

DEATH

AHKAME MAYYIT

RULES RELATING TO THE DECEASED

A Journey to the Hereafter

Death is an essential part of our life. Death may catch us up unaware, unexpectedly, all of a sudden and at any time. What should you do as required by the *Shariah*, while the person is in the course of dying and soon after death?

According to Islamic point of view, death is not the complete end of the life of a person. It is a new world, new life, and it is one of the doors to reach the merciful Allah (s.w.t.). That is why He orders to clean the dead body and make him wear a simple and clean cloth and bury him under the earth, so that this action becomes the sign of the eternity of the real life and a sign of continuity.

Preparing for death is a lifetime's job. It begins on the day you reach the age of *bulugh* and are held accountable for your deeds in the eyes of Almighty Allah. Imam 'Ali bin Abu Talib (a.s.) has beautifully described the preparation for death as follows: "Fulfilling the obligations, refraining from forbidden [things], and acquiring noble character."

In Preparation for Death

Before death, try your best to fulfil the obligations, which are upon you in regard to the creatures as well as the Creator.

Return to the owners whatever has been given to you as a trust or write it down in your Will so that the executor of your Will shall return the trust to its rightful owner.

In Islam, you are allowed to dispose up to one-third of your estate for whomsoever or whatever cause you like. As for the two thirds, it must be distributed among your heirs according to the shares allocated for them in the *shari'ah*.

Make a Will in writing or verbally about those religious obligations which you could not fulfil by yourself and which cannot be done on your behalf by others except after your death: the *qadha* prayers, fasting and pilgrimage (*hajj*), etc. You should specify the amount from the one-third of your estate to be used to hire people to do such deeds. If you cannot afford this, then you may request your heirs to do unfulfilled rituals on your behalf voluntarily or pay someone else to do so.

It is also recommended, if your financial circumstances allow you, to include your deserving relations in the one-third of your estate.

It is recommended to forgive your brethren in *iman* for whatever wrong they may have done to you. On the other hand, you should ask your brethren in *iman* to forgive you for the intentional and unintentional wrong you may have done to them.

At The Time of Death

When death approaches you, it is *wajib* on you to lie down on your back in such a way that the soles of your feet face the *qiblah*. Or you may turn your bed in such a way that your soles will face the *qiblah*. If you cannot do so yourself, then it is *wajib* on those who are with you to help you.

It is recommended to say by yourself or repeat after someone else the declaration of faith. It is a declaration in which you reconfirm your belief in Allah, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), the twelve Imams (a.s.), the Qur'an, and the Day of Judgement.

It is recommended to move the dying person to his/her usual place of prayer in the home. This is recommended only if it does not cause pain or inconvenience to the dying person.

It is recommended to recite two *surahs*, *Yasin* (no. 36) and *as-Saffat* (no. 37), near the dying person. According to the traditions, this will relieve the pangs of death.

It is recommended to recite the *Shahadah* and make him repeat it. It should cover *Tawhid /Nubuwwat/ Imamah and Wilayah* of the twelve Imams (a.s);

make him/her recite *Du'a* for *Istighfar* repeatedly, seeking forgiveness from Allah (s.w.t.) for his sins.

After The Death

Soon after a person dies, it is recommended to do the following things:

Close the eye-lids of the dead person

Close the mouth of the dead person

Tie the two jaws so that the mouth does not open

Straighten his/her arms and place them on the two sides of his body

Straighten his/her legs

Cover the dead body

Switch on the light in the room where the dead body is kept

Arrange the funeral as soon as possible

Inform the mu'mineen to attend the funeral.

After Death Rituals

They cover *Ghusl/Kafan/Dafan* i.e., washing, shrouding, and burying. Basically, these are *Wajib* (obligatory) acts for all of us but *Kifai - Wajibe Kifai*, which means if one or more persons undertake to do, others are absolved. Else it is *wajib* on everyone.

Therefore, it is essential for all of us to know the basics of burial rituals in case we are called upon to perform them when it becomes obligatory for us to do so according to the *Shar'ia*.

First Obligatory *Wajib* Act -

Ghusl-e-Mayyit (Ritual Wash of the Dead Body)

It is *wajib* to give three *Ghusls* to a Muslim dead body.

- ❖ First *Ghusl* with water mixed with *Sidr* (berry or lotus) leaves.
- ❖ Second *Ghusl* with water mixed with camphor.
- ❖ Third *Ghusl* with pure water.

Note: The quantity of "*Sidr*" leaves or camphor should neither be so much that the water becomes mixed (*Mudhaf*), nor so little that it may be said that "*Sidr*" leaves or camphor has not been added in it.

Method of Performing *Ghusl-e-Mayyit*

STEP ONE

Before giving *Ghusl*, it is necessary to remove all dirt and oily substances from the dead body, which may prevent water from reaching the skin. If there is any '*ayn najasat*' on any part of the dead body, it is obligatory to first remove it before giving *Ghusl*. And it is required that before the dead body is given *Ghusl*, it should be clean and free from all other *Najasat*.

It is recommended that the dead body should be laid, with feet facing the *Qiblah*, during the *Ghusl*. After the three *Ghusls* have been completed, it is better that the dead body is laid in the same way as it is laid when *Salatul Mayyit* is prayed.

STEP TWO - GHUSL WITH WATER MIXED WITH SIDR

Make a *niyyat*, "I am washing this dead body with *SIDR WATER Wajib Qurbatan Ilal-lah*" and wash the body with *SIDR* water in which small quantity of berry or lotus leaves have been added or its essence squeezed from a parchment paper.

Note: Care should be taken that the water does not become *mudhaf*.

STEP THREE - GHUSL WITH WATER MIXED WITH CAMPHOR

Make a *niyyat*, "I am washing this dead body with *CAMPHOR WATER Wajib Qurbatan Ilallah*". And wash the body with camphor water in which a little camphor has been added.

Note: Care should be taken that the water does not become *mudhaf*.

STEP FOUR - *GHUSL* WITH CLEAN WATER

Make a *niyyat*, "I am washing this dead body with *CLEAN WATER* *Wajib Qurbatan Ilallah*" and wash the body with clean (tap) water.

After all these *Ghusls*, the body should be gently dried with a clean towel.

Some Basic Rules

- ❖ While giving *Ghusl* cover the body, or at least the private parts of it, with a sheet of cloth or any type of cover. It is *Haraam* to look at the private parts of a *mayyit*.
- ❖ The method of giving *Ghusl* is *Tartibi* - in sequence, first head and neck, then the right side and finally the left, the way we ordinarily do our *Ghusl*.
- ❖ While performing *Ghusl* it is better to recite Surah/Ayat of the Qur'an and Du'a for the *marhum* than keeping quiet or chatting.
- ❖ The person giving *Ghusl* should be a Muslim, preferably a Shia Ithna-Asheri, adult, sane and should know the basic, essential rules of *Ghusl*. He should belong to the same gender.
- ❖ It is *haram*, as a precaution, to take any remuneration for giving *Ghusl*. If any remuneration is paid and the person receives it as an earning, *Ghusl* will be void (*batil*). The person who gives *Ghusl* to the dead body should keep the *niyyat* of *Qurbatan Ilallah* (obedience to and for the pleasure of Allah).
- ❖ If both *sidr* leaves and camphor or either of them is not available, then the body should be given *Ghusl*, on the basis of precaution, with pure water instead of the *Ghusl* which is not possible. In such a case, after the three *Ghusls*, one *tayammum* should be performed on the *mayyit*.
- ❖ If water is not available or the body has open and bleeding wounds or partially crushed, or any other valid reason for abstaining from using water, and, as no rule of *Jabirah* is applicable to *Ghusle Mayyit*, one *Tayammum* should be given instead of *Ghusl*. However, the recommended precaution is to give three *tayammums*, and in one of the *tayammums*, there should be a

Niyyat of '*Ma fi-zimmah*' which means that the person giving *tayammum* resolves that this *tayammum* is given to absolve him of his responsibility.

- ❖ Method of giving *Tayammum* to the *Mayyit* is that the person giving *Tayammum* strikes his own palms on earth and then wipes them on the face and back of the hands of *Mayyit*. However, the obligatory precaution is that he should, if possible, use the hands of the *Mayyit* to do its own *Tayammum*. This may not be possible in countries where the climatic conditions are prohibitive.

Second Obligatory *Wajib* Act - *Tahnit*

Application of Camphor Powder to Specific Parts of the Body

TAHNIT

After first *wajib* act has been completed, the second *wajib* act is *tahnit* (to give *Hunut*). This involves applying fresh fragrant camphor powder on seven parts of the body which rest on the ground when prostrating (doing *Sajdah*).

These are:

- ❖ the forehead,
- ❖ both the palms of hands,
- ❖ both the knees,
- ❖ and both the big toes.

Note: It is *Mustahab* to apply camphor on the tip of the nose.

Camphor must be powdered and fresh. It will not be sufficient if it is so stale that it lost its fragrance.

It is, as an obligatory precaution, to start *tahnit* starting with the forehead. It is not necessary to observe sequence while applying to other parts mentioned above. The *niyyat* should be, before commencing *tahnit*, "I am doing *tahnit/hunut* on this dead body *Wajib Qurbatan Ilallah*."

It is *Mustahab* to mix a small quantity of *Turbah* (soil of the land around the shrine of Imam Husayn a.s.) with camphor, but it should not be applied to those parts of the body where its use of it may amount to disrespect, i.e.

the knees and the big toes. It is also necessary that the quantity of *Turbah* should not be so much that the identity of camphor disappears or is obscured.

Third Obligatory *Wajib* Act - *Kafan* - Shrouding the *Mayyit*

RULES RELATING TO *KAFAN*

After the second *wajib* act has been completed, the third *wajib* act is *Kafan* i.e., shrouding or systematically wrapping the body with three obligatory - *wajib* and several additional recommended - *mustahab* pieces of cloth, as outlined below.

As a precaution, each of the three pieces of cloth used for *Kafan* is not so thin as to show the body of the deceased. However, if the body is fully concealed when all the three pieces are put together, it will be sufficient.

WAJIB* PIECES OF *KAFAN

a. Loin cloth

It is an apron like cloth worn around the waist. The *wajib* portion of the loin cloth should completely cover both the front and back part of the body from the navel to the knees. However, it is recommended that it should be long enough to cover the body from the chest up to the feet.

b. Tunic (shirt)

It is a piece of cloth similar to a long shirt that covers the body from the shoulders to below the knees, preferably to the ankles.

c. Inner Wrapper (Sheet Cover)

A large sheet of cloth that covers the entire body. As a precaution, it should be long and wide enough so that the front

and the back part overlap each other, and the top and the bottom ends can be tied with a string.

MUSTAHAB PIECES OF KAFAN

- a. Outer Wrapper - a second large sheet like the first sheet (for both males and females)
- b. Scarf to cover the head and the neck (for females only)
- c. *Turban* to cover the head (for males only)
- d. A piece of clothing to cover the complete area of the private parts and should be long enough to secure around the hips. (for both male and female)
- e. A strip of cloth to cover the whole area of the breast (for female only).

It is *Mustahab* (recommended) that:

- The cloth for "*Kafan*" should be white.
- The body should be kept in such a position so that the right shoulder faces *Qibla* as it is done for *Salatul Mayyit*.
- Two fresh green twigs of a tree inscribed with *Shahadah (Kalma)*, called *Jareedatain*, should be kept in the *Kafan* with the dead body.
- Recite *surahs/ayats* from the Qur'an and *Istaghfar* while shrouding the body.

Fourth Obligatory *Wajib* Act - *Salatul Mayyit*

RULES RELATING TO *SALATUL MAYYIT*

The next *wajib* act is *Salatul Mayyit* - (*Namaz-e-Janaza*) for every Muslim. The *Salat* is also obligatory for a Muslim child who has completed six years.

As an obligatory precaution, it should also be prayed for an under six year old child, if the child is *Mumayyiz*, a religious terminology which means that the child knows what *Salat* is and can also distinguish good from bad or right from wrong. If the child is not *Mumayyiz*, then the *Salat* could still be prayed with the *Niyat* of *Raja'*.

Positioning the Coffin

The body, in a coffin, is laid on its back before the person(s) praying in congregation, head on the right side of the congregation, and the right shoulder facing towards *Qibla*. Those praying, stand close to the coffin in a row(s) stretching along both sides from the middle of the coffin. Imam stands in front reciting loudly and *M'amumeen* should not remain quiet and just listen but actually follow the recitation. It is recommended that they all be in (*wudhu*). For a male *mayyit* the Imam stands near the abdomen of the *mayyit* while for a female *mayyit*, Imam stands near the chest of the *mayyit*.

NB. If the *Salaat* is not prayed in congregation then one should not be distant from the body. i.e. the coffin should be close to him and he should be directly facing the coffin.

The *Salat* has no *Ruku* or *Sujuud*. It is prayed in a standing position. There are five *Takbirs* with recitations after each *Takbir*.

The details of the normal and shorter methods of praying *Salatul Mayyit* can be obtained from the Islamic Laws book of Ayatullah Al-Sistani Dama-Dhilluhu.

Fifth Obligatory *Wajib* Act - *Dafan* (Burial)

Place of Burial

After *Salatul Mayyit*, the body should be buried in a Muslim graveyard. It cannot be buried in non-Muslim cemetery unless a portion of that cemetery has been specifically allocated and reserved for Muslims.

Method

The *Mayyit* should be laid in the grave on its right side so that the face remains towards the *Qibla*.

It is *Mustahab*, that the coffin, after arrival in the graveyard, is placed a short distance away from the dug up grave and moved slowly to the grave by pausing and putting back on the ground and lifting up again, three times. At the fourth time, it is finally lowered into the grave. If the dead body is of a male, it should be put on the ground at the third time in such a manner that its head should be towards the lower side of the grave and at the fourth time it should be lowered into the grave from the side of its head. In the case of a female, it should be placed on the ground at the third time towards the Qibla and the body should be lowered into the grave sideways. Also, a piece of cloth should be spread over the grave while lowering the body of a female so that the bystanders should not be able to see. In the absence of *mahram*, close relatives should lower the body in the grave.

Note: It is recommended that the persons who lower the dead body in the grave should be *pak*, bare-headed and bare-footed.

After the body has been laid in the *grave*, the ties at both ends, and in the middle, of the *kafan* should be unfastened and some earth should be put under the right cheek of the *mayyit*. A pillow of earth should be made under the head.

Before closing the grave *Talqin* is then recited.

TALQIN

Before closing the grave, the person reciting the Talqin should hold the right shoulder of the dead body with his right hand and should place his left hand tightly on its left shoulder and draw his face close to the ear of the dead body. Then, shaking shoulders of the dead body, he should say thrice: "*Isma' ifham ya... (Listen and understand, O')* mention the name of the deceased as the son of his father. For example, if the name of the deceased is Muhammad and his father's name 'Ali, say Muhammad ibn 'Ali thrice:

The full text of *Talqin*, for both a male *mayyit* and a female *mayyit* can be obtained from the Islamic Laws of Ayatullah Al-Sistani Dama-Dhilluhu.

After the *Talqin*, and closing the grave it is *Mustahab* that those who participated in the burial, except the near relatives who include blood

relatives and other close relatives from the extended family of the deceased, throw small quantity of soil into the grave, using the back side of their right hand. The grave then is filled with earth, using shovels or by mechanical means. After the grave has been shaped, close members of the family then sprinkle water over the grave, followed by *Tanzil*, the recitation, seven times, of *Surah al-Qadr* and the above-mentioned *Du'a* or any other short *Du'a* for *Maghfirat* of the deceased.

Note: It is *Mustahab* that the grave be rectangular in shape and its height equal to four fingers' span.

After the Burial

It is *Mustahab* that, after burial and after the persons who attended the funeral have gone, the guardian of the *Marhum/a* or the person whom the guardian grants permission should recite the *Talqin* and the *Du'a* once again for the *Mayyit*.

- Note: 1] It is *Mustahab* that after the burial, the bereaved family is consoled.
- 2] It is *Mustahab* that food be sent to the members of the family of the deceased for 3 days. It is, however, *Makrooh* to eat with them in their homes.

GHUSL MASE MAYYIT (GHUSL FOR TOUCHING A DEAD BODY)

If a person touches a *Mayyit* which has become completely cold and has not yet been given all three *Ghusl-e-Mayyit*, with any part of his body including nail, he should do *Ghusl Mase Mayyit*. The method is the same as that of other prescribed *Ghusls*, i.e. *Janabat*. After performing *Ghusl* for touching a dead body, the recommended precaution is that he should also perform *Wudhu* when he has to pray.

Note: *Ghusl* of *Mase-Mayyit* will not be *Wajib* if a person touches a dead body which has not become entirely cold even if he touches a part which has become cold.

EXHUMATION

It is *Haraam* to open the grave of a Muslim even if it belongs to a child or an insane person. However, there is no objection in doing so if the dead body has decayed and turned into dust.

Digging up or destroying the graves of the descendants of Imams, the martyrs, the *Ulama* and the pious persons is *Haraam*, even if they are very old, because it amounts to desecration.

Note: There are certain cases where digging up the grave is allowed. Details can be obtained from the Islamic Laws of Ayatullah Al-Sistani Dama-Dhilluhu.

Condolences

It is recommended (*Sunnah*), in fact, a religious, moral and social duty of Mu'mineen that condolences should be conveyed to the family of the deceased after the burial and expression of sorrow and sympathy should be shown to the members of the bereaved family.

Bereaved Family

With regard to the bereaved family, it is important that they should bear the loss with patience by often reciting "*Inna lil-Llah wa inna ilahi Raji'oon*", recite Qur'an, pray *Salat*, pay *Sadaqa* to the poor and remember *Marhum/Marhuma* with *Du'a* and *Istighfar*, organize recitation of the Qur'an and *Majalis* of Imam Husayn (a.s.) all for *Ithale Sawab* for the departed soul. These are a few ways of benefiting the departed soul.

Discipline of Visiting Cemetery

There are several disciplines you need to observe when visiting the cemetery:

- ❖ You should remember death and visualize yourself as lying in the grave and facing the consequences of your sins and acts of disobedience to Allah (swt).
- ❖ Worldly talks, jokes and laughs should be avoided and, instead, recitation of the *Surahs* of the Qur'an and *Du'as* for the dead buried in the cemetery should be constantly recited.
- ❖ Eating and drinking in the cemetery should be avoided. Apparently, *Tabarruk* in respect of recitation of the Qur'an or *Majlis* of our *Aemmah* (a.s.) is an exception.
- ❖ It is recommended to visit either on Thursday or Friday.

A person, on entering a cemetery, should say,

(I begin) in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

اللهم صل على محمد وال
 محمد وعجل فرجهم يا كريم
 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، مِنْ أَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، يَا أَهْلَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، بِحَقِّ لَا
 إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، كَيْفَ وَجَدْتُمْ قَوْلَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، مِنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، يَا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ،
 بِحَقِّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، اغْفِرْ لِمَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاحْتَشَرْنَا فِي زُمْرَةِ مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ
 إِلَّا اللَّهُ، مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ وَآلِهِ

"Peace, Salam be on the people who are worthy of being among those who declare that there is no God but Allah. O' those who are (buried here) and worthy of being among the people who declare that there is no God but Allah, for the sake of there being no God but Allah, (tell us) how have you found the declaration that there is no God but Allah?"

O' Allah, there is no God but (You) Allah. By Your absolute and sole Attribute of You alone being God, Allah, forgive those who declare that there is no God but (You) Allah and raise us (on the Day of Judgment) among the group of people who declared (during their lives) that there is no God but Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is the Prophet of Allah, 'Ali (a.s.) is the Representative of Allah."

