

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

SUNNAH RELATING TO DEATH AND BURIAL

O Allah (The Exalted) bless our lord and master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as much as pleases You.

Death is such a thing that every soul will taste. We should make ourselves comfortable with the fact that we will die one day and not be scared. One of the reasons that people don't like to learn about death is that we are drowned in the love of the world and are too busy in chasing it. However, that day will come when we will have to taste death, hence we should begin to make preparations for it.

Martyr in Islam

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) *"Is there a person who (without martyrdom) will attain the status of a Martyr?"* The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied that, *"The person who remembers death twenty times in the day (attains this status)."*

Remember death!

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was once going past a group of people who were laughing loudly, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, *"O people! Talk about those things in your gathering which remove desires",* they asked, *"What is this?"* The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"That is death!"*ⁱ

When we get together we talk about those things that does not concern us, we end up backbiting, swearing and things that will take us to hell fire. Let us leave these types of talk and remember death which is our final destination.

Live like a stranger

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) stated that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) held me by my shoulders and said, *"Live in this world like a stranger or a traveller."*

Do not think we will live forever, we run after the world as if we will. We prepare for our retirement, buy buildings, cars etc. whilst we do not know if we will live the next hour!

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) always said that, *"When it is night do not wait for the morning and when it is morning do not wait for the night and when in good health and during life make preparations for death (meaning good deeds)."*ⁱⁱ

Hard heart

A woman came to 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) and said that, *"My heart is hard what can I do to make it soft?"* 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) replied, *"Remember death on a regular basis and your heart will become soft."* The woman practised this deed and her heart no doubt became soft. The woman then thanked 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her).

Talk about Qiyamah & Death

'Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (may Allah be pleased with him) had a habit, where every night he held a gathering of the scholars and talked about Qiyamah and death. All the people would cry in such a way as if there had been a death. Hasan Basri (may Allah be pleased with him) in his gathering talked about death, the Hell fire, and the Hereafter.

Do not ask for death

Do not ask for death as this is forbidden. If you must ask for it then say, *'O Allah (The Exalted) keep me alive until life is good for me and give me death when that is better for me'*.ⁱⁱⁱ

Breaking unpleasant news

If you must give the undesirable news of a tragic accident, or death of a close relative or a dear friend, break the news in a way that decreases its impact and makes it as mild and gentle as possible. For example, in the case of a death, you may say, "Recently, I learned that Mrs. Ahmad has been very sick.

Unfortunately her condition has worsened lately. Today, I learned she has passed away. May the mercy of Allah (The Exalted) be with her.”

One should start by giving the name of the person in question. Do not break the news of a death by asking, “Do you know who died today?” this unduly manner frightens the listeners and prompts them to expect the worst, like the death of someone who is very close to them. Instead, mention the name of the dead person before breaking the tragic news of the death, this will make the news more bearable by softening its impact and reducing the listener’s apprehension.

Likewise, convey the news of any tragedy (such as a fire, drowning, car accident, etc.) in a similar fashion. Prepare the listener for the news in a way that minimizes its impact. Mention the name of the affected person in a kind way, not a shocking way. Some people have weak hearts and such bad news may cause them to faint and collapse.

Choose the appropriate time to convey such news. It should not take place at a meal, before going to sleep or during an illness. Compassion and tactfulness are the best qualities you will need to handle such a situation.

We belong to Allah (The Exalted)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, “Allah (The Exalted) said, *“If I take away the loved ones of My believing servant in this world, and he bears that with patience and fortitude, then there is no other reward with Me for him than Paradise.”*”^{iv}

He also reminds them of the attitude that the believers should adopt at the time of death, according to the teaching of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as reported by Usamah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that, “*One of the daughters of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) sent for him, calling him to come and telling him that her boy-or son-was dying. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘Go back to her and tell her that what Allah (The Exalted) had taken belonged to Him, and to Him belonged what He granted, and He has an appointed time for everything. So tell her to have patience and to seek reward.’*”^v

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, “*The deceased suffers in his grave because of people’s wailing over him,*” and in another report, “*as long as they carry on wailing over him.*”^{vi}

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, “*The woman who wails, and does not repent before she dies, will be raised on the Day of resurrection wearing a shirt of tar and a garment of scabs.*”^{vii} *Allahu Akbar!*

After the burial

After the burial, recite Surah Fatiha and the beginning of Surah Al-Baqarah at the head side and the last verses of Surah Baqarah at the feet.^{viii}

Stay a little while at the graveside and ask Allah (The Exalted) for forgiveness for the deceased and supplicate that he remains firm at the time of questioning by the angels.^{ix}

Before leading the prayer

Before leading the funeral prayer of a Muslim, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would ask if the deceased had any debt? If he was in debt then he would tell that person to whom he owed the debt, to lead his funeral prayer but if someone took responsibility of the debt then the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would lead the prayer. He would take part in lifting the body and would walk behind the funeral procession when not assisting and would also make supplication for them.

“Three things accompany a person to his grave his wealth, his relatives, and his deeds. His wealth and his relatives turn back after his burial, but his actions go on and stay with him in the grave.”

The method of praying the Salaah

First of all to make the intention:

Intention of funeral (Janaza) prayer:

نَوَيْتُ أَنْ أُدْرِيَ أَرْبَعَ تَكْبِيرَاتٍ صَلَاةِ الْجَنَائِزِ فَرَضٍ
الْكُفَايَةِ وَالشَّاءَ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى وَالِدُعَاءٍ لِهَذَا الْمَيِّتِ .

'I make the intention to pray Salaah for Allah and to perform supplication for this deceased person'.

After making the intention raise the hands to the ears and whilst saying 'Allahu Akbar' fold below the navel. Pray Thana:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ وَجَلَّ ثَنَّاؤُكَ وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

"Subhanakallah Humma Wabihamdika Watabarakasmuka Wa Ta'ala Jadduka Wa Jalla Thana'uka¹ Wa Laa illaha Ghairuk".

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

Without lifting the hands say 'Allahu Akbar' and pray Durood-e-Ibraheem, if another Durood is prayed there is no harm.

Durood-e-Ibraheem

دُرُودُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا
صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ سَيِّدِنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ
إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مُجِيدٌ اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى
آلِ سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى
آلِ سَيِّدِنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مُجِيدٌ

Oh Allah! Shower Your mercy upon Muhammad ﷺ and the followers of Muhammad ﷺ, as You showered Your mercy upon Ibraheem, Upon im peace, and the followers of Ibraheem, upon him peace. Behold You are praiseworthy, Glourious. Oh Allah! shower Your blessings upon Muhammad ﷺ, and the followers of Muhammad ﷺ as You showered Your blessings upon Ibraheem, upon him peace, and the followers of Ibraheem, upon him peace. Behold, You are Praiseworthy, Glourious.

Say 'Allahu Akbar' and pray the following supplication for yourself and the deceased and for all Muslim Ummah:

Supplication for an Adult

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَغَائِبِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرِنَا وَأُنثَانَا
اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَاحْيِهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ

"Allahum Magh Firli Hayyina Wa Mayyitina Wa Shaahidina Wa Ghaa'ibina Wa Sogeerina Wa Kabirina Wa Dhakarina Wa Unthana Allahumma Man Ahyaytahu Minna Fa'ahyih 'Alal Islam Wa Man Tawaffaytahu Minna Fatawaffahu 'Alal Imaan".

¹ This is an addition to be prayed in the funeral. prayer

O Allah! Forgive those of us that are alive and those of us that are indeed; those of us that are present, and those absent; those who are young, and those who are adults; our males and our females. O Allah! Whomsoever of us You keep alive, let him live as a follower of Islam, and whomsoever You cause to die, let him die a believer.

If the deceased was either insane² or a male child, after the third *Takbeer* (Allahu Akbar) instead of praying in M1.5 pray this:

Prayer for a young boy:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ لَنَا فَرَطًا وَاجْعَلْهُ لَنَا ذِكْرًا وَاجْعَلْهُ لَنَا شَافِعًا وَمُشَفَّعًا

“Allah Hummaj ‘Alhu Lana Faratow Waj ‘Alhu Lana Dhukhrow Waj ‘Alhu Lana Shafi ‘Aw Wamushafa’a.

O Allah! Make Him (this child) a source for our salvation; and make him a source of a treasure for us; and make him an intercessor for us, and one whose intercession is accepted.

Prayer for a young girl:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهَا لَنَا فَرَطًا وَاجْعَلْهَا لَنَا ذِكْرًا وَاجْعَلْهَا لَنَا شَافِعَةً وَمُشَفَّعَةً

“Allah Hummaj ‘Alha Lana Faratow Waj ‘Alha Lana Dhukhrow Waj ‘Alha Lana Shafi ‘Ataw(n) Wamushafa’a.

Translation is the same as above but replacing HIM with HER.

Say ‘Allahu Akbar’ for the fourth time and complete with *Salaam* to the right and left.

If someone does not remember this supplication³ any other supplication will do.

Out of all the four *Takbeers* of the *Salaah*, only lift the hands on the first *Takbeer* and not for the other three. At the fourth *Takbeer*, without praying anything else perform *salaam* and release your hands.

In the *Salaam* ensure the intention is for the deceased, the angels and the people present.⁴ The *Takbeer* and *Salaam* should be prayed by the Imam loudly, and the rest of the people praying behind quietly.

Donating the reward to the deceased

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) sacrificed two rams of predominately white colour, one for himself and the other for his followers. The evidence therein is that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) offered sacrifice animals and donated the reward to his followers, which includes both the living and the dead, both those who existed at his time and those who came after. ^x

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that he said to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace): “O Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) we give in charity, perform the pilgrimage, and supplicate for our dead. Does this reach them?” He replied, “Yes, indeed it reaches them, and they rejoice thereat just as one of you rejoices at the gift of a tray of food.”

Distributing of food

A question was asked to Shaykh Ahmad Raza Khan regarding distributing food in the name of the decease, the answer is given here. The answer to this is that the food that is cooked and distributed in the name of the deceased is disliked and should not be eaten and to call people for the Fatiha food as a form of *invitation* is not allowed.

It has been stated in Fatahul Qadir ' If the family of the deceased *invite* guests for food on the third and fortieth day then this is reprehensible innovation^{xi} and is not allowed. This is because as per Shariah, to *invite* guests for food is done on a happy occasion and not on a sad occasion, however, to feed the poor and needy is allowed.

² Insane in the above text means he/she became insane before becoming an adult

³ M1.5, M1.6 or M1.7

⁴ Durr-e-Mukhtar, Radd-ul-Mohtar

Shaykh Ahmad Raza Khan states a full Fatwa on this issue and called it '*Jalus Soot An Nahi Dawat Anil Mawt*' and in his Fatawa-e-Radhwiyya as follows;

Question: There is a common tradition in the sub-continent of India that after a person has died, his friends, family and neighbours etc. gather at his house and the traditions that occur at weddings occur here where people are invited to attend and food is distributed and this is done generally on the third or seventh day. Also the next of kin of the deceased arrange for the feeding of the guests and a large gathering is held. If the next of kin cannot afford it then they borrow the money and if they cannot arrange this then usury means is obtained to fulfil this obligation. If they do not do this then they are disrespected and looked down upon. Is this allowed in Shariah or not?

Answer: Subhanallah! Oh Muslim. You are asking whether this is allowed or not? Ask how much of a sin there is for this impure tradition and how much will be the punishment?

This invitation is in itself not allowed and is a Bi'dah. Imam Ahmad in his Musnad and Ibn Majah in his Sunan with a Sahih Isnad (authentic chain) narrates from Jarir Ibn 'Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) "*Our group of companions used to state that to gather at the house of the deceased and to arrange for the preparations of food for him used to regard it as part of the lamentation⁵ process for the deceased*" The forbiddance has been stated in the hadith and a Hadith of multiple transmission (Mutawattir).⁶

Shaykh Ahmad Raza Khan writes; to have the food⁷ of the friends of Allah (The Exalted) is permissible, as it is a source of blessing, the poor and rich may eat from this.^{xii}

To go once a week

To go and visit the graves is the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). You should go once a week, either on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, or Monday. The best time to go is Friday mornings.^{xiii}

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, "*I had forbidden you from visiting the graves (before), but now you should visit them.*"^{xiv} In another narration, he said, "*Visit the graves, for verily it is a reminder of death.*"^{xv}

Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that, "*I would forbid you from visiting the graves, but now you should visit them, for indeed the hearts are softened, the eyes are made to shed tears, and it is a remembrance of the hereafter.*"^{xvi}

Take shoes off

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) once saw a person wearing shoes he said, "*Take your shoes off, do not make it difficult for the buried and they will not make it difficult for you*".

Pray Surah Ikhlas eleven times

It is quoted in the Hadith that those who pray Surah Ikhlas (Qul Huwallahu Ahad) eleven times and then send the reward to the dead will gain a reward equivalent to the number of dead people.^{xvii}

Visiting at the time of sorrow

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) states that, "*Those who grief and visit their brother during the time of sorrow then Allah (The Exalted) will give them the outfit of miracle.*"^{xviii}

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) states that, "*Those who beat their head and scream out and rip their clothes, I am unhappy with them.*"

5 Which is forbidden in Islam

6 From Hadith's of multiple transmissions

7 Niyaz

Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, *“Without doubt these graves are dark for the deceased, however, Allah (The Exalted) illuminates it with my supplication.”*^{xix} *Subhanallah!*

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) not only assists us in the world but in the grave and in the hereafter with his intercession too.

Manners of the funeral procession

1. The face of a person on his deathbed should be turned to face towards the Qibla and he should be advised to recite the Kalima Shahadah and not forced.
2. Surah Yaseen could be recited beside the person and pious persons should remain near him.

Supplication on confirmation of death

Read the following supplication upon the confirmation of death,

“Inna Lillahi Wainna Ilaihi Raji’oon.”

‘To Allah (The Exalted) we belong and to Him is our return’.

Supplication when closing the eyes

Upon the confirmation of death the head and chin of the deceased should be fastened together with a strip of cloth and the eyes closed with the right hand index finger whilst reading this supplication:

“Bismillahi Wabillahi Wa’Alaa Millati Rasulullah’.

Allah’s name I begin with and in accordance with the religion of the messenger’.

3. Hands and legs should be straightened, covered with a sheet and clothes removed.
4. Relatives and friends should be informed to enable more people to participate in funeral prayer and make supplication for the deceased.
5. Do not delay in the shrouding and burial.
6. To shed tears without wailing and complaining is permissible and only natural.
7. It is permissible to kiss the deceased’s forehead.
8. Food should be sent to the house of the deceased for the first day only.
9. It is not proper for a Muslim to mourn for a dead person for more than three days. However, for a widow the mourning period is four months and ten days.
10. To sympathise with the family of the deceased and encourage them to show patience and accept the will of Allah (The Exalted).
11. If one has heard about the passing away of a fellow Muslim, attend the Janaza Salaah and burial.
12. It is preferable to visit the graveyard (for men only). As this shall remind him of his own imminent death, and therefore enable him to lead a more righteous life.

When the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) attended the funeral of any person, after the burial the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself would seek forgiveness for the deceased. Together with this the making supplication for staying steadfast in answering the angels (Munkar and Nakir’s) questions and the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would also encourage the companions (may Allah be pleased with them) to do this.

Manners of visiting the cemetery

1. Do not sit, sleep, and walk on the graves.
2. One should not wear shoes in the graveyard if possible.

Supplication when entering the graveyard

Enter from the feet side of the buried and stand facing them and say,

“Assalamu Alaikum, Ya Ahlal Quboor Yaghfirullahu Lana Walakum Antum Salafna Wanahnu Bil Aakhir”

‘O people of the graves, Salaam on you. May Allah forgive us and you all. You left first and we will be coming later.’

3. Do not approach the graves near the head side of the buried as it will cause the dead person discomfort, meaning they will have to turn their head to look at you.
4. Pray *Surah Fatiha* and *Alif Laam Meem* upto *Muflihoon*, *Ayatul Kursi*, and *Aamanar Rasuluh* to the end of the *Surah*.
5. One can also pray *Surah Yaseen*, *Tabarak* and *Qul Huwallahu Ahad* (*Surah Ikhlas*) twelve, eleven, seven or three times.
6. Do not kiss or circumambulate around the graves.
7. To place flowers, as whilst they remain wet they will perform the tasbeeh of Allah and satisfy the heart of the deceased.
8. The desirable manner of visiting the graveyard is to offer two circuits of superogatory (Nafil), in each cycle pray *Surah fatiha*, *Ayat ul Kursi* once, and *Surah Ikhlas* three times and send the reward to the deceased.
9. Four days are better for visit, Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and it is better on the days of Eid and the first ten days of *Dhul Hajjah*.^{xx}
10. It is permissible to place a sheet of cloth known as a *Ghilaaf* over the graves of the pious saints so that the unaware public can respect the person resting and receive blessing.^{xxi}

Shaykh Ahmad Raza Khan writes: it is unlawful for the women to visit the graves of the Awliya and normal cemetery. When a woman leaves the house with the intention of visiting a shrine of a Awliya the curse of Allah is on her till she returns.^{xxii}

In the same book he also writes: to circle anything⁸ besides the holy Kabah with respect is not permissible and to bow to anything⁹ besides Allah is unlawful in the Islamic law and there is difference of opinion among the scholars of kissing the grave¹⁰. Our scholars have said that one should stand four arm lengths away from the grave as respect.^{xxiii}

May Allah (The Exalted) give us all the ability to remember and prepare for our death, Ameen.

8 Meaning graves

9 Meaning graves

10 One should refrain from this.

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- ⁱ Kimiyai Sa'adat
ⁱⁱ Bukhari
ⁱⁱⁱ Bukhari & Muslim
^{iv} Bukhari
^v Bukhari & Muslim
^{vi} ibid
^{vii} Muslim
^{viii} Mishkat
^{ix} Abu Dawood
^x Bukhari & Muslim
^{xi} Bid'at-e-Sayyiah
^{xii} Ehkam-e-Shariat
^{xiii} Bahare Shariat and Qanoon-e-Shariat
^{xiv} Muslim
^{xv} ibid
^{xvi} Haakim
^{xvii} Bahare Shariat and Qanoon-e-Shariat
^{xviii} Ibn Maja
^{xix} Muslim, Bayhaqi, Sharah Sunnah, Fatawa-e-Radhwiyya, Vol 4, p. 47, Jam'i-ul-Hadith, Vol: 4, p. 172
^{xx} Alamgiri
^{xxi} Durre Mukhtar
^{xxii} Ehkam-e-Shariat and Fatawa-e-Radhwiyya
^{xxiii} Ehkam-e-Shariat