

Muslim Funeral and Burial Services for the Deceased

Syed A. Majid Shah and B. K. Ahmad

When it appears that death is near, recitation of Surah Yasin (The Holy Qur'ān, Ch: 36) is recommended. The topics dealt with in this Surah are of a nature which alleviate the suffering of the dying and give spiritual comfort. One should also recite, in a low but audible tone, the *Takbeer* and *Kalima Shahadah* near the dying person. Once the person is dead, all present and those who later come to know of the death should recite:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
ہم یقیناً اللہ ہی کے ہیں۔ اور ہم یقیناً اسی کی طرف لوٹ کر جانے والے ہیں۔

Transliteration:

Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajioon.

Translation:

Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.

The eyes of the deceased should be closed by hand and a cloth band bound around his chin and head so that his mouth remains closed. Instead of wailing and crying out aloud, one should remain composed and attend to the funeral and burial arrangements. Islam instructs that Muslims should arrange the burial of a deceased person in a simple but dignified manner. Performance of the rituals of the funeral and burial service (washing of the body of the deceased, shrouding, participation in funeral prayer and burial) are obligatory for all believers but it is considered a *Farz-i-Kifaiyya*. This means if three or more persons undertake to do it, others are absolved. Otherwise it is obligatory on everyone. If no one offers the funeral prayer of a Muslim, the entire local community are considered sinners. So it is essential for everyone to know the basics of how to perform this duty.

Bathing/Washing of the Body of the Deceased:

Fresh and clean lukewarm water should be used to wash the body. The practice of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) was to put some *beri* (a type of jujube tree) leaves in the water to be used for washing the dead body. If *beri* leaves are not available a small amount of an antiseptic could be used.

The private parts of the deceased should be washed first. Then those parts of the body which are washed during normal *wudhu* (ablution) i.e., the hands, face, arms to the elbows and the scalp. It is not required to pour water into the mouth or nostrils. Then the rest of the body should be washed three times, the right side first and then the left. The private parts of the deceased should remain covered by a cloth at all times. Only men may bathe deceased males and women the



deceased females. However, if a woman is not available, the husband may bathe his wife's body and vice versa.

Shrouding/Wrapping the Body

After the body is bathed and dried, the next step is shrouding which involves systematically wrapping the body with white cloth (three pieces for men and five pieces for women). The shroud (*kafan*) should be of unsewn inexpensive white cloth.

For men, the shroud consists of three pieces of cloth:

1. A bottom sheet/piece of cloth to cover the lower part of the body (front and back) completely, like a skirt.
2. A top sheet/piece of cloth to wrap the upper part of the body, like a shirt.
3. A large sheet/piece of cloth that covers the entire body from the head to the feet, and long and wide enough so that the top and the bottom parts may be tied with belts/strings made of the same cloth. All these pieces of cloth are pre-cut and kept ready to facilitate shrouding when the body is laid on them.

For women, two additional pieces of cloth are used, one for the chest and the other for the head.

The dead body of a martyr does not need to be bathed or shrouded. He should be buried in the clothes he was wearing at the time of death.

Funeral Prayer (*Namaz-e-Janaza*):

After bathing and wrapping the dead body in its shroud, it should be placed in a wooden casket and transferred to the place where the funeral prayer is to be performed. The funeral prayer is held in a suitable gathering place indoors or in the open. The casket is placed in front of the *Imam* so that the face of the dead body is towards the *Ka'aba*. Those present for the funeral prayer should arrange themselves in an odd number of rows behind the *Imam*.

The *Imam* commences the prayer by saying *Allah-o-Akbar* loudly raising his hands to his ears. The followers say the same in a low tone. The *Imam* then silently recites *Thanaa* and *Sura Fatiha*. The followers should recite the same silently. He then says *Allah-o-Akbar* without raising his hands. The followers also say *Allah-o-Akbar* in a low tone without raising their hands. The whole congregation then recites *Durood Sharif* (Salutations) silently. After that the *Imam* says *Allah-o-Akbar* for the third time and the particular prayer for the deceased is recited by everyone silently (see below). The *Imam* then says *Allah-o-Akbar* for the fourth and last time, turning his face towards the right saying: *Assalam-o-alaikum wa rahmatullah*. Then turning his face towards the left repeats the same to mark the end of the prayer. The followers do the same and repeat silently "*Assalam-o-alaikum wa rahmatullah*" turning their faces to the right and left.

There is no *Ruku* or *Sajdah* in the funeral prayer. *Namaz Janaza Ghaib* (funeral prayer in absentia) may also be offered for a deceased person, especially for prominent or well-known people or when only a few Muslims were available to offer the funeral prayer initially. However, offering funeral prayer in absentia should not become a routine practice.

If the deceased is an adult, male or female, the following Prayer is recited:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَعَائِبِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا
وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرِنَا وَأُنْثَانَا اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَاحْيِهِ
عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ
اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تَفْتِنَّا بَعْدَهُ.

اے اللہ تعالیٰ بخش دے ہمارے زندوں کو بھی اور جو مر چکے ہیں۔ اور جو حاضر ہیں اور جو غائب ہیں۔ اور ہمارے چھوٹے بچوں اور ہمارے بڑوں اور ہمارے مردوں کو اور عورتوں کو اے اللہ جو کو تو ہم میں سے زندہ رکھے اس کو اسلام پر زندہ رکھ اور جس کو ہم میں سے وفات دے۔ اس کو ایمان کے ساتھ وفات دے اے اللہ تعالیٰ اس کے اجر سے ہم کو محروم نہ رکھ اور اس کے بعد ہم کو کسی فتنہ میں نہ ڈال۔

Transliteration:

Allahumaghfir lihayyina wa mayyitina wa shahidina wa ghaibina wa sagheerina wa kabeerina, wa Zakarina wa unthaana. Allahumma man ahyaitahu minna fa ahyiyee 'alal Islam, wa man tawaffaitahu minna fa tawaffahu 'alal-Iman. Allahumma laa tahrinna ajrahu wa laa taftinna ba'dahu.

Translation:

O Allah, forgive our living ones and our deceased ones and those of us who are present and those who are absent, and our young ones and our old ones and our males and our females. O Allah those of us whom You grant life, keep them firm on Islam, and those of us whom You cause to die, cause them to die in the faith. Deprive us not, O Allah, of the benefits relating to the deceased and subject us not to trial after him.

Funeral Prayer for a male child:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ لَنَا سَلَفًا وَفُرْطًا وَاجْعَلْهُ لَنَا أَجْرًا
وَذُخْرًا وَاجْعَلْهُ لَنَا شَافِعًا وَمُشَفَّعًا ۝

اے اللہ۔ اس بچے کو ہمارا پہلے جانے والا پیشرو اور اجر و ثواب کے ذخیرے کا موجب بنا دے۔ یہ ہمارا سفارشی بنے اور اس کی سفارش قبول فرما۔

Transliteration:

Allahumaj 'alhu lanaa salafanwa forotan-wajalhu lanaa ajranwa zukhran-wajalhu lanaa shafianwa mushaffan

Translation:

O Allah, make him our forerunner, and make him for us a reward and a treasure and make him for us a pleader and accept his pleading.

Funeral prayer for a female child:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهَا لَنَا سَلْفًا وَفُرْطًا وَذُخْرًا وَاجْرًا
وَشَافِعَةً وَمُشَفِّعَةً.

اے اللہ! اس بچی کو ہمارا پہلے جانے والا پیشرو اور اجر و ثواب کے ذخیرے کا موجب بنا دے۔ یہ ہماری سفارشی ہے اور اس کی سفارش قبول فرما۔

Transliteration:

Allahumaj 'alhaar lanaa salafanwa furutan-wadukhran wajranwa shafiatanwa mushaffah

Translation:

O Allah, make her our forerunner, and make her for us a reward and a treasure and make her for us a pleader and accept her pleading.

Burial:

After the funeral prayer, the body should be taken to the cemetery for burial without any delay and all should accompany the body to the grave site. Those who follow the funeral procession should continue to remember Allah (*Zikr-e-Ilahi*) as well as pray for the forgiveness of the deceased in a low tone. The grave may be prepared either as a dug up area which contains a further niche on the side for the body to rest on or it may be just a dug up area. It is essential for the grave to be wide and spacious. In extreme cases more than one body may be buried in a single grave. The body must be lowered into the grave with proper care. As the body is placed in the grave, the sheet wrap should be loosened a bit at the opening and the face tilted a little towards the *Ka'aba*.

As the body is lowered into the ground the following should be recited:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَبِاللَّهِ عَلَى مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

اللہ کے نام کے ساتھ۔ اللہ کی تائید کے ساتھ۔ اللہ کے رسول کی ملت پر۔

Transliteration:

Bismillahi wa billahi alaa millati rosoolillaahi sallallahu alaihi wa sallam

Translation:

In the name of Allah and with His blessings upon the path set by the conduct of the messenger of Allah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam.

When the casket is covered up with loose soil the following should be recited:

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى

اسی سے ہم نے تمہیں پیدا کیا ہے۔ اور اسی میں ہم تمہیں لوٹا دیں گے۔ اور اسی سے تمہیں ہم دوسری مرتبہ نکالیں گے۔

Transliteration:

Minha khalaqnaakum wa feeha noeedukum wa minha nukhrijukum taratan ukhraa.

Translation:

We have created you out of this (dust) and we shall return you to it and it is out of the same that we shall revive you in the end.

It was the practice of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) to make the grave somewhat raised from the ground i.e., a slight hump-like form.

When the burial is complete, a brief silent congregational prayer with raised hands should be offered for the forgiveness of the deceased.

The mourners should leave the cemetery reciting the following:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَلْآحِقُونَ.

تم پر اللہ کی طرف سے سلامتی ہو ہم اگر اللہ نے چاہا آپ سے ملنے والے ہیں۔

Transliteration:

Assalamu 'alaikum wa inna insha Allahu bikum la-laahiqun.

Translation:

Peace be upon you and God willing we are certainly bound to join you.

Condolences:

Community members must offer condolences to the relatives of the deceased. It is recommended

that near and dear ones or neighbors provide meals to the bereaved family for three days. Offering of personal condolences and bereavement should be maintained for a period of three days. After that life should come back to normal. One must not give in to superstitions.

Bereavement:

The period of bereavement for the widow of the deceased is four months and ten days. According to the Holy Qur'ān, this period is prescribed to stabilize her mentally and emotionally. Women are under a great deal of stress, more so than men in this situation and need protection from others who may exploit them when they may be most vulnerable. During this period, a widow should not leave her home except for unavoidable reasons.

If the widow is the only earning member in the family and has to maintain her job obligations, she is allowed to go out to perform essential professional responsibilities. She should dress in a simple manner, abstain from wearing make-up or perfume or take part in festive activities. She should observe patience, offer gratitude to her Creator and spend this time in the remembrance of Allah.

Legal Issues

In case of converts to Islam, the next of kin may be Christian, Jew, Hindu, or of some other faith. After death, the dead body legally belongs to the next of kin. The Muslim's wishes for his/her funeral and burial arrangements should be discussed beforehand with the legal next of kin. It is best to make a Will for all funeral and burial rights, and provide a copy to one's relatives and another to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Adequate funds should be set aside for one's burial arrangements. The relatives should also be made aware that the estate shall be divided according to Islamic laws of inheritance as stated in the Holy Qur'ān. Consult a legal professional for the will other necessary documents.