

# Preparation of the Deceased and Janazah Prayers

There are five main stages for the preparation of a Muslim's body for burial:

body-washing or ghusl, wrapping (kafan), the funeral Prayer (Salaat al-Janaazah), the funeral, and the burial. Below is a brief description of the procedure involved in each stage:

## I. Body-Washing or "Ghusl"

Washing the deceased's body is obligatory on Muslims; it is a *Fard Kifayah*, i.e., if some Muslims take the responsibility of doing it, the obligation is fulfilled, but if no-one fulfils it then all Muslims will be accountable. Washing can be carried out in the following way:

1. A man's body should be washed by men and a woman's by women. A child's body may be washed by either sex. A husband can wash his wife's body and vice-versa if the need arises.
2. Only one person is needed for washing with one other person as an assistant.
3. It is better to choose for this the person who knows how to perform *ghusl* best.
4. Place the body on a high place, e.g., a table or something similar.
5. Remove the deceased's clothes (garments) leaving the private parts covered.
6. Press the stomach gently and clean whatever comes out.
7. For washing, use a piece of cloth or your hands.
8. Only clean water may be used; add some scented oils (non- alcoholic) in the final wash. It is preferable to use warm water.
9. Perform ablution (*wudu*) for the body, cleaning the teeth and nose from outside only.
10. Wash three times, but if the body is not yet cleaned, continue washing five or seven times - it must be odd numbers.  
  
Turn the body on its left side and begin washing the right side. Then turn it on its right side to wash the left side. This is done in each wash. The first and the second washes are done with water and soap, while the last one with water and scent.
11. Hair should be unbraided, washed and combed. For women it may again be braided in three braids.
12. Dry the body with a clean cloth or towel.
13. Add some perfume on the head, forehead, nose, hands, knees, eyes, armpits, and place perfumed cotton on the front and rear openings.

## II. Wrapping (Kafan)

1. This must be a clean piece of cloth (preferably white) to cover the whole body.
2. Add some perfume to the *kafan* (non-alcoholic).
3. Do not use silk cloth for men.
4. Use three pieces for men and five for women, [but each one must cover the whole body.]

5. Tie the front and the rear with a piece of cloth (from the same *kafan*) in such a way that one can differentiate the head from the legs.

### III. The Funeral Prayer (Salat al-Janazah)

1. It is better that those praying divide themselves into three rows facing the *qiblah* with the Imam (Prayer leader) in front.
2. Put the body (or bodies) in front of the Imam.
3. The Imam should stand by the middle of the body if the deceased is a man and by the shoulder if she is a woman.
4. If there is more than one body, then they should be put one in front of the other, those of the men nearest to the Imam and those of the women furthest from him.
5. Having the appropriate *neeyat* (intention) in your heart, raise your hands in the usual manner of performing Salat, and say, Allahu Akbar (God is Most Great).
6. Then fold and hold your hands on your breast in the usual manner, the right hand on the left.
7. Read *al Fatihah* (the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an) silently.
8. Say *Allahu Akbar* without raising the hands.
9. Pray for the Prophet in the same way as you do in *tashahhud*: *Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad, wa 'ala aali Muhammad...* O Allah bless Muhammad and the followers of Muhammad...
10. Say Allahu Akbar (don't raise your hands).
11. Make *du'a* (supplication) for the deceased.
12. Say *Allahu Akbar* (don't raise your hands).
13. Make *du'a* for all.
14. Say *Assalaamu 'Alaikum* (Peace be on you all) - thus finishing the Salat al-Janaazah (Funeral Prayer).

It is clear from this description that all this Prayer is done while one is standing - there is no *ruku* (bowing) or *sujud* (prostration) in it.

*Du'a* (supplication) for the deceased may be chosen from the authentic supplications of the Prophet Muhammad. An example of such a supplication is:

'O God, forgive our living and our dead, those who are present and those who are absent, our young and our old, our males and our females.

O God, whomever you cause to live, let him live in a state of submission to You. And whomever You cause to die, let him die in a state of belief in You.'

### IV. Funeral

1. Procession: Mourners should walk in front or beside the bier. Those who are riding or driving should follow it.
2. Silence is recommended.
3. It is absolutely forbidden to accompany the body with music or wailing.

## V. Burial

1. The grave should be deep, wide and well made. It is recommended that it consist of two excavations, one inside the other. It is recommended that the smaller one called *lahd* be dug on the side of the larger one facing the qiblah.

2. It is in this one that the body is put.

3. The deceased's body should be laid on the ground with the face toward the qiblah, the direction of the *ka'abah*.

4. While laying it say:

*Bismillah, wa 'ala millati rasulillah* - In the name of God, and according to the religion of the Messenger of God.

5. It is not recommended to use a casket unless there is a need for it, e.g., if the soil is very loose or wet. A stone, or bricks or some soil should be put under the deceased's head to raise it up.

6. *Do not* use a pillow or put anything with the deceased inside the grave.

7. Cover the *lahd* with bricks so that they become like a roof for it. Pour three handfuls of soil.

8. Fill the larger pit with soil. It is preferable that each one of those present share in this by pouring three handfuls of soil. With the first handful, utter the Qur'anic words: *minhaa khalaqnaakum* - from this earth We created you;

With the second handful: *wa feeha nu'eedukum* - and into this earth, We return you;

With the third handful: *wa minhaa nukhrijukum taaratan ukhraa* - and from this earth We shall bring you forth another time.

Raise the level of the grave a little less than one foot above the surrounding ground in a sloping way.

If a person should die on a ship while at sea, the procedures of washing and shrouding the body should be followed. A weight can then be tied to the body and the body then thrown into the water.

All the above procedures should be performed by Muslims.

## References

1. *Al Fiqh'Al Madhahib Al Arba'a*, Abdul Rahman Al Jazeeri, 1970, pp.500-535.
2. *Fiqh as-Sunnah*, Vol.4, Sayyid Sabiq, 1968, pp. 69-138. (English translation available - American Trust Publications, Indianapolis)
3. *Sifat Salatul Nabi*, 5th Edition, Mohammad Nasirul Deen, Al Albani, 1389, pp.125.
4. *Riyadhul Saliheen*, pp.360-373, Cairo Edition.