buy their own shroud and take it home with them.

This is a conscious decision. It shows awareness that death can come at any time. They also wanted to buy it from Madinah in particular, which shows their attachment to that place.

A similar meaning is found in the story of a companion during the time of the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ was once given a garment as a gift, and he was in need of it. He had little to wear, and he was pleased with the gift. One of the companions saw it and said, "How beautiful it is, O Messenger of Allah. Give it to me."

The other companions were upset with him, because they knew the Prophet ﷺ would not refuse. They said to him, "How could you ask the Prophet ﷺ for it when you know he needs it?"

But the man explained that he did not ask for it because he wanted to wear it. He wanted it to be his shroud, because the garment had touched the blessed body of the Prophet ﷺ. And when that companion passed away, he was shrouded in that garment.

### *Items needed for washing*

If you are involved in washing the body, you will need practical items such as disposable gloves. These are important, especially when washing the private areas. You should not touch anything directly.

You may also need cotton, or a soft cotton cloth, depending on the situation.

The deceased should be treated with the same gentleness and respect as a living person. So when preparing the water, do not use water that is too cold, because you would not use that on yourself. And do not use water that is too hot, because you would not use that on yourself either.

The water should be comfortably warm.

Camphor, known as كافور, may also be used. This is from the Sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ instructed that camphor be used when washing the deceased.

Depending on the place where the body is washed, you may have a bucket of water, or you may have a hose and a proper washing facility. In a specialised place, the equipment may be more suitable and everything may be easier. If not, then you do what you can with what is available.

Perfume may also be used. There are different opinions regarding alcoholic and non-alcoholic perfume, similar to the discussion about using such perfume for a living person. If non-alcoholic perfume is available, that is preferable. If not, then the matter follows the recognised difference of opinion.

A towel is also needed to cover the 'awrah. This is very important.

### *Washing the body is a trust*

The first principle when washing the deceased is trust.

This is an amanah. Washing someone's body is a serious responsibility. The Prophet ﷺ emphasised that those who wash the deceased should be trustworthy people.

The first thing to do is to cover the 'awrah of the deceased, whether male or female. Their dignity must be preserved throughout.

### *Can a spouse wash their deceased spouse?*

There are differences of opinion about whether a husband may wash his wife and whether a wife may wash her husband.

As for the wife washing her husband, one opinion clearly allows this. The bond between them still remains in a certain sense, because she is in 'iddah for four months and ten days. So, according to this view, if no one else is available, she may wash him.

The question of the husband washing his wife is discussed more because, once she dies, some scholars say the marital connection has ended, and there is no 'iddah for him.

However, there is an opinion that he may wash her. The evidence used for this is that Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her), the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, requested that Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) wash her after her death, and he did so.

This is clear evidence for those who allow it.

The Hanafi school, however, does not allow the husband to wash his wife after her death, based on their reasoning regarding the marital bond ending with death.

So there are two valid opinions. A person may follow either recognised opinion, and this should not be turned into a cause of argument.

### *Who may wash the body?*

A question was asked: can a son wash his mother?

The general rule is that women should wash a woman's body, and men should wash a man's body. This is the first scenario we look for.

However, if no woman is available to wash the mother, then in a case of necessity, the son may assist. But even then, the 'awrah must remain covered. No one should see or touch the 'awrah directly.

This is treated as a last resort, not the normal procedure.

A wife may wash her husband if she knows how to do it, and there is reward in washing the body. There is also reward in keeping the secrets of the deceased.

What secrets are meant here?

Sometimes those washing the body may see signs on the deceased. Some signs may be good, and some may be unpleasant. Some bodies may feel very smooth, like silk. Others may be very stiff. There may be other signs as well.

The person washing the body must be trustworthy. They should not go and speak about what they saw. This is an amanah.

### *Should the body face the qiblah during washing?*

When the deceased is placed in front of us for washing, should the body be turned onto its right side to face the qiblah?

The better and easier way is to leave the body lying on its back. This makes the washing process easier and more practical.

The same applies when a person is taking their last breaths. We do not need to force them onto their right side if that will make things difficult. Leave them on their back, and if possible, place a cushion under the head to raise it slightly.

The jaw should be closed gently, without pushing harshly. A strip of cloth may be placed under the chin and tied to keep the mouth closed until the washing begins.

If the deceased has removable dentures, they may be taken out. This can be done gently at the appropriate stage.

### *The washing table*

Usually, the washing table is not flat like an ordinary table. A proper washing table is slightly tilted, with drainage holes towards the lower end. It may have hoses or outlets to allow the water to drain away easily.

This is the professional setup. If such a table is not available, then you work with what you have. Buckets can be placed underneath to collect the water. The aim is to make the process clean, dignified and manageable.

#### *Preparing the water*

The water should be prepared before washing begins.

If camphor is available, it may be added to the water. This is from the Sunnah. If camphor is not available, then shampoo or soap may be used.

The water should be suitable and gentle on the body, not too hot and not too cold.

#### *Covering the 'awrah*

The first thing is to cover the 'awrah of the deceased.

Whether the deceased is male or female, the 'awrah must remain covered throughout. The 'awrah of a man is different from that of a woman, but in all cases modesty and dignity must be preserved.

For a woman being washed by women, the body should still be covered appropriately. The washing should be done without unnecessary exposure.

#### *Pressing the stomach gently*

Before the washing begins properly, the body may be raised slightly, and the stomach may be pressed gently.

This is done to help any remaining fluids or impurities come out before the body is washed.

However, this must be done carefully. In some cases, it should not be done, such as if a woman passed away after giving birth, because pressing the stomach may cause more difficulty and mess.

So we apply the principle according to the situation: do what is helpful, and avoid what causes harm or unnecessary difficulty.

#### *Loosening the joints*

Before washing, the body should be prepared gently.

The hands, fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, knees, ankles and toes may be moved gently to loosen the joints. This makes it easier to wash and move the body.

This should be done carefully and without exposing the 'awrah.

If the body is stiff, forcing the joints may cause harm. So if the limb moves easily, fine. If not, do not force it.

## How to wash the body

There are four main stages in the process.

First, the impurities are cleaned.

Second, wudu is performed for the deceased.

Third, the body is washed, beginning with the right side, then the left side, and then the whole body.

Fourth, the body is shrouded.

This gives us the overall picture before going into the details.

### *Cleaning impurities first*

The first stage is to remove impurity from the body.

A clean cloth is used, along with water. The person washing should wear gloves, and ideally two pairs of disposable gloves, especially when cleaning the private parts.

The private parts are cleaned without exposing them and without looking at the 'awrah. This must be done as respectfully as possible.

The cloth is used under the covering towel, and the area is cleaned. This may need to be repeated until the impurity has been removed as much as possible.

Water may be poured either under the towel or over the towel, depending on what is more practical and what preserves modesty best.

Any obvious impurity on the rest of the body, such as blood or filth, should also be cleaned before the main washing begins.

### *Performing wudu for the deceased*

After removing impurity, wudu is performed for the deceased.

The wudu is done in the normal order, beginning with the face, then the arms, wiping the head, and then washing the feet. As with normal wudu, the right side is washed before the left.

Do we rinse the mouth and nose?

There are two opinions. The stronger practical approach is that water is not placed into the mouth and nose, because this is difficult and may cause problems. The deceased cannot expel the water, so it is better not to rinse them in the same way as a living person.

Instead, the mouth and nose may be cleaned gently from the outside or with a damp cloth, without pouring water into them.

If the deceased has removable dentures and they were not removed earlier, they may be removed at this stage, as long as it can be done gently and without difficulty.

### *Beginning the ghusl*

After the body has been cleaned of impurity and wudu has been performed, we begin the ghusl.

The intention is to purify the body.

As with your own ghusl, you begin by saying:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

*“In the name of Allah.”*

Then you begin from the right side.

A sponge or clean cotton cloth may be used. The hair should be washed gently and cleaned properly, but without excessiveness. Everything should be done with gentleness.

After washing the hair, you wash the right side of the body. This includes the shoulder, arm, side, thigh, knee, leg and foot, down to the toes.

Then the same is done for the left side.

Care should be taken throughout not to expose the ‘awrah.

### *Washing the back*

The back must also be washed.

A practical technique is to place the right foot over the left foot, and place the right arm across the body. Then the body is gently turned onto its side. Because the joints were loosened earlier, the body should move more easily.

Once the back is exposed, the right side of the back is washed carefully.

Then the body is gently returned to its back.

To wash the other side, you do the opposite: place the left foot over the right foot, move the left arm across the body, and gently turn the body to expose the other side of the back.

Then wash that side in the same way.

This completes one full wash of the body.

The Sunnah is to wash the body three times.

### *Repeating the wash*

The first wash may include camphor, sidr, soap, shampoo or whatever suitable cleaning agent is available.

After the first full wash, the process is repeated until three washes have been completed. Water is passed over the body, beginning with the right side, then the left, and ensuring the whole body is washed.

Wudu itself is separate from the ghusl. It is performed before the washing of the whole body and is not counted as one of the three washes.

If there is a shortage of water or difficulty, then one does what is possible.

### *Should the washer have wudu?*

It is preferable for the person washing the deceased to have wudu.

Usually, the person washing will need one or two assistants. They help move the body, pass items, pour water, and make the process easier.

It is also wise, in some cases, to invite someone who may benefit spiritually from being present, provided they are trustworthy and suitable. For example, someone who is very distant from the remembrance of Allah may be reminded by seeing the reality of death in front of them.

However, the washing should not become an open gathering. Only trusted and necessary people should be present.

### *Placing perfume on the places of sujud*

After the third wash, perfume or camphor may be placed on the places of sujud.

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned placing perfume on the places of prostration.

These are:

the forehead and nose,  
the hands,  
the knees,  
and the feet.

Camphor may also be used in the water during washing, and some may be kept for the final rinse. Sidr, the leaves of the lote tree, was traditionally used like soap or shampoo. If sidr is available, it may be used. If not, ordinary suitable soap or shampoo may be used.

It is better to ensure that the soap used is pure and does not contain anything impermissible or impure.

### *How many people should wash the body?*

If there are several siblings, may each one take part in washing?

It is better not to have too many people present. The washing should be done by trusted people, and perhaps those who will benefit from the reminder. It should not be open to everyone.

One person may lead the washing, especially if they know what they are doing, and one or two others may assist. It does not invalidate the washing if more than one person helps, but it is usually better for one experienced person to take responsibility.

The reason is that private matters may be seen during the washing, and those present must keep the trust.

### *Reciting Qur'an during the washing*

Qur'an is not recited during the washing itself.

The person washing may say *Bismillah* (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ) at the beginning, as they would when beginning ghusl, but there is no Sunnah of reciting Qur'an during the washing of the deceased.

### *Why do we wash the deceased?*

What is the purpose of washing the deceased?

The answer is that this is an act of worship which we received from the Prophet ﷺ. He taught the ummah to wash the deceased, and this was also the practice of the prophets before him.

Scholars discussed whether the washing is mainly because the body needs to be cleaned, or whether it is a ritual act of worship, or both. There are different explanations.

What we can say with certainty is that it is the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. The deceased is now going to meet Allah and the angels, so we do our best to honour the body and clean it as much as we can.

### *Why are martyrs not washed?*

Another question was asked: why are martyrs not washed?

The answer is that the Prophet ﷺ instructed that martyrs should not be washed. If he had not instructed this, we would have washed them like others. So we follow the Sunnah.

Similarly, if someone dies in ihram during Hajj or 'Umrah, there are special rulings. We do not perfume the body, and we do not cover the head of a man in ihram. This is because he will be raised on the Day of Judgement in that state of ihram, saying the talbiyah.

So we preserve that state and do not do anything that would contradict it.

### *If blood or fluids continue to come out*

If a woman dies during menstruation, after childbirth, or in a situation where blood continues to come out, then the opening may be closed if needed.

Cotton may be used. If placing it outside is enough, then that is done. If it is not enough and it needs to be placed inside to stop the flow, then that may be done as needed.

The same principle applies to other fluids. We do what is needed to preserve cleanliness and dignity.

### *Bandages, wounds and medical tubes*

If the deceased has wounds, bandages, surgical cuts or medical tubes, the situation must be handled carefully.

If removing a bandage would cause bleeding or harm the body, then it should not be removed. The body of the deceased must not be harmed.

The principle throughout the washing remains the same: clean and purify as much as possible, but do not damage, injure or disrespect the body.

### *Can a female relative supervise a male body being washed?*

If a male family member dies and there are no male relatives available, but men from the community come to wash the body. Could a female relative attend or supervise, especially to make sure everything is done properly?

The general rule is that men wash men and women wash women, unless there is a specific exception, such as between spouses according to the opinions that allow it.

If trustworthy men from the community are available to wash the male body, then the female relative should not be involved in the washing itself, because there is no husband-wife relationship here.

However, if there is a genuine need for her to supervise from a distance or ensure that matters are being handled properly, then this should be done with modesty and without exposing the 'awrah. The washing itself remains the responsibility of the men.

### *Washing children and miscarried babies*

Children have different scenarios.

If the miscarriage was less than four months, then the foetus is not treated like a full body for washing and janaza. It is wrapped in a piece of cloth and buried, but there is no ghusl and no janaza prayer.

If the miscarriage or stillbirth was after four months and the baby had a clear human form, then we look at whether there were signs of life.

If the baby was born alive, even briefly, then the baby is washed and the janaza prayer is performed.

If there were no signs of life, but the baby was after four months and had a clear form, then the baby is washed, but the janaza prayer is not performed according to the view mentioned here.

### *Naming the child*

A question was asked: if a child is stillborn, should the child be named?

The answer given here is that the child is named if the child was born alive.

As for giving the adhan in the ear of the newborn, the narrations on this are not at the strongest level of authenticity, though there are narrations which suggest it. So it may be done by those who follow that view, but it should not be treated as something firmly established like the strongest Sunnah practices.

### *Choosing who washes the body*

A person may state in their will who they would like to wash their body.

This has precedent. Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) requested that Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) wash her, and he did so.

If the person did not specify, then the matter follows the usual family order and practical arrangements: the closest suitable and trustworthy people, according to the proper rules of who may wash whom.

### *What happens if someone dies in the sea?*

A question was asked about someone who passes away at sea.

If there is truly no way to preserve the body or bring it back to land, then in some exceptional circumstances, the body may be placed into the sea. Allah Almighty will resurrect people from wherever they are.

However, in today's circumstances, if someone dies on a cruise or a ship and the body can be brought back to land, then it should not simply be thrown into the sea. The body should be returned and buried properly if that is possible.

We do our best according to what is under our control.

### *If the deceased person's religion is unknown*

If you come across a deceased person and you do not know whether they were Muslim, Christian, or something else, then you deal with them as a Muslim.

You wash them and bury them accordingly. It may be that the person was Muslim, and even if they were not, there is no harm in having treated the body with dignity.

If it is known that the person was Christian or belonged to another faith, then the matter is handled according to the appropriate process for that person.

#### *If only parts of the body are recovered*

A question was asked about a person who dies in a plane crash, explosion, natural disaster, or similar situation, where only parts of the body are recovered.

In such a case, the normal washing may not be possible.

You do your best. If the body cannot be collected fully, or only some parts are recovered, then the parts are gathered respectfully and placed together as much as possible. The janaza prayer may then be performed over what has been recovered.

If washing is not possible, then it is not required in the normal way. We do what we can.

#### *If bleeding continues after washing*

If blood or fluids continue to come out of the body, we try to stop it as much as possible.

Cotton or something similar may be used to block the source of bleeding or leakage. This is important because otherwise it may ruin the shroud and make it difficult to carry the body.

If, after washing the body three times, blood or filth appears again while shrouding, you do not need to repeat the entire ghusl.

You simply clean the area, wash away the impurity, try to block the exit if possible, and continue.

The ghusl is complete. You do not start the whole process again.

#### *Washing more than three times*

The Sunnah is to wash the body three times.

If the body is not clean after three washes, then it may be washed more than three times, according to need. The number should be odd, such as five or seven.

But this is only if needed. If the body is clean after three washes, there is no need to keep repeating.

#### *Different levels of martyrdom*

People who die in natural disasters or other situations are described as martyrs. There are many levels and categories of shahadah. Not every person who receives the reward or status of a martyr is treated like the martyr of the battlefield in terms of washing and burial.

The martyr who is not washed is the battlefield martyr. The Prophet ﷺ instructed that those martyrs should not be washed. But others who receive the reward of martyrdom are still washed.

For example, the Prophet ﷺ himself passed away as a shahid in one sense, because of the effects of poison. Yet the companions washed his blessed body.

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away, the companions were in shock. They wanted to wash him, but they did not know whether they should remove his clothing and expose his body. Then they heard a voice instructing them not to expose him, but to wash him while he was still in his garment.

This shows the honour and special dignity of the Prophet ﷺ, and also reminds us that the rulings differ depending on the type of martyrdom and the evidence that applies.

### *Washing the Prophet ﷺ*

When the Prophet ﷺ passed away, the companions washed him while he remained in his garment. They did not expose his blessed body.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) later said that if she could turn back time, she would have washed the Prophet ﷺ herself. But at that moment, she was also in shock and could not think clearly about what should be done.

This shows how heavy the moment of death was even for the closest companions, and how overwhelming grief can be.

### *If part of the body cannot be washed*

A question was asked about someone who has, for example, skin cancer over part of the body, or a condition where washing that area would cause harm.

If an area cannot be washed, then it is not washed. You wipe over it gently and wash the rest of the body.

The rule is simple: do what is possible without harming the deceased.

### *Tayammum for the deceased*

If water cannot be used at all, then tayammum is performed.

Tayammum is the replacement for washing with water when water is unavailable or cannot be used.

It may be done with dust, sand, soil, or anything from the earth. Marble or stone surfaces may also be used if they have dust or are from the earth.

The hands are placed on the earth or dusty surface, then any excess is shaken off, and the face and hands are wiped.

This is done as a replacement when washing is not possible.

### *The battlefield martyr*

Who is the martyr who is not washed?

This refers to the person who dies as a shahid in the battlefield, fighting for the cause of Allah. Such a person is not washed.

Other categories of martyrdom may receive the reward of shahadah, but they are still washed, as mentioned earlier.

#### *Closing the eyes and jaw of a female relative*

Can a brother close the eyes and jaw of his sister after she passes away?

Yes, he may do so. He is her mahram, and this does not involve exposing the 'awrah or dealing with her clothing in an inappropriate way. Closing the eyes and jaw gently is allowed.

After that, the washing itself should be left for women to perform.

#### *Should the person who washed the deceased take ghusl?*

There is a narration which mentions that whoever washes the deceased should take ghusl, and whoever carries the deceased should make wudu.

This is recommended, not obligatory.

If someone washed the deceased and then prayed without taking ghusl, the prayer is still valid. There is nothing wrong with it.

The wisdom behind the recommendation is practical. When washing the body, some impurity may come onto the person's clothes or body. By taking ghusl afterwards, changing clothes and cleaning oneself, the washer ensures cleanliness.

However, if the person wore protective clothing, an apron and gloves, and is sure that no impurity came onto them, then there is no obligation to take ghusl.

#### *Combing and arranging the hair*

There are differences of opinion regarding combing the hair, trimming, cutting nails and similar matters.

The Shafi'i and Hanbali schools are more permissive in this area, while the Hanafi and Maliki schools are more restrictive.

According to the view that permits arranging the hair, a woman's hair may be braided after washing. It may be braided into three plaits, or arranged in two, depending on what is practical.

There are also two opinions about where the braids should be placed. Some said they should be placed behind the shoulders, and others said they should be placed on the chest. Either may be followed.

Those who permit braiding also allow the hair to be combed, because practically, braiding usually requires some combing. Those who do not permit combing say that the hair may be arranged without combing.

This is not an issue that should become a major argument. There are valid scholarly differences, and the matter should be handled gently and practically.

#### *The shroud touching the ground*

Can the shroud may touch the ground when it is being cut or prepared.

There is no issue with the shroud touching the ground unless there is known impurity on the ground.

If you know there is impurity and the shroud falls on it, then yes, that is a problem. But if there is no visible impurity and no clear reason to assume impurity, then one should not become obsessive.

Excessive worry about purity can become a form of waswas or OCD. We do not invent impurity where there is no evidence of it.

#### *The colour and simplicity of the shroud*

The shroud does not have to be white, but white is highly recommended.

Any clean and pure cloth may be used as a shroud. However, one should not be excessive by buying a luxurious or expensive shroud.

The shroud should be simple.

Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) asked to be shrouded in the clothes he was wearing. When his daughter suggested buying a new shroud, he said that the living are more in need of new clothing than the dead. This shows humility and awareness of the reality of the grave.

The shroud does not need to be sewn. It is better for it to be plain and simple, because this reflects humility. The deceased is going to the grave, not to a wedding or a worldly gathering.

Why beautify the shroud excessively when the body is returning to the earth?

#### *If no shroud is available*

If a proper shroud is not available, then clothing may be used.

The ideal is to use a simple, clean shroud. But if there is a need, then whatever clean cloth or clothing is available may be used. The washing and shrouding are not invalid simply because the ideal material was not available.

## How to shroud the deceased

We now come to the practical side of shrouding the deceased.

In Arabic, this is called التكفين, which means placing the deceased in the kafan.

There are different scenarios: shrouding a man, shrouding a woman, and shrouding a child. We begin with adults.

As mentioned earlier, the male shroud consists of three pieces:

the لفافة, which is the largest outer sheet,  
the إزار, which covers the lower part of the body,  
and the قميص, which covers the upper part of the body.

For a woman, there are five pieces. She has the same three basic pieces as the man, with two additional pieces: one to cover the chest and one for the head, like a hijab.

### *Preparing the body for the shroud*

Before placing the body into the shroud, the body should be dried properly. The table should also be dried fully, because the shroud should not become wet.

In some places, the body is moved to another table after washing. If that is available, it is better and easier. If not, the shrouding may be done on the same table, as long as the table is dried first.

There are different practical techniques for placing the shroud under the body. One way is for several people to lift the body and place the shroud underneath. Another way is to roll the shroud and gently turn the body from side to side, placing the shroud underneath without exposing the 'awrah.

These are techniques, not acts of worship in themselves. The Sunnah gives us the principles: preserve dignity, cover the 'awrah, do not harm the body, and shroud the deceased properly. The practical method may vary depending on what is easiest and safest.

### *Placing the shroud*

The shroud may be prepared by laying the pieces on top of one another.

For a man, the three pieces are placed in order: the large outer sheet, then the lower body sheet, then the upper body sheet.

For a woman, the additional chest covering and head covering are also prepared.

In some methods, the chest piece has a hole cut into it so that it can pass over the head, with part of it covering the front and part covering the back. If that is available, it may be used. If not, the chest may be covered with a separate piece of cloth in a practical way.

Once the pieces are ready, the body is placed on top of them carefully, without exposing the 'awrah.

#### *Covering the private area*

Before the main shroud is wrapped, a cloth may be placed like underwear to cover the private area properly.

Cotton may be placed to cover the front and back passages if needed, especially where there may be leakage. Some perfume or camphor may also be used where appropriate.

This cloth is placed carefully and tied in a way that keeps the private area covered.

Only after this is secured should the towel covering the 'awrah be removed. The body should never be exposed unnecessarily.

#### *Wrapping the shroud*

For a man, the wrapping begins with the lower body piece, then the upper body piece, and then the large outer sheet.

The wrapping is done from the left side first, then the right side over it.

The hands are kept by the sides. They are not placed on the chest. Some opinions may allow placing the hands on the chest, but it is better and easier to keep them by the sides.

For a woman, the same basic wrapping is done, but the chest covering and head covering are added before the final wrapping is completed.

The hijab or head covering should be placed before the final outer sheet is wrapped.

#### *Perfuming the shroud*

Before the shroud is placed around the body, it is Sunnah to perfume it.

This may be done by passing the shroud over incense or bukhooor so that it takes on a pleasant scent. The three or five pieces may be scented in this way.

Camphor or another suitable perfume may also be placed on the shroud as each layer is wrapped. After one layer is completed, some scent may be placed before wrapping the next layer.

The aim is for the deceased to be wrapped in something clean, simple and pleasant.

#### *Tying the shroud*

After the body has been wrapped, strips of cloth are used to tie the shroud and keep it secure.

The number of ties depends on the size of the body and what is needed. Sometimes three ties are enough. Sometimes five or seven may be needed.

The purpose is to make sure the shroud does not open while the body is being carried.

The knots should be tied on the left side.

Why the left side?

Because when the body is placed in the grave, it will be placed on its right side facing the qiblah. The left side will then be accessible. Since it is Sunnah to untie the knots in the grave, tying them on the left side makes it easier to untie them.

If the knots were tied on the right side, they would be underneath the body and difficult to reach.

Therefore, the shroud is tied from the left side so that it can be untied easily once the body is placed in the grave.

### *Covering the face after shrouding*

At what point is the face and head covered in the shroud?

After the ghusl is complete, the body is shrouded fully, including the face and head. The face should not be left open as a general practice. In some cultures, the face is left exposed until the janaza prayer or even until the body reaches the cemetery, but this is not the Sunnah.

Before the body is fully shrouded, if the face is still uncovered, then it is fine. At that point, close family members may see the face if they need to.

For example, if the mother, father, children or close family members have not seen the deceased and wish to see them before the final covering, they may do so. But this should be done with dignity and restraint. It should not become like a public viewing where everyone comes one after another.

The deceased should not be treated like a display. This is not a showroom. The body should be honoured, covered and taken for burial.

If the body has already been fully shrouded, it is not practical or proper to keep opening the shroud repeatedly. The better approach is to allow close family members to see the face before the final covering, then cover the face and complete the shrouding.

### *Kissing the deceased*

It is permissible to kiss the deceased.

When Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) came after the Prophet ﷺ had passed away, he went straight to the room of the Prophet ﷺ and kissed him.

So if someone sees the face of the deceased before the final covering and wishes to kiss them, this is allowed, particularly for close family.

The face itself is not 'awrah. However, this does not mean the face should remain exposed as a general cultural practice. There is a difference between allowing close family to see or kiss the deceased briefly, and leaving the face open for everyone until the janaza.

#### *Cultural viewing after ghusl*

In some communities, after the ghusl is completed, the body is brought back to the house. People gather, weep, view the face, and the face may remain exposed until the janaza prayer.

This is not the Sunnah.

It may be deeply embedded in culture, and challenging it may cause strong reactions. Therefore, it should be handled with wisdom. But the teaching remains clear: after the body has been washed and shrouded, it should be covered and taken for janaza and burial without unnecessary delay or exposure.

If close family need a short moment to see the deceased before the final covering, that can be accommodated. But it should not become an open viewing for everyone.

#### *Coffins and burial in this country*

A question was asked about burial in this country, where bodies are often placed in coffins or boxes.

In some areas, burial in a coffin may be required by local regulations. In other Muslim cemeteries, the body may be removed from the box and placed directly into the grave in the shroud. For example, in some Muslim burial grounds, the coffin is used for transport and then taken back.

So the practice depends on the cemetery and local rules.

The Sunnah is not to bury the deceased in a box. The body is shrouded and placed in the grave. However, if a coffin is required and there is no other option, then it is allowed due to necessity. What else can the family do?

In that case, the body is placed in the coffin, and the burial proceeds according to what is possible.

#### *Untying the shroud in the grave*

The ties of the shroud should be untied once the body is placed in the grave.

This is why, as mentioned earlier, the knots are tied on the left side. When the body is placed on its right side facing the qiblah, the left side remains accessible, making it easier to untie the knots.

If the body is buried in a coffin and it is not possible to remove the body from the box, then one does what is possible according to the circumstances.

### *Placing the body in the grave*

The Sunnah is that the body is placed on its right side, facing the qiblah. It is not simply laid flat on its back.

Traditionally, a recess or niche is made in the side of the grave, known as the lahd, and the body is placed into that space on its right side.

If the body must remain in a coffin, then if possible, the body may be positioned within the coffin on its right side. If that is not possible, then again, the family does what they can.

The aim is to follow the Sunnah as much as possible, while recognising practical limitations.

### *Seeing the deceased as a reminder*

Some people say that viewing the deceased helps people remember death. There may be some truth in that, because seeing death can be a powerful reminder.

However, we should not turn that into a promoted public practice if it was not the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Death itself is a reminder, and attending the janaza and burial is a reminder. But leaving the face exposed for everyone is not something we should encourage as a Sunnah practice.

There can be exceptions for close family, especially parents and children, but the general practice should be to cover the deceased and proceed quickly.

### *Hurrying the burial*

The Prophet ﷺ instructed us to hasten the burial of the deceased.

Therefore, unnecessary delays should be avoided. The washing, shrouding, janaza and burial should be completed as quickly as reasonably possible.

If people around the deceased delay matters, we do not say the deceased is punished for their delay. That is not the action of the deceased. People are responsible for their own actions.

However, the Sunnah is still to proceed quickly. Among the good signs of the pious is that their janaza is often made easy and moves quickly.

### *Stating who should wash the body*

Usually, if a person has a particular wish, they should tell their family during their lifetime. They may also write it in the will to document it. But practically, the family should know beforehand, because the will may only be read after burial or later in the process.

So if a person wants a particular trusted person to wash them, they should make this known clearly while they are alive, and also record it if possible.

### *Treating the deceased gently*

When we say that the deceased should be handled gently, this includes matters such as the temperature of the water, the way the body is moved, and the way the washing is performed.

The deceased should be treated with respect, as though the body were your own. The water should not be too hot or too cold. The body should not be pushed, pulled or handled harshly. Is this only out of respect, or does the deceased still feel pain?

The deceased does feel, but they cannot speak to us. They are aware of who is washing them, who is around them, and what is being said, but they cannot respond.

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned that the deceased hears the footsteps of the people as they leave after burial. At that point, the person is left alone in the grave with their deeds.

This is from the unseen, so we only speak about it according to what has come in authentic narrations.

### *Seeing the deceased in dreams*

Can a person who has passed away be seen after death?

They may be seen in dreams. This is possible.

But in waking life, we do not claim such things without evidence. Matters of the unseen must be treated carefully.

### *Leaving the body alone*

It is often said that from the time of death until burial, the body should not be left alone unnecessarily.

There may be cultural practice around this, but no clear evidence was recalled for it in the session. Therefore, one should not make it a strict religious ruling without proof.

The main concern is to honour the body, wash it, shroud it, pray over it, and bury it as soon as reasonably possible.

### *The reward of attending janaza*

There is great reward in attending the janaza.

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned that among the rights of Muslims over one another is to follow the janaza, pray over the deceased, and accompany the body to burial.

*Whoever prays the janaza receives one qirat of reward. Whoever prays the janaza and follows it until the burial receives two qirats. Each qirat is like a great mountain, described in the hadith as being like Mount Uhud.*

*(Bukhari and Muslim)*

So if a person prays the janaza, they receive a mountain of reward. If they also accompany the janaza to the cemetery and remain until burial, they receive another mountain of reward.

As for the one who washes the deceased, there is reward as well, but the specific reward mentioned for attending the janaza is different. There are narrations about forgiveness for the one who washes the deceased and conceals what they see.

#### *Making du'a while washing*

While washing the deceased, can a person make du'a? Are their supplications answered?

A person may make du'a at any time, including while washing the body.

They may say:

“O Allah, make things easy for him.”

“O Allah, forgive her.”

“O Allah, have mercy on him.”

There is nothing wrong with making du'a for the deceased during that time. However, one should not claim a specific formula or specific promise unless it is established in the Sunnah.

#### *The personal effect of washing the deceased*

Some can handle it more easily than others. Some people are very frightened and may even faint. This is their nature. Just as some people have a fear of heights, some people find death and the body of the deceased very difficult to face.

Others may be more able to manage it practically.

With experience, the process may become more familiar and easier to carry out. But when you really reflect on it, it still shakes you from inside. Every time you wash or witness the washing of a deceased person, you are reminded that one day you will be in that position.

Sometimes people cry at a janaza, not only because they knew or loved the deceased, but because they suddenly feel that they themselves will one day be carried, washed, shrouded and buried. They feel sorry for themselves because they realise they are not as prepared as they should be.

Death is a reminder for us to prepare.

It should also motivate us to correct the cultural practices in our communities and revive the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. But this should be done wisely, gently and smoothly, not by creating conflict or making a big scene.

### *Keeping a shroud ready*

A question was asked: should a person keep a shroud ready in the house? And if it is not used after a year, should it be given away?

It is permissible to keep a shroud ready. It may also be given if someone dies and their family does not have a shroud available.

In that situation, giving the shroud is a good deed.

As for giving a living person a shroud as a gift, that may feel unusual, because gifts are normally given for benefit and joy in life. But if someone has a shroud available and it is needed for a deceased person, then it may certainly be used.

The shroud should ideally come from the deceased person's own wealth, but if someone else provides it, especially out of need, there is nothing wrong with that.

### *The shroud being donated*

If the shroud is given by someone else, and no money is taken from the estate, this is acceptable.

Ideally, the shroud is paid for from the deceased person's own wealth. But if a shroud is donated, especially when the family does not have one available, then there is no issue with that.

## Part four: The Janaza prayer and burial

After the body has been washed and shrouded, the next stage is the salah: the janaza prayer.

There are several issues to discuss:

How is the janaza prayer performed?

Is there any difference between praying over a male and praying over a female?

Where should the imam stand?

Can janaza be prayed inside the mosque, or should it be outside?

What if there are multiple bodies?

What are the timings?

Who has the right to lead the prayer?

### *Praying janaza inside or outside the mosque*

The janaza prayer was often performed outside the mosque.

One reason for this may have been practical: the body may release impurity, and they did not want impurity entering the mosque. So the janaza would be placed outside, and the prayer would be performed there.

Today, many precautions exist. Bodies are usually placed in coffins or boxes, and these prevent impurity from reaching the mosque. Therefore, praying janaza inside the mosque is allowed according to many scholars.

However, some opinions still prefer that the janaza should not be brought inside the mosque. For this reason, some mosques have a special entrance or area where the body can remain outside while the imam stands inside and leads the prayer facing the janaza.

This is fine. But if it is raining, or there is difficulty, then bringing the body into the mosque may be more practical. So one should follow what is suitable, while respecting the valid scholarly opinions.

### *Women and the janaza prayer*

In many communities, women do not commonly attend or pray the janaza prayer. Because of this, the janaza prayer may feel unfamiliar to them.

Men, on the other hand, are often more familiar with it because they attend janaza prayers more regularly.

But the janaza prayer itself is simple and should be understood by everyone.

### *Where does the imam stand?*

If the deceased is male, where should the imam stand?

There are two opinions.

One opinion is that the imam stands near the head of the male deceased.

Another opinion is that the imam stands in the middle, whether the deceased is male or female.

For a female deceased, some scholars said the imam stands in the middle of the body. One reason given is that this position better covers the 'awrah of the woman.

So, according to one view:

for a male, the imam stands near the head;  
for a female, the imam stands near the middle.

According to another view, there is no distinction between male and female; the imam stands in the middle in both cases.

Both are valid opinions with their evidences, and this should not become a cause of dispute.

#### *If there are multiple bodies*

If there is more than one deceased person, the bodies may be placed together and one janaza prayer can be performed for all of them.

It is not necessary to pray a separate janaza prayer for each body.

If there are males, females and children, they are arranged in order similar to the order of salah.

The adult male is placed closest to the imam. Then male children. Then females.

So the order is:

adult male,  
male child,  
female.

One janaza prayer is sufficient for all of them.

#### *Times when janaza should not be prayed*

The Prophet ﷺ prohibited praying and burying at three times:

when the sun is rising,  
when the sun is at its zenith, around midday before Dhuhr,  
and when the sun is setting.

These times should be avoided for janaza prayer and burial.

When we go to Hajj, we see janaza being prayed after almost every salah, even at times that may appear close to these prohibited periods. How is that allowed?

The answer is that in Makkah and Madinah, due to the huge number of people and the large number of janazas, there is a need. Where there is a genuine need, the fatwa may allow it.

But where there is no need, we should stick to the normal Sunnah timings and avoid the prohibited times.

#### *What is the janaza prayer?*

The janaza prayer is a special salah.

It has no ruku' and no sujud. It is prayed standing. It consists of takbirs and supplications.

The standard janaza prayer has four takbirs.

Some schools mention five takbirs, but in the Sunni schools generally, the janaza prayer is performed with four takbirs.

The person praying janaza should have wudu.

#### *Tayammum for janaza if wudu will cause a person to miss it*

In the Hanafi school, there is a specific exception.

If a person enters the mosque and the janaza prayer is about to begin, but they do not have wudu, and if they go to make wudu they will miss the janaza prayer completely, then according to the Hanafi school they may perform tayammum and join the janaza prayer.

This is an exceptional ruling, because the janaza prayer cannot be repeated in the same way. If you miss it, you miss the reward.

This ruling is specific to the Hanafi school. Other schools do not necessarily agree with it, and they have their own reasoning.

The Hanafi reasoning is that the janaza prayer is unique and time-sensitive, so tayammum may be used in this exceptional situation, even if water is available.

#### *Who should lead the janaza prayer?*

Sometimes disagreement occurs over who should lead the janaza prayer. One person may say, "I will pray," and another may say the same. This should be avoided.

The first right belongs to the imam.

This may mean the imam of the Muslim community, or the imam of the mosque where the janaza is taking place.

If he is not available, then his deputy. If not, then a judge or recognised authority. If not, then the local imam.

If there is no imam, then the wali of the deceased has the right to lead the janaza prayer, if he is capable.

The wali is the close guardian or relative of the deceased, such as the father, husband, or another close male relative, depending on the situation.

If he cannot lead, then a knowledgeable and suitable person should be put forward to lead the prayer.

## How to pray the janaza prayer

The janaza prayer consists of four takbirs.

For the first takbir, the imam raises his hands and says:

الله أكبر

Then he places his hands as in the normal salah.

### *What to recite after the first takbir*

After the first takbir, there are different opinions about what should be recited.

Some scholars say that you recite the opening praise, such as:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

*“Glory be to You, O Allah, and praise be to You. Blessed is Your Name, exalted is Your Majesty, and there is no god besides You.”*

Others say that you recite Surah al-Fatihah.

It is also possible to combine both, if one wishes. So there is room in this matter. A person may recite the opening praise, or al-Fatihah, or combine the two, according to the opinion they follow.

### *Raising the hands in the takbirs*

There is also a difference of opinion regarding whether the hands should be raised with every takbir.

Some scholars say the hands are raised with every takbir in the janaza prayer. Others say that the Prophet ﷺ was not seen raising his hands in the janaza prayer except for the first takbir.

According to the Hanafi school, the hands are only raised for the first takbir. In the other takbirs, the hands are not raised.

According to other schools, the hands may be raised with each takbir.

This does not invalidate the prayer either way. If someone raises their hands, the prayer is valid. If someone only raises them for the first takbir, the prayer is also valid.

#### *After the second takbir*

After the second takbir, salawat is recited upon the Prophet ﷺ.

This is the same salawat that is recited in salah, such as:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

*“O Allah, send Your peace and blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, as You sent peace and blessings upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.”*

This is recited after the second takbir.

#### *After the third takbir*

After the third takbir, du‘a is made for the deceased.

One may say any authentic supplication from the Sunnah, such as:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ، وَعَافِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ

*“O Allah, forgive him, have mercy on him, pardon him and grant him wellbeing.”*  
(Muslim)

If the deceased is female, the wording is changed accordingly:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهَا وَارْحَمْهَا، وَعَافِهَا وَاعْفُ عَنْهَا

*“O Allah, forgive her, have mercy on her, pardon her and grant her wellbeing.”*

This is the main part of the janaza prayer: asking Allah to forgive and have mercy on the deceased.

#### *After the fourth takbir*

After the fourth takbir, one may make du‘a for oneself and the community, such as:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ، وَلَا تَفْتِنَّا بَعْدَهُ، وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهُ

*“O Allah, do not deprive us of his reward, do not test us after him, and forgive us and him.”*

If the deceased is female, the wording is adjusted:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهَا، وَلَا تَفْتِنَّا بَعْدَهَا، وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهَا

*“O Allah, do not deprive us of her reward, do not test us after her, and forgive us and her.”*

Some scholars say that after the fourth takbir, one simply gives salam without making an additional du'a. Others mention this du'a after the fourth takbir. Both approaches are acceptable.

### *Ending the janaza prayer*

The janaza prayer ends with salam.

There are two narrations: one salam and two salams. Both have been mentioned.

Many people are familiar with two salams, as in the normal salah:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

to the right, and then to the left.

In Makkah, many people are surprised because they only hear one salam. That is because they follow the narration of one salam: the imam says salam once and the prayer ends.

Both are valid.

### *The ruling of janaza prayer*

The janaza prayer is a communal obligation, fard kifayah.

This means it is obligatory upon the Muslim community, but if some people fulfil it, the obligation is lifted from the rest.

This is different from an individual obligation, such as the five daily prayers, which no one can perform on your behalf.

If some Muslims pray the janaza, the obligation has been fulfilled. But if no one prays over the deceased at all, then the whole community is sinful.

This is why the janaza prayer is serious.

### *Forming rows for janaza*

The Prophet ﷺ encouraged people to form rows for the janaza prayer.

The more rows there are, the more hope there is for forgiveness and mercy from Allah. There are narrations mentioning three rows, although some of them are weak. Still, the general meaning is that having more people pray for the deceased is better.

So it is recommended to arrange the congregation into rows, even if the rows are shorter, so that there are multiple rows behind the imam.

### *Is there a better time to pray janaza?*

There are narrations mentioning virtue for someone buried on Friday, and some scholars discussed this. However, this should not become something that causes delay or difficulty.

The principle remains: hasten the janaza and burial.

If the janaza happens to be after Jumu'ah, that is fine. But one should not unnecessarily delay the burial just to wait for a particular time.

#### *If someone misses the janaza prayer*

If someone misses the janaza prayer, or hears that someone died abroad, can they pray janaza alone at home?

The janaza prayer is meant to be prayed in congregation. It is not performed individually in the normal way.

Can janaza be prayed over someone who is not physically present?

There is a difference of opinion.

The Hanafi school does not allow janaza in absentia. According to this view, the body should be present.

The Shafi'i school allows it, using as evidence the fact that the Prophet ﷺ prayed janaza over the Najashi, the ruler of Abyssinia, even though his body was not physically present before him.

Both are valid scholarly opinions. The opinion allowing janaza in absentia has strong evidence, and it may be followed.

#### *Speaking after the janaza prayer*

After the janaza prayer, sometimes someone may stand and say a few words, especially if the deceased was a scholar, community figure, or well-known person.

A very short reminder may be given, mentioning the person's good deeds and reminding people of death and the akhirah.

However, this should not become excessive or delay the burial unnecessarily.

#### *Debt and the deceased*

The Prophet ﷺ, in some cases, did not pray over a deceased person when he knew that the person had unpaid debts.

He would ask, "Does he have any debt?" If they said yes, he would refrain from praying over him. Then one of the companions might say, "I will take responsibility for his debt." Once the debt was taken on by someone else, the Prophet ﷺ would pray over him.

This shows how serious debt is.

If someone owes money, they should do their best to repay it. The rights of people are very serious. Allah is forgiving, but people may not forgive so easily.

When there is a conflict between the right of Allah and the right of people, the right of people is extremely serious because it belongs to them. They may choose to forgive, or they may not.

Many people borrow money, enjoy the benefit of it, and then forget to return it. This is wrong. A Muslim must take debt seriously.

Whoever borrows money with the sincere intention to repay it, Allah will help him repay it. But whoever borrows with the intention not to repay it exposes himself to punishment.

A question was then raised about modern forms of debt, such as student loans or bankruptcy, and whether they count as debt in this discussion. This leads into the next part of the discussion.

#### *Different types of debt*

A question was raised about modern debts, such as student loans, bank loans or bankruptcy.

They are still debts, but there is a difference between an individual debt and a commercial or institutional debt.

If you owe money to an individual and you do not repay it, you may ruin that personal relationship and violate the right of that person. This is very serious.

A debt owed to a bank, government, or institution is still a debt and should not be ignored. But the nature of the relationship is different from taking money directly from another person.

In all cases, a Muslim should do their best to repay debts as soon as possible.

#### *Promising charity and forgetting*

A question was asked: if someone intended to give money to charity, but then forgot, is that considered a debt?

No, not in the same sense. An intention to give charity is not the same as an established debt.

However, if a person made a clear vow or binding commitment, that may be a different discussion. But a general intention to give charity, followed by forgetting, is not treated like owing money to someone.

#### *Forgiving a child's debt*

If a child borrowed money from their parent and the parent later wishes to write off that debt, this may be done.

However, the parent should remember the earlier principle of fairness between children. If one child borrowed £5,000 and the parent forgives it, while another child only received £5, this may create unfairness.

If the parent wipes off a large debt for one child, they should consider giving the other children the same opportunity or balancing it in another fair way.

The principle is: do your best to be fair with your children.

### *Inheritance tax*

A question was asked about inheritance tax. If someone dies and inheritance tax is due, but the family does not pay it, is that a debt on the deceased?

The answer given here is that once the person has passed away, the matter is no longer directly their responsibility in the same way. The authorities will deal with the estate and the family accordingly.

The deceased is not held responsible for what the family then fails to do after their death.

### *Attending condolences for a non-Muslim*

If a non-Muslim friend or neighbour dies, may a Muslim attend their church or funeral gathering to share condolences?

Yes, a Muslim may attend to offer condolences and show respect, especially where there is a relationship of friendship, neighbourliness or common good.

We are people of common good. If they would come to us and share our grief when we lose someone, then we should not be less noble in our conduct towards them.

However, a Muslim should not participate in their religious prayers or rituals. You may attend respectfully, offer condolences, and take the reminder of death, but you do not join in acts of worship that are not part of Islam.

### *Carrying the body*

After the janaza prayer, the body is taken to the graveyard.

The body should be carried with dignity. Ideally, at least four people carry it: two from the front and two from the back. Sometimes more people may be needed, depending on the weight and the situation.

What should be avoided is shaking the body, making dramatic movements, shouting slogans, or turning the carrying of the body into an emotional display.

This is not from the Sunnah.

Some people shout loudly or chant while carrying the body. This was not the practice of the Prophet ﷺ or his companions. If someone quietly remembers Allah or says

something softly, that is different. But loud, organised shouting and slogans should not be made part of the janaza.

Every touch of the body may carry reward, but we should not turn it into competition or chaos. Sometimes people rush to touch or carry the body, and this may affect the dignity of the deceased. In some cases, bodies may even be dropped because of this.

Death must be respected.

### *Respecting the dead*

The Prophet ﷺ was once sitting when a janaza passed by, and he stood up. The companions said that it was the janaza of a Jew. The Prophet ﷺ replied:

أَلَيْسَتْ نَفْسًا

*“Was it not a soul?”  
(Bukhari and Muslim)*

In another wording, the meaning is: is he not a human being?

Allah Almighty says:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

*“Indeed, We have honoured the children of Adam.”  
(Surah al-Isra, 17:70)*

So we respect the dead and treat the body with dignity, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Some scholars discussed whether the ruling of standing for a passing janaza was abrogated, but the narration itself is authentic and powerful in showing the Prophet’s ﷺ respect for human dignity.

### *Walking with the janaza*

When following the janaza, it is better to walk behind it rather than in front of it.

There should be no slogans or loud chanting.

If the cemetery is close enough, walking with the janaza is better where possible. If the distance is far, then the body may be placed in a vehicle and taken to the cemetery.

You do your best according to the situation.

### *Burial in a Muslim cemetery*

One should try, as much as possible, to bury the deceased in a Muslim cemetery.

If that is not available, then a Muslim section within a mixed cemetery may be used. In many places, alhamdulillah, cemeteries have designated Muslim sections.

The family should do what is possible according to their circumstances.

### *Women following the janaza to the cemetery*

A question was raised about women following the janaza to the cemetery on the day of burial.

There is no absolute harm in women going, but it was not the common practice during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. A few female companions did attend, but generally, going to the cemetery for the burial was more commonly done by men.

So it is not the usual practice, but it is not treated here as absolutely forbidden.

### *Entering the cemetery*

When entering the cemetery, one should say the du'a for visiting the graves:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ دَارَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ، وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَآحِقُونَ

*“Peace be upon you, O dwelling of believing people. Indeed, we will, Allah willing, join you.”*

*(Muslim)*

You give salam to the people of the graves and remember that they have gone ahead, and we will follow them.

### *Preparing the grave*

The Sunnah is for the grave to be deep enough to protect the body and prevent animals from disturbing it.

It should not be unnecessarily deep, but it should be deep enough for dignity and protection.

Where possible, a niche or pocket is made in the side wall of the grave. This is known as the lahd. The body is placed into that side pocket on its right side, facing the qiblah.

This is one of the recognised ways of burial.

### *Who lowers the body into the grave?*

The close blood relatives have the first right to lower the body into the grave, if they are able.

This may be the son, brother, father or other close male relatives.

However, sometimes family members are overwhelmed and cannot do it. They may be in shock or emotionally unable to carry the body. In that case, others may help.

But the close relatives should be given the opportunity, because it is their right.

### *Placing the body in the grave*

The body is received from the head side and lowered carefully.

If you are inside the grave, you receive the body and place it on its right side, facing the qiblah. Usually, more than one person will be needed, depending on the weight of the body.

The body is then placed into the lahd, if there is one, or positioned on its right side in the grave.

Before covering the grave, the ties of the shroud are untied.

Then bricks, timber, or whatever is used in that cemetery are placed to protect the body, and the soil is returned.

If the body is in a coffin, then the process depends on the cemetery rules. In some places, the body may be removed from the coffin and placed in the grave in the shroud. In other places, the coffin must remain.

Where the body can be removed, it should be placed on the right side facing the qiblah, as described.

If there is no side niche, the base of the grave may be shaped slightly so that the body can rest on its right side and remain facing the qiblah.

#### *Covering the grave*

Once the body has been placed in the grave, the bricks, timber, or whatever is used in that cemetery are placed over the body, and then the soil is returned.

This is the technical part of the burial.

The body has been placed on its right side facing the qiblah, the ties of the shroud have been untied, and then the grave is closed.

#### *How high should the grave be?*

Some graves are built extremely high, almost as though a person needs a lift to reach the top of them. This is not allowed.

The grave should only be raised slightly from the ground, around fifteen to twenty centimetres. It may be shaped like a small hump, or it may be made in a simple square or triangular shape. The point is that it should be modest and recognisable, not exaggerated or built up excessively.

Excessive elevation and decoration of graves is not from the Sunnah.

#### *Can a headstone be placed on the grave?*

A marker may be placed on the grave so that people know who is buried there.

The Prophet ﷺ himself marked a grave, so there is no issue with placing a simple marker or headstone for identification.

### *Can Qur'anic verses be written on the grave?*

Writing Qur'anic verses on the grave is not recommended. The reason is that animals may come and step on the grave or jump over it, and this may become disrespectful to the Qur'an and the words of Allah. For this reason, writing Qur'anic verses on graves is not recommended in the schools of law.

However, in many communities, this has already become common practice. If it has been done, then what can be done? At the very least, one should make sure that the verses are not written somewhere people may step on them.

If anything is written, it should be on a vertical surface, not on the floor or somewhere that may be walked over.

### *Is it necessary to write anything on the grave?*

No, it is not necessary.

A simple marker is enough if needed. The grave should remain simple and dignified.

### *Reciting Surah Ya Sin after burial*

Another issue is whether Surah Ya Sin may be recited after burial, as is practised in different countries and communities.

There are two opinions among the scholars.

Some scholars said it is allowed. They relied on the narration which says:

اقْرؤُوا يَسَّ عَلَي مَوْتَاكُمْ

*“Recite Ya Sin over your deceased.”*

*(Abu Dawud)*

They understood “your deceased” to include the person after death and burial.

Therefore, according to this opinion, reciting Ya Sin at the grave is allowed.

Other scholars said that the narration refers to a person who is dying, not someone who has already passed away and been buried. According to this view, reciting Ya Sin after burial was not the practice of the companions, and therefore it should not be treated as Sunnah.

So we have two valid opinions.

We should not fight over this. If someone follows the opinion that permits reciting Ya Sin, we should not accuse them of innovation, because they are relying on a narration, even if that narration is not very strong. And if someone follows the opinion that it should not be recited, we should not force them to recite.

The important thing is to respect the valid difference of opinion and not turn this into name-calling or argument.

### *Should the grave be made like a room so the deceased can sit up?*

In some cultures, the grave is prepared in a way that makes it look like a small room inside. The belief is that when the angels come to question the deceased, the person will sit up, so the grave is made with enough space for that.

In other places, such as in Arab countries, the body is placed on its right side in the lahd, the side niche of the grave.

The narration mentions that the angels come to the deceased and make him sit up. However, this belongs to the unseen world.

The unseen does not operate according to the same physical rules as this world. We should not imagine it in purely physical terms, as though the deceased needs a room in the grave in order to sit up like a living person.

The angels have power by Allah's permission, and the questioning of the grave belongs to the unseen. We cannot judge it according to our physical experience.

So there is no need to build the grave like a room for this reason. We follow the Sunnah method of burial as much as possible and leave the unseen to Allah.

### *What questions will be asked in the grave?*

The narrations mention that the deceased will be asked about his Lord, his religion, his Prophet ﷺ, and matters connected to his faith.

The main preparation is not simply memorising answers. The real preparation is living with iman and righteous deeds, because a person's deeds will either support him or stand against him.

What we take with us into the grave is our faith and our actions.

### *Talqeen after burial*

There is another practice in some places where, after the body is placed in the grave and people are throwing soil over it, someone gives talqeen to the deceased.

They may say something like:

*“O so-and-so, son of so-and-so, remember that you left this world upon the testimony that Allah is your Lord, Muhammad ﷺ is your Messenger, Islam is your religion, and the Qur'an is your book.”*

### *The formula of prompting (talqeen) the deceased*

It is recommended (sunnah) to prompt the deceased who was morally responsible (i.e., an adult Muslim) after burial. One should say to him:

يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ ابْنَ أُمَّةِ اللَّهِ، اذْكُرْ مَا خَرَجْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا: شَهَادَةَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَأَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ حَقٌّ، وَالنَّارَ حَقٌّ، وَالْبَعْثَ حَقٌّ، وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ

فِيهَا، وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ، وَأَنَّكَ رَضِيتَ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا، وَبِالإِسْلَامِ دِينًا، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ نَبِيًّا، وَبِالْقُرْآنِ إِمَامًا، وَبِالْكَعْبَةِ قِبْلَةً، وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِخْوَانًا.

For a woman:

يَا أُمَّةَ اللَّهِ ابْنَةَ أُمَّةِ اللَّهِ، اذْكُرِي مَا خَرَجْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا: شَهَادَةَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَأَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ حَقٌّ، وَالنَّارَ حَقٌّ، وَالْبَعْثَ حَقٌّ، وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا، وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ، وَأَنَّكَ رَضِيتَ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا، وَبِالإِسْلَامِ دِينًا، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ نَبِيًّا، وَبِالْقُرْآنِ إِمَامًا، وَبِالْكَعْبَةِ قِبْلَةً، وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِخْوَانًا.

*'O servant of Allah, son/daughter of the female servant of Allah, remember what you departed upon from this worldly life: the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; that Paradise is true, Hellfire is true, resurrection is true, and that the Hour is coming without doubt, and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves. And that you were content with Allah as your Lord, with Islam as your religion, with Muhammad ﷺ as your Prophet, with the Qur'an as your guide, with the Ka'bah as your direction, and with the believers as your brothers.'*

*(Mughni al-Muhtaj)*

This is based on a reported hadith. Imam Al-Nawawi said in Al-Rawdah said that though this hadith is weak, it is supported by corroborating reports from authentic hadiths, and people have continued to act upon it since the earliest generations, in the time of those who are followed. Allah said: 'And remind, for indeed the reminder benefits the believers.' And the servant is in most need of reminder in this situation. The one giving the prompting should sit at the head of the grave..

It is also narrated from Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said:

*When I die, do with me as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded us. He said: 'When one of your brothers dies and you have levelled the soil over his grave, let one of you stand at the head of his grave and say: "O so-and-so, son of so-and-so," for he hears but does not respond. Then say again: "O so-and-so, son of so-and-so," and he will sit upright. Then say: "O so-and-so, son of so-and-so," and he will say: "Guide us, may Allah have mercy on you," though you do not perceive it. Then say: "Remember what you left this world upon: the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, and that you were pleased with Allah as your Lord, Islam as your religion, Muhammad as your Prophet, and the Qur'an as your guide." Then Munkar and Nakir will each take the hand of the other and say: "Let us go; what need have we to sit with one who has been prompted with his proof?"'*

*A man asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what if he does not know his mother?"*

*He said: "Then attribute him to his mother Eve: 'O so-and-so, son of Eve.'" (Tabarani)*

There are two opinions about this practice. Some scholars said it should not be done, because it was not established as the practice of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions.

Other scholars said there is no harm in it, because it is a form of reminder. They also relied on some narrations, though those narrations are weak.

So if someone is doing this, we do not need to make a big fuss and say, “Stop, this is haram.” But if no one is doing it, we should not insist on it either or say, “You have missed the Sunnah.”

The balanced approach is this: if it is done, do not create conflict; and if it is not done, do not demand it.

#### *What is the intention behind talqeen after burial?*

The deceased can still hear. This was mentioned earlier. He hears until the people leave the graveyard. He cannot respond, but he hears.

So when talqeen is done after burial, those who allow it say that it is a reminder to the deceased at that moment. As mentioned, there are differences of opinion on this practice, but those who do it base it on the idea of reminding the deceased before the questioning begins.

#### *Can women attend the burial?*

Women may go to the cemetery if they wish. It is not prohibited for them to go.

The reason there is hesitation around this issue is because, at first, the Prophet ﷺ prohibited women from visiting the graveyard. This was because some women at the time were unable to control their grief. They would cry, wail, shout and scream. So the Prophet ﷺ prohibited them from visiting the graves.

Later, the Prophet ﷺ said:

كُنْتُ نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ زِيَارَةِ الْقُبُورِ فَزُورُوهَا

*“I had forbidden you from visiting graves, but now visit them.”*

*(Muslim)*

This is an authentic narration. It shows that visiting graves is allowed because it reminds a person of death and the hereafter.

Therefore, women may visit the graveyard, provided they observe the proper etiquettes and avoid wailing, screaming or any behaviour that displeases Allah.

#### *Can women help lower the body into the grave?*

Women do not assist in lowering the body into the grave. But they may attend the burial if they wish.

The actual lowering of the body is usually done by men, especially close male relatives.

*If the deceased is a woman, can her husband lower her into the grave?*

If the deceased is a woman, her mahram relatives have the right to lower her body into the grave: her son, father, brother and so on.

Can her husband do it?

This follows the same difference of opinion mentioned earlier regarding whether the husband may wash his wife. According to the view that allows him to wash her, he may also help bury her. According to the view that does not allow that, it would not be done.

So this is a valid area of scholarly difference.

If there are no close relatives available, or in an exceptional situation where only the professional burial staff can manage it, then they may do it.

But in the normal situation, the close male relatives and maharim should lower the body into the grave, and they will be rewarded for doing so.

## Part five: Condolences, mourning and cultural practices

### *Offering condolences*

After the burial, people return to the community. In some places, there may be a specific area inside or near the cemetery where condolences are offered. In other places, condolences may take place at the mosque, community centre, or family home.

The Sunnah of condolence is not to go and waste time, have long conversations, drink coffee, eat food and sit for hours.

The Sunnah is to go and sympathise with the family.

It is about mercy, kindness and support. It is about remembering that the believers are like one body: when one part is affected, the rest of the body feels it.

So you go to comfort them, make du‘a for the deceased, and remind them gently of patience and Allah’s mercy.

You should not sit for hours. Stay for a short time, offer condolences, and leave. Do not overburden the family.

### *Who should provide food after a death?*

The Sunnah is that others make food for the family of the deceased.

When Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) was martyred, the Prophet ﷺ told the people to prepare food for the family of Ja‘far because something had come to them which occupied them.

(Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

The family are busy with their grief. They should not be burdened with cooking, hosting and feeding everyone.

So the Sunnah is not that the bereaved family spends money feeding people. Rather, the neighbours, relatives and community should support them and prepare food for them.

### *Hosting large meals after death*

In many communities, condolences become like a feast. People compete in food, catering and presentation. They say, “We ordered from this restaurant,” or “The catering was from that place,” and sometimes they spend money they do not even have just to impress people.

This is haram when it becomes showing off, extravagance and burdening the family of the deceased.

The gathering of condolence should not become a display of wealth. It should not become competition. It should not be about who served better food or who arranged a more impressive event.

In some cases, people even serve food on gold or silver plates. This is even worse: haram because of the extravagance, and haram because using gold and silver utensils is prohibited.

At the very moment when death should remind us to detach from dunya, people are competing in dunya. This is completely against the spirit of the Sunnah.

#### *What should be said about the deceased?*

The Prophet ﷺ said to mention the good qualities of the deceased.

So we do not open their faults, expose their sins, or speak badly about them after they have gone to their grave.

Do not say, “He used to do this,” or “She used to do that,” and begin bringing out old files. That is not allowed.

They are now in their grave. Ask Allah to forgive them. Forgive them yourself. Mention their good and leave their faults.

This is the Sunnah.

#### *Should people be fed during condolences?*

It is not necessary to feed people during condolences.

People are not coming to eat and drink. They are coming to sympathise. If they are not coming to sympathise, then they should not overburden the family.

A person should not come to the house of the deceased expecting food, tea, drinks, or a full meal. This is wrong.

We need to revive the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Be kind to the grieving family. Help them. Do not add pressure to them.

#### *How long should condolences last?*

Condolences should not continue formally beyond three days.

There is no seventh day gathering, no fortieth day gathering, and no annual death gathering as part of the Sunnah.

These practices should not be treated as religious obligations or Sunnah practices.

The exception is if someone was away and only returned after three days. In that case, they may offer condolences when they arrive. But as a general practice, formal condolences are limited to three days.

#### *Can reward be gifted to the deceased?*

This issue returns to a broader question: can a person gift the reward of their deeds to someone else?

There are two opinions.

Some scholars said yes. They used evidence such as the Prophet ﷺ slaughtering sacrificial animals and gifting the reward to his ummah. The deed was his, the reward was his, and he gifted it to others.

Based on this, they said that if a person recites Qur'an, gives charity, or does a good deed, they may gift the reward to a deceased person.

Other scholars said no. They said this was not the regular practice of the companions, and therefore it should not be done.

Both are valid opinions.

The position followed here is that it is permissible to gift the reward of good deeds to the deceased. If someone recites Qur'an and gifts the reward to the deceased, there is no harm in that.

However, it must be done with the right etiquette.

#### *Is gathering to recite Qur'an for the deceased allowed?*

If people gather, recite Qur'an, complete a khatm, and gift the reward to the deceased, this may be good if it is done correctly.

But it must not be treated as compulsory. It must not be turned into a fixed part of the funeral process. It must not be treated as though the janaza is incomplete without it.

If it is done, alhamdulillah. If it is not done, nothing has been missed from the essentials of the Sunnah.

The balanced approach is to recognise the valid difference of opinion. Some scholars allow gifting reward, and others do not. We should respect both views and avoid fighting over these matters.

#### *Should mourners wear black or white?*

There is no evidence that mourners must wear black.

Some cultures associate mourning with black clothing, but this is not from the Sunnah. There is no specific colour that people must wear when mourning.

The separate issue is the widow whose husband has passed away. She has specific rulings during her 'iddah. She should not wear makeup, adorn herself, or beautify herself during that period. This is out of loyalty, sincerity and the continuing connection with her husband during the prescribed waiting period.

But for general mourners, there is no Sunnah requirement to wear black or any particular colour.

### *Completing a khatm for the deceased*

If people want to complete a khatm of Qur'an and gift the reward to the deceased, this should be done with the correct etiquette.

It should not become burdensome. Sometimes only a few people attend, and they feel pressured to complete the entire Qur'an slowly, each reading several juz. This is not the right approach.

If there are limited people present, the recitation can be shared with others who are not physically there. For example, thirty people may each read one juz wherever they are, and then gift the reward to the deceased.

This is fine according to the opinion that allows gifting reward.

The important thing is not to overburden people, not to make it compulsory, and not to treat it as an essential part of the funeral rites.

### *Placing food in front of people while reciting Qur'an*

Some people place food in front of themselves while reciting Qur'an, and then everyone eats from that food afterwards, believing that it has received blessing.

There is nothing like this established in the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

One may try to understand why people do it: they may say that the Qur'an is blessed, and that the Prophet ﷺ would recite and blow into his hands and wipe over his body for barakah. So they transfer this idea to food, reciting near it and then eating it.

However, this is not the correct etiquette and it is not something established from the Sunnah. If people believe it is compulsory or part of the religion, that is wrong.

### *Can Hajj or 'Umrah be done on behalf of the deceased?*

Yes, Hajj or 'Umrah may be performed on behalf of the deceased.

The Prophet ﷺ was asked about performing Hajj on behalf of someone who had passed away, and he allowed it.

So this is permissible, provided the person performing it fulfils the necessary conditions, including having performed their own obligatory Hajj first.

### *Can flowers be placed on the grave?*

Placing flowers on the grave is not from the Sunnah.

What is mentioned in the Sunnah is placing something green, such as a fresh branch or plant, because it makes tasbih as long as it remains fresh. For that reason, in some cultures people take green leaves, branches or plants to the grave.

But flowers as a decorative custom are not from the Sunnah.

### *Should people be asked publicly about the character of the deceased?*

In some places, after the janaza, the imam asks people, “How was this person’s character?” and everyone responds by praising the deceased.

This was not the practice of the Prophet ﷺ.

Perhaps those who do this are trying to follow the meaning of the hadith that when people testify to someone’s goodness, that testimony is accepted. They want people to mention good about the deceased out of mercy and hope that Allah showers them with forgiveness.

The intention may be understandable, but this public questioning was not the practice of the Prophet ﷺ.

### *Is saying Fatihah for the deceased allowed?*

This comes under the earlier discussion of reciting Qur’an and gifting the reward to the deceased.

If someone recites Surah al-Fatihah and gifts the reward to the deceased, then according to the opinion that allows gifting reward, there is no harm in that.

However, it must not be believed to be a Sunnah practice established in this particular form, nor should it be treated as a compulsory part of the janaza or condolence process.

If someone believes it is part of the religion in this fixed way, then that is wrong. But if they simply recite Qur’an and gift the reward, without treating the form as compulsory, then it falls under the broader valid opinion permitting gifting reward.

### *Can these practices be corrected gently?*

Yes. Cultural practices should be corrected with wisdom.

If people are doing something excessive or treating it as compulsory, we should explain the Sunnah gently. We should not attack people, humiliate them, or create unnecessary conflict.

If advice is given in a nice, subtle way, people may accept it. But if they are pushed harshly, they may resist.

It is also worth remembering that some people attending these gatherings may not have wudu, may not know how to recite properly, or may be distracted. So we should not build religious obligations around practices that many people are not prepared for.

## Part six: Du'as for the deceased

'Awf ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) performed a funeral prayer, and I memorised from his supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ، وَارْحَمْهُ وَعَافِهِ، وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ، وَأَكْرِمْ نُزُلَهُ، وَوَسِّعْ مُدْخَلَهُ، وَاغْسِلْهُ بِالْمَاءِ  
وَالْتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ، وَنَقِّهِ مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا نَقَّيْتَ الثَّوْبَ الْأَبْيَضَ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ، وَأَبْدِلْهُ دَارًا خَيْرًا  
مِنْ دَارِهِ، وَأَهْلًا خَيْرًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ، وَأَدْخِلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَفِيهِ فِتْنَةُ الْقَبْرِ وَعَذَابَ النَّارِ

*“O Allah, forgive him, have mercy on him, grant him well-being, and pardon him. Honor his abode, expand his entrance, wash him with water, snow, and ice, and cleanse him of sins as a white garment is cleansed of dirt. Replace his home with a better home, and his family with a better family. Admit him into Paradise and protect him from the trial of the grave and the punishment of the Fire.” (Muslim)*

أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَا أَخَذَ وَلَهُ مَا أُعْطِيَ، وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى، فَمُرَّهَا فَلْتَصْبِرْ وَلْتَحْتَسِبْ.  
متفق عليه.

*Indeed, to Allah belongs what He has taken, and to Him belongs what He has given, and everything with Him has an appointed time. So be patient and seek reward (from Allah).  
(Bukhari and Muslim)*

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ, when he performed the funeral prayer over a deceased person, would say:”

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا، وَغَائِبِنَا، وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا، وَذَكَرِنَا وَأُنثَانَا. اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ  
أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ، وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ، اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا  
أَجْرَهُ، وَلَا تُضِلَّنَا بَعْدَهُ. أبو داود والترمذي.

*O Allah, forgive our living and our dead, those who are present among us and those who are absent, our young and our old, our males and our females. O Allah, whoever among us You give life to, give him life upon Islam; and whoever among us You cause to die,*

cause him to die upon faith. O Allah, do not deprive us of his reward, and do not lead us astray after him. (Abu Dawoud and Tirmidhi)

Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ, when he finished burying the deceased, would stand over him and say:

استغفروا لأخيكم ، وسلوا له التثبيت ، فإنه الآن يُسألُ.

*'Seek forgiveness for your brother and ask that he be made firm, for he is now being questioned.'* (Abu Dawood)

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ [...] ، وارفعْ دَرَجَتَهُ فِي الْمَهْدِيِّينَ ، واخلُفْهُ فِي عَقِبِهِ فِي الْغَائِرِينَ ، واغْفِرْ لَنَا  
وَلَهُ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ، وَاغْفِرْ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ ، وَتَوَرَّ لَهُ فِيهِ مُسْلِمًا .

*O Allah, forgive [...], raise his rank among the rightly guided, and take care of those he has left behind among those who remain. Forgive us and him, O Lord of the worlds.  
Make his grave spacious for him and illuminate it for him. (Muslim)*

## About the Author

Shaykh Haytham Tamim is a Shariah scholar specialising in Islamic jurisprudence, Hadith, and Islamic finance. He trained under leading scholars in Beirut and Damascus, receiving some of the highest ijazahs in Qur'an, Hadith, and Fiqh with an unbroken chain of transmission (sanad) reaching back to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, before undertaking judicial training within the Lebanese Shariah court system.

Alongside his academic and teaching work, he has verified and published over twenty classical Islamic texts, preserving the legacy of the scholars while presenting it with clarity for the needs of the present time.

He is also the author of numerous English-language works across tafsir, Hadith, and Fiqh, and a prolific writer, with extensive articles and resources published through his website. Further publications are currently in preparation.

Today, he advises financial institutions, international organisations, and professional bodies across Europe and the Middle East on Shariah governance, compliance frameworks, and ethical finance structures. His advisory work includes Zakat governance and compliance for major global organisations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and Save the Children.

He is the founder of Utrujj Foundation and Director of Shariah Solutions Limited.