



A COMPLETE REFERENCE BOOK

Facing Death: A Complete Guide

A complete guide for the Muslim family — visiting the sick, prayer during illness, the shahadah and talqin at the point of death, washing, shrouding, the funeral prayer, burial, the affairs that follow, and evidence-based answers to the question “why”

أَرْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً

How to use this book

This book is a practical guide for Muslim families who are caring for someone gravely ill, who are facing the death of a loved one, or who wish to be prepared. The chapters follow the real course of events: visiting and illness, prayer during illness, prompting the shahadah at the point of death, the moment of death, washing, shroud, funeral prayer, burial, the affairs that follow, and finally a question-and-answer chapter, “why this, why that”.

Each chapter opens with a verse of the Qur'an, includes a **Do & Avoid** page, and ends with common questions. Important supplications are given in Arabic script, transliteration and meaning.

Sources. The Arabic text of Qur'anic verses is taken from the digital Tanzil mushaf, and the Arabic text of hadith from the verified Sunan collections, not retyped. A hadith is used only if it is sahih or hasan, and its grade is stated for hadith of the Sunan books. Sahih Muslim is cited by the name of its book (major section).

Fiqh follows the Shafi'i school as practised in Malaysia. On matters where scholars differ, such as talqin after burial, the recitation of Yasin, the absent funeral prayer, combining prayers during illness, tahlil and memorial feasts, this book states the main views briefly and fairly, without condemning local practice.

This book complements **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, which discusses the agony of death, the barzakh, a good ending (husnul khatimah), preparation, condolences and the widow's waiting period ('iddah). This book does not repeat it, but refers to it.

Administrative procedures, hospital rules and cemetery regulations differ between states and change from time to time. For your particular situation, consult your state Islamic religious office, mosque or state mufti's office.

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Each chapter opens with a verse of the Qur'an, includes a **Do & Avoid** page, and ends with common questions. Fiqh follows the Shafi'i school as practised in Malaysia. Further reference at mypolygyny.com.

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CHAPTER 1

Facing death with calm

Death will certainly come. What we choose is how we meet it: with faith, good expectation of Allah and affairs put in order.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

"He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving."

Surah al-Mulk 67:2

Death: a meeting that is certain

Allah created death and life as a test (Surah al-Mulk 67:2). Death cannot be avoided: “The death from which you flee will surely meet you” (Surah al-Jumu'ah 62:8). So the question is not when, but in what state we meet it.

This book is practical. It explains what is done when someone falls gravely ill, at the time of dying, immediately after death, through the washing, shrouding, funeral prayer and burial of the deceased, and the affairs that follow.

The discussion of the agony of death (sakaratul maut), the signs of a good ending (husnul khatimah), the life of the barzakh and spiritual preparation is found in the book **Finding Peace in the Hereafter** (Chapters 3, 4 and 14). This book does not repeat it, but refers to it.

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- Do not wish for death because of hardship or illness (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).
-
- Ask for good in life and in death with the supplication the Prophet ﷺ taught (next page).
-
- Remember death so that you hurry towards good, not so that you despair.

Supplication in prolonged illness

اللَّهُمَّ أَحْيِنِي مَا كَانَتِ الْحَيَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي وَتَوَفَّنِي إِذَا كَانَتِ الْوَفَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي

"O Allah, keep me alive for as long as life is better for me, and take me when death is better for me."

Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim; Arabic wording according to Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih)

Allahumma ahyini ma kanatil-hayatu khairan li, wa tawaffani idza kanatil-wafatu khairan li.

The Prophet ﷺ forbade a person to ask for death because of a hardship that has befallen him. If matters are too heavy, this is the supplication: leaving the choice to Allah, who knows best.

Etiquette of visiting the sick and the dying

1

Visiting is a Muslim's right

Visiting the sick and following the funeral are among the rights of one Muslim over another (al-Bukhari, Muslim).

2

Keep it short and follow the rules

Observe visiting hours and hospital instructions. Do not burden the patient or the family.

3

Pray for recovery

Recite the supplication “As'alullahal-‘azim...” seven times beside the patient (Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi; sahih).

4

Say only what is good

The angels say “Amin” to what is said beside the sick or the dead (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).

5

Plant hope

Mention Allah's mercy and kindness. Avoid frightening stories.

6

Help with worship

Ask whether he needs help with ablution, tayammum or facing the qiblah (Chapter 2).

7

Protect modesty and dignity

Cover the awrah, protect privacy, and do not take photographs without the family's permission.

Supplication when visiting the sick

أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ رَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ أَنْ يَشْفِيكَ

"I ask Allah the Almighty, Lord of the Mighty Throne, to cure you."

Sunan Abu Dawud and Jami' at-Tirmidhi (sahih) — recited seven times

As'alullahal-'azim, rabbal-'arshil-'azim, an yashfiyak.

The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever visits a sick person whose appointed time has not yet come and recites this supplication seven times beside him, Allah will cure him of that illness.

Visiting the sick also carries great reward: seventy thousand angels pray for blessings upon the visitor until evening or morning (narrated by at-Tirmidhi, sahih).

Illness, reward and good expectation of Allah

Illness is not a sign of Allah's anger. The Prophet ﷺ said that no tiredness, illness, sorrow or pain befalls a Muslim, even the prick of a thorn, except that Allah erases some of his sins because of it (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Deeds usually done in health are still recorded: “When a servant falls ill or travels, there is written for him the reward of what he used to do when resident and healthy” (narrated by al-Bukhari).

Three days before his death the Prophet ﷺ advised: “Let none of you die except while thinking well of Allah” (Sahih Muslim, Book of Paradise, Its Delights and Its People (Kitab al-Jannah wa Sifat Na'imiha wa Ahliha)).

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- For the patient: say istighfar, remember Allah and make supplication as far as you are able; do not feel that small acts of worship are in vain.
 - For the family: help the patient feel accepted and loved. That is one way of nurturing good expectation of Allah.
-

Matters worth settling while still able

- ✓ Write a will: a Muslim who has something to bequeath should not let two nights pass without it (al-Bukhari, Muslim)
- ✓ The limit of a will is one third, and “one third is already a lot” (al-Bukhari, Muslim)
- ✓ A bequest to an heir takes effect only with the consent of the other heirs (Shafi'i school)
- ✓ List debts owed and debts due; the believer's soul is held back by his debt until it is settled (at-Tirmidhi, sahih)
- ✓ Return trusts, ask forgiveness and forgive
- ✓ Tell the family where important documents are kept
- ✓ State your wishes for the funeral arrangements: simple and in line with the sunnah
- ✓ Full checklist: **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, Chapter 14

Do & avoid: in grave illness

Do

- ✓ Make the supplication “keep me alive for as long as life is good”
- ✓ Visit briefly and pray for recovery
- ✓ Think well of Allah and nurture hope
- ✓ Arrange the will, debts and trusts early
- ✓ Help the patient pray as far as he is able

Avoid

- ✗ Asking for death because of illness or hardship
- ✗ Frightening stories beside the dying
- ✗ Visiting too long, or in large groups on the ward
- ✗ Postponing the will and the settling of debts
- ✗ Spreading photographs of the patient without permission

Common questions

Does a long illness mean a great sin?

Not necessarily. The prophets too were tested with illness. Sound hadith state that illness erases sins and that deeds done in health continue to be recorded. We do not judge anyone's condition; we pray for them and help them.

May the patient pray to be taken quickly?

The Prophet ﷺ forbade asking for death because of hardship. If it is too heavy, recite the supplication he taught: "O Allah, keep me alive for as long as life is better for me, and take me when death is better for me."

Should the family tell the patient about his condition?

Do it wisely and gently, in consultation with the treating doctor. The aim is that the patient has time to arrange his affairs and repent, not to frighten him.

02

CHAPTER 2

Prayer during illness

Prayer is not lifted so long as the mind is present. Only the manner changes, according to ability.

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ

"Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides..."

Surah Ali 'Imran 3:191

An obligation made easy

So long as a person is of sound mind and conscious, the obligatory prayers remain required even in illness. Yet Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity (Surah al-Baqarah 2:286), and He says: "So fear Allah as much as you can" (Surah at-Taghabun 64:16).

So the patient prays according to ability: standing; if he cannot, sitting; if he cannot, lying down; and after that by gesture. He also purifies himself as he is able: with water, and if water would harm him, with tayammum (Surah an-Nisa' 4:43; Surah al-Ma'idah 5:6).

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- According to the Shafi'i school, a person who loses his mind or is unconscious for the whole of a prayer time is not required to make up that prayer.
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- If he is conscious for part of the time and has the chance to pray, that prayer is still required of him.
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- For particular situations, such as surgical anaesthesia, ask your state Islamic religious office, mosque or state mufti's office.

The basic hadith on prayer for the sick

صَلِّ قَائِمًا فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَقَاعِدًا فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَى جَنْبٍ

"Pray standing; if you cannot, then sitting; if you cannot, then on your side."

Narrated by al-Bukhari; Arabic wording according to Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih)

These words were addressed to 'Imran ibn Husain (may Allah be pleased with him), who suffered from haemorrhoids and asked about his prayer. They became the basis for the order of prayer for the sick: each stage is chosen only when the one before it cannot be done.

Shafi'i scholars add: if he cannot lie on his side, he prays on his back, and if he cannot move, he prays by gesture (next page).

The order of prayer according to ability

1

Standing

If he can stand, even leaning on something or using a stick, he prays standing.

2

Sitting

If standing is too difficult, he prays sitting. He bows by leaning forward, and prostrates on the floor if he can.

3

Lying on the right side

Face and front of the body towards the qiblah. This is preferred to the left side (Shafi'i school).

4

On the back

Feet towards the qiblah, with the head raised slightly on a pillow so that the face is towards the qiblah.

5

Gesture with the head

Lower the head for the bowing, and lower still for the prostration.

6

Gesture with the eyes

If the head cannot be moved, indicate with the eyelids (Shafi'i school).

7

In the heart

If none of this is possible, perform the pillars in the heart for as long as the mind is conscious (Shafi'i school).

Special situations in hospital and at home



Bandage or cast

Wash the healthy parts, wipe water over the bandage, and perform tayammum (Shafi'i school).



Catheter or colostomy bag

The ruling for continuous impurity applies: purify after the time has begun, one ablution for each obligatory prayer.



Cannot be moved

Pray facing the direction that is possible; ask the nurse or family to help face the qiblah.



Helped by another person

The patient may have ablution or tayammum performed for him by another; the intention remains his own.



Soiled clothing or bedsheet

Change it if possible. If not, pray anyway, and ask your state mufti's office whether it needs to be repeated.



Do not let the time pass

It is better to pray in the condition you are in than to leave the prayer.

How to perform tayammum (Shafi'i school)

1

Confirm the reason

No water, or using water would harm him on the advice of a doctor or from experience.

2

Time has begun and the body is clean

Perform tayammum after the prayer time has begun; clean any impurity on the body first.

3

Pure dust of the earth

Use dust of the earth. A special container of dust can be prepared for a patient in bed.

4

Intention and wipe the face

Intend tayammum to make prayer permissible; strike the dust and wipe the whole face.

5

Wipe both hands

Strike the dust a second time; wipe the right hand up to the elbow, then the left.

6

One tayammum, one obligatory prayer

Perform tayammum again for the next obligatory prayer (Shafi'i school).

Combining prayers during illness: differing views

Combining (joining Zuhr with Asr, or Maghrib with Isha) is clearly permitted for a traveller. For a sick person who is not travelling, scholars differ.

The final position of the Shafi'i school: illness does not make combining permissible; the patient performs each prayer in its time according to ability. **Some Shafi'i scholars** (Imam an-Nawawi judged this view strong in evidence), and **the Hanbali school**, permit combining for an illness that truly causes hardship. Among their evidence, Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet ﷺ once combined prayers in Madinah without fear and without travelling, so that his community would not be put to hardship (Sahih Muslim, Book of the Prayer of Travellers and Shortening It (Kitab Salat al-Musafirin wa Qasriha)).

Shortening (qasr, reducing four-rak'ah prayers to two) is for travellers only, not because of illness.

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- A patient who truly finds it hard to perform each prayer in its time may ask the state Islamic religious office, mosque or state mufti's office which view is followed.

Do & avoid: prayer during illness

Do

- ✓ Pray within the time according to ability
- ✓ Perform tayammum if water would harm
- ✓ Ask for help to face the qiblah and to purify
- ✓ Keep a dust container and prayer mat beside the bed
- ✓ Ask the mufti's office about difficult cases

Avoid

- ✗ Leaving prayer because "I cannot move"
- ✗ Postponing all prayers until recovery
- ✗ Forcing oneself to stand to the point of harm
- ✗ Thinking the prayer is void because the qiblah could not be faced when unable
- ✗ Combining prayers without asking which view is followed

Common questions

Father was unconscious for three days in intensive care. Must he make up the prayers?

According to the Shafi'i school, prayers missed while a person is without his mind or unconscious for the whole of their time need not be made up. If he was conscious for part of the time long enough to purify and pray, that prayer is required of him.

May one pray sitting on a chair?

Yes, for one who cannot stand, or cannot bow and prostrate fully. He does what he can, for example standing while reciting al-Fatihah, then sitting for the pillars he cannot do.

I cannot memorise all the recitations because I am weak. What should I do?

Recite what you are able. What is obligatory are the pillars such as al-Fatihah, the final tashahhud and the blessings upon the Prophet. Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity.

03

CHAPTER 3

The shahadah and talqin at the point of death

The most beautiful last words are La ilaha illallah. Our task is to help him say them, gently.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

﴿١٠٢﴾

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam."

Surah Ali 'Imran 3:102

Prompt the dying

لَقُّنُوا مَوْتَاكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

"Prompt those of you who are dying with La ilaha illallah (there is no god but Allah)."

Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz); Arabic wording according to Jami' at-Tirmidhi (sahih)

"Mawtakum" in this hadith is understood by the scholars to mean one who is at the point of death, that is, close to dying. Talqin means saying those words beside him so that he remembers them and repeats them.

Talqin for one who has already been buried is a different matter, and is discussed in Chapter 8.

The last words

مَنْ كَانَ آخِرُ كَلَامِهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ

"Whoever's last words are La ilaha illallah will enter the Garden."

Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih)

The Prophet ﷺ himself prompted his uncle Abu Talib as he was dying: "My uncle, say La ilaha illallah, a word with which I shall plead for you before Allah" (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

He also visited a Jewish boy who was ill and invited him to Islam, and the boy accepted Islam (narrated by al-Bukhari). Talqin is the last act of love.

How to prompt gently

1

Choose a suitable person

Best is a loved family member who is not distrusted, so that he is calm as he listens.

2

Say it beside him

Say “La ilaha illallah” softly and clearly, so that he hears and repeats it.

3

Do not press him

Shafi'i scholars advise against saying “Say it!” again and again to a dying Muslim, so that he is not distressed.

4

Once is enough

If he has said it, do not repeat it, unless he speaks of other things afterwards.

5

If he cannot

Keep saying it softly and pray for him. Allah knows the believing heart.

6

Face the qiblah

Lay him on his right side facing the qiblah, or on his back with his feet towards the qiblah (Shafi'i school).

The full shahadah or La ilaha illallah?

The wording in the hadith is La ilaha illallah. For a dying Muslim, most Shafi'i scholars consider these words sufficient, since they already contain the shahadah and are easier for a weak person to repeat.

Some scholars hold that the full shahadah, "Ash-hadu an la ilaha illallah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah", is more complete. Both are good; what matters is that it is done gently and without burdening him.

-
- For a non-Muslim who wishes to embrace Islam during illness, the full shahadah is taught, as with the Jewish boy in the hadith.
 - Do not force it or make the dying person feel tested. A calm atmosphere helps him remember Allah.
-

Reciting Yasin beside the dying: differing views

The practice of reciting Surah Yasin beside the dying is based on the hadith of Ma'qil ibn Yasar (may Allah be pleased with him), "Recite Yasin over those of you who are dying", narrated by Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah.

The status of this hadith is disputed. Many hadith scholars judge it weak because of weakness in its chain; other scholars accept it. **The Shafi'i school** regards reciting Yasin beside the dying as a recommended practice, and it is widely observed in Malaysia. Scholars who judge the hadith weak do not regard it as a specific sunnah, but reciting the Qur'an in general is still a good deed.

-
- Recite in a low, calm voice, without interrupting the talqin, the supplications or the treatment.
-
- Do not regard it as obligatory, and do not blame a family that does not recite it.
-
- Prompting with La ilaha illallah remains the foremost, because it is sound from the Prophet ﷺ.

The atmosphere beside the dying



Face the qiblah

If it does not trouble the patient or interfere with treatment.



Soft supplication and remembrance

The angels say “Amin” to what is said (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).



Calm, without wailing

Weeping is permitted; wailing and screaming are forbidden.



Clean and comfortable

Moisten his lips if dry, keep him clean and cover his awrah.



Respect the treatment

Follow the doctors' and nurses' instructions about equipment and position.



Hope

Remind him of Allah's mercy so that he thinks well of his Lord.

Do & avoid: beside the dying

Do

- ✓ Say La ilaha illallah softly and clearly
- ✓ Turn him to the qiblah if it causes no trouble
- ✓ Make supplication and remembrance in a low voice
- ✓ Recite the Qur'an calmly
- ✓ Be patient if he cannot respond

Avoid

- ✗ Pressing "Say it!" again and again
- ✗ Idle chatter or quarrelling beside him
- ✗ Talking about the inheritance in front of him
- ✗ Reading his dying words as a bad sign
- ✗ Screaming or wailing loudly

Common questions

Mother could not say the shahadah because she was unconscious. Is that a sign of a bad ending?

No. Many believers die unconscious because of illness or medication. Allah judges faith and deeds over a whole life, not only the tongue's ability at the last moment. Keep praying for her.

He said strange things while dying. What does it mean?

Illness, fever and medication can affect awareness and speech. Do not read it as a sign of anything, and do not recount it to others. Say the words of tawhid gently and pray for him.

May talqin be done by video call?

If the family cannot be present, saying the words of tawhid and praying by telephone is a good deed, so long as it does not interfere with treatment. Talqin in person by someone at his side remains better.

04

CHAPTER 4

After the last breath

The first moments after death: calm, courteous, and promptly putting affairs in order.

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تُمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا^ص فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي
قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ
لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

"It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed verily in this are Signs for those who reflect."

Surah az-Zumar 39:42

Immediately after the soul departs

1

Confirm the death

In hospital, the doctor confirms it. At home, contact a clinic or the relevant authorities.

2

Say *istirja'*

"Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un" (Surah al-Baqarah 2:156).

3

Close the eyes

The Prophet ﷺ closed the eyes of Abu Salamah: when the soul is taken, the sight follows it (Sahih Muslim).

4

Pray for the deceased

Use the Prophet's supplication for Abu Salamah (next page); say only what is good.

5

Tidy the limbs

Tie the jaw with a cloth so the mouth closes, soften the joints, and straighten the arms and legs.

6

Cover the whole body

Cover with a cloth, as the Prophet's ﷺ body was covered with a *hibarah* cloth (al-Bukhari, Muslim).

7

Hasten the arrangements

Inform the heirs and the imam or death-benefit committee (*khairat kematian*) for the washing, shrouding, prayer and burial.

The Prophet's ﷺ supplication for Abu Salamah

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِأَبِي سَلَمَةَ وَارْفَعْ دَرَجَتَهُ فِي الْمَهْدِيِّينَ وَاخْلُفْهُ فِي عَقِبِهِ فِي
الْغَابِرِينَ وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهُ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ اللَّهُمَّ افسَحْ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَنَوِّرْ لَهُ فِيهِ

"O Allah, forgive Abu Salamah, raise his rank among those who are guided, be his successor (with good) among those he has left behind, forgive us and him, O Lord of the worlds. O Allah, make his grave spacious and give him light in it."

Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz); Arabic wording according to Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih)

Replace the name Abu Salamah with the name of the deceased. For a woman, the pronoun "hu" (for a man) is usually changed to "ha".

Before this supplication, he said to the weeping family: "Do not pray for yourselves except for good, for the angels say 'Amin' to what you say."

Hasten, but in good order

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Hasten with the funeral. If he was righteous, you are hastening him to something good; if not, you are removing an evil from your necks” (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Hastening does not mean rushing so that the deceased's rights are neglected. Waiting briefly for the closest heir is permitted so long as it is not long and does not harm the deceased. Where a death requires investigation or a post-mortem, the law must be followed; the funeral arrangements continue once the body is released.

- The deceased's debts should also be settled promptly; the believer's soul is held back by his debt until it is paid (narrated by at-Tirmidhi, sahih).
- The responsibility of handling the deceased is a communal obligation (fard kifayah): if some of the community carry it out, the obligation lapses for the rest.

Administrative matters (general guidance)

- ✓ Obtain confirmation of death from the doctor or hospital
- ✓ Death at home or sudden death: ask the clinic or police station what steps are required
- ✓ Ask the hospital, police station or National Registration Department (JPN) about the document permitting burial
- ✓ Register the death with the National Registration Department (JPN) and obtain the death certificate
- ✓ Contact the imam, death-benefit committee (khairat kematian) or mosque for the washing, shroud, prayer and cemetery
- ✓ Bring the deceased's identity card and that of the heir handling the arrangements
- ✓ Inform employer, bank and related institutions after the burial
- ✓ Procedures differ between states and hospitals; ask your state Islamic religious office, mosque or state mufti's office
- ✓ Matters of property and documents: **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, Chapter 14; **Your Legal Rights**, Chapter 8

Who does what



Closest heir

Makes decisions, contacts the imam, and is present at the washing or prayer if able.



Imam & death-benefit committee

Help with washing, shroud, prayer and burial according to local custom.



Neighbours and friends

Prepare food for the bereaved family, look after small children, receive guests.



One coordinator

One heir is appointed to hold the documents and the list of tasks so that nothing overlaps.



Keeper of debt records

Gathers the records of the deceased's debts and trusts so they are settled quickly.

Do & avoid: at the moment of death

Do

- ✓ Say *istirja'* and pray for the deceased
- ✓ Close the eyes and cover the body with a cloth
- ✓ Inform the heirs and the imam promptly
- ✓ Appoint one coordinator
- ✓ Record the deceased's debts and trusts

Avoid

- ✗ Wailing, screaming or tearing clothes
- ✗ Spreading photographs of the deceased on social media
- ✗ Delaying the arrangements without reason
- ✗ Quarrelling about property beside the body
- ✗ Speaking of the deceased's faults

Common questions

May one kiss the deceased?

Yes, for close relatives (mahram) and the spouse. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) uncovered the face of the Prophet ﷺ after he died, kissed him and wept (narrated by al-Bukhari).

Our child is abroad. May the body be kept waiting?

Waiting briefly for an heir is permitted so long as it is not long and does not harm the deceased. A long delay goes against the command to hasten the funeral. Consult the imam; an heir who cannot arrive in time may pray the funeral prayer at the grave or the absent funeral prayer (Chapter 7).

Must all the children agree before the funeral is arranged?

Handling the deceased does not need the agreement of every heir. Discuss it well, but do not let a difference of opinion delay the deceased's rights.

05

CHAPTER 5

Washing the deceased

The last bath for a human being whom Allah has honoured: gentle, with the awrah covered and secrets kept.

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ...﴾ ٧٠ ﴿﴾

"We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation."

Surah al-Isra' 17:70

The ruling and who is washed

Washing a deceased Muslim is a communal obligation (fard kifayah). Human dignity does not end with death (Surah al-Isra' 17:70); this is why the deceased is washed gently and the awrah protected.

Every deceased Muslim is washed **except the martyr who falls in battle**: the Prophet ﷺ commanded that the martyrs of Uhud be buried in their blood, neither washed nor prayed over (narrated by al-Bukhari). Those called martyrs of the hereafter, such as those who drown or die in childbirth, are washed as usual.

-
- **Miscarriage (Shafi'i school):** if the baby showed signs of life, he is handled like any other deceased. If there were no signs of life but he is already formed as a human being, he is washed, shrouded and buried without the prayer. If he is not yet formed, it is recommended to wrap and bury him.
 - According to the final position of the Shafi'i school, the intention is not obligatory for the one who washes, but it is good to make it.
-

The hadith of Umm 'Atiyyah: guidance for washing

اغْسِلْهَا ثَلَاثًا أَوْ خَمْسًا أَوْ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ - إِنْ رَأَيْتُنْ ذَلِكَ - بِمَاءٍ وَسِدْرٍ
وَأَجْعَلْنَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ كَافُورًا أَوْ شَيْئًا مِنْ كَافُورٍ ... ابْدَأْنَ بِمِائِمِنِهَا وَمَوَاضِعِ
الْوُضُوءِ مِنْهَا

"Wash her three times, five times or more if you see it necessary, with water and lote-tree leaves (sidr), and make the last wash with camphor, or a little camphor... Begin with her right side and the places of her ablution."

Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim; Arabic wording according to Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih)

This was said when the Prophet's ﷺ daughter died. It is the basis for the odd number of washes, the use of lote leaves (or a cleansing agent such as soap), camphor in the final wash, and beginning from the right and the places of ablution.

Umm 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her) also said: "We combed her hair and plaited it in three plaits" (narrated by al-Bukhari).

Who does the washing

Male deceased

- A man, best of all the nearest relative who knows how
- A wife may wash her husband
- If there is no man or wife: see the Shafi'i school below

Female deceased

- A woman, best of all the nearest relative who knows how
- A husband may wash his wife
- An unrelated man does not wash a woman

Small children

- May be washed by a man or a woman
- If he or she has not reached the age that arouses desire
- Parents are encouraged to take part

Steps in washing (guidelines)

1

Prepare the place and materials

A screened place, clean water, soap or lote leaves, camphor, gloves, cloth to cover the awrah.

2

Lay him down and cover the awrah

Lay him on a raised place with the head slightly raised. The awrah is always covered with cloth.

3

Remove impurity

Press the abdomen gently so that waste comes out, then clean with a gloved hand.

4

Perform the ablution

Perform ablution for the deceased as for the living; do not let water go far into the mouth and nose.

5

Wash the head and body

Wash the head and hair with soapy water, then the body: right side first, front and back.

6

Repeat in odd numbers

Three, five or seven times as needed. The final wash is with camphor water.

7

Dry gently

Dry with a towel; comb the hair. The deceased is ready to be shrouded.

Obligatory and recommended in washing

- ✓ **Obligatory:** removing impurity from the body of the deceased
- ✓ **Obligatory:** spreading water over the whole body at least once
- ✓ **Recommended:** an odd number of washes (three, five or more)
- ✓ **Recommended:** performing ablution for the deceased and starting from the right side
- ✓ **Recommended:** using lote leaves or soap, and camphor in the final wash
- ✓ **Recommended:** combing the hair; a woman's hair is plaited in three
- ✓ **Etiquette:** be gentle, as though the deceased can still feel; no idle talk
- ✓ **Etiquette:** keep private anything unseemly seen on the body
- ✓ **Afterwards:** it is recommended that the one who washed takes a bath (Abu Dawud, sahih; Shafi'i school)

Special situations



Died in ihram

Wash with water and lote leaves, without perfume; a man's head is not covered (al-Bukhari, Muslim).



Water would harm the body

If the body would fall apart when washed, as with severe burns, tayammum is performed for the deceased (Shafi'i school).



No one of the same sex

If there is no mahram, spouse or person of the same sex, tayammum is performed for the deceased through a covering layer (Shafi'i school).



Contagious disease

Follow the guidelines of the health and religious authorities. Ask the hospital and the Islamic religious office.



Post-mortem

Follow the law. The deceased is handled as usual after release by the hospital.



Infants and miscarriage

See the ruling on miscarriage on the first page of this chapter.

Do & avoid: washing the deceased

Do

- ✓ Cover the deceased's awrah at all times
- ✓ Wear gloves for the private parts
- ✓ Handle the deceased gently
- ✓ Involve relatives who know how
- ✓ Keep private any fault that is seen

Avoid

- ✗ Many unrelated people in the washing room
- ✗ Pressing or scrubbing the deceased roughly
- ✗ Taking photographs or video
- ✗ Telling afterwards about the condition of the body
- ✗ Delaying the washing without reason

Common questions

I want to wash my own mother but I do not know how. What should I do?

Join the washing team at the mosque or death-benefit committee (khairat kematian); they usually guide family members. Many mosques also run courses on handling the deceased. A relative who knows how has priority in washing.

The deceased has wounds or medical tubes. What then?

The hospital usually removes medical equipment. Wounds are covered and washed carefully. Spread the water as far as you are able; for parts that cannot be washed, follow the guidance of the imam or the Islamic religious office.

Must lote leaves be used?

No. They are recommended as a cleansing agent; soap and other cleansers are sufficient. What is obligatory is removing impurity and spreading water over the whole body.

06

CHAPTER 6

Shrouding the deceased

Simple white cloth: we return to Allah carrying nothing of this world.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فُرَادَىٰ كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَتَرَكْتُمْ مَا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاءَ
ظُهُورِكُمْ ... ﴿٩٤﴾

"And behold! ye come to us bare and alone as We created you for the first time: ye have left behind you all (the favours) which We bestowed on you: We see not with you your intercessors whom ye thought to be partners in your affairs: so now all relations between you have been cut off, and your (pet) fancies have left you in the lurch!"

Surah al-An'am 6:94

The ruling and basics of the shroud

Shrouding the deceased is a communal obligation (fard kifayah). **What is obligatory** is one cloth that covers the whole body. **What is recommended** for a man is three layers of white cloth: the Prophet ﷺ was shrouded in three white cotton sheets from Yemen, without a shirt and without a turban (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The Prophet ﷺ also said: "When one of you shrouds his brother, let him shroud him well" (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)). Well means clean, covering and complete, not expensive.

-
- The cost of the shroud and of handling the deceased is taken from the deceased's estate, before debts and bequests (Shafi'i school).
-
- For a wife, according to the final position of the Shafi'i school, the cost of her shroud is borne by her husband if he is able.
-
- If the deceased has no estate, the cost is borne by whoever was obliged to support him, then by the community or the public treasury (baitulmal).

Why white cloth

الْبَسُوا مِنْ ثِيَابِكُمُ الْبَيَاضَ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ خَيْرِ ثِيَابِكُمْ وَكَفُّوا فِيهَا مَوْتَكُمْ

“Wear white clothes, for they are among the best of your clothes, and shroud your dead in them.”

Jami' at-Tirmidhi and Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih)

White cloth symbolises cleanliness and simplicity, and it makes things easy for everyone: rich and poor are shrouded in the same cloth.

When Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was close to death, he asked to be shrouded in the garment he wore during his illness, after it was washed, saying: “The living have more right to new clothes than the dead” (narrated by al-Bukhari).

The shroud for men, women and children

Men

- Three layers of white cloth wrapping the whole body
- Without a shirt and turban (recommended)
- Minimum: one cloth covering the whole body

Women

- Five pieces (practice of the Shafi'i school)
- Waist wrapper, shirt (qamis) and head covering
- Two layers of cloth wrapping the whole body
- Minimum: one cloth covering the whole body

Children

- A boy as for an adult man
- A girl as for an adult woman
- An infant: one cloth covering the whole body is sufficient

Steps in shrouding (general)

1

Spread the layered cloth

Spread the layers of cloth over the tying cords; the best and widest layer at the bottom.

2

Perfume and camphor

Sprinkle perfume or camphor between the layers, except for a deceased in ihram.

3

Cotton wool on the body

Place perfumed cotton wool on the body openings and the parts that touch the ground in prostration (practice of the Shafi'i school).

4

Lay the deceased down

Lay the deceased gently on the cloth; for a woman, put on the waist wrapper, shirt and head covering.

5

Wrap layer by layer

Fold each layer neatly until the whole body is covered.

6

Tie with cords

Tie so that the cloth does not come open when carried. The ties are loosened when the deceased is laid in the grave.

Material and measurements: in general



White cotton cloth

Clean and not so thin that the body shows through.



Measurements

According to the length and width of the body, with extra for folding and tying.



Perfume and camphor

To perfume; not used for a deceased in ihram.



Ready-made shroud kit

Many mosques and death-benefit committees (khairat kematian) provide ready kits in suitable sizes.



Guidance

Mosque staff usually guide the family. Ask the Islamic religious office about nearby courses.

Do & avoid: shrouding

Do

- ✓ Use clean white cloth that covers
- ✓ Shroud neatly and completely
- ✓ Cover the awrah while putting on the shroud
- ✓ Tie so that it does not open when carried
- ✓ Loosen the ties when the deceased is in the grave

Avoid

- ✗ Excess with expensive or decorated cloth
- ✗ Thin cloth that shows the body
- ✗ Writing verses of the Qur'an on the shroud
- ✗ Putting jewellery on the deceased
- ✗ Putting personal belongings inside the shroud

Common questions

May verses of the Qur'an be written on the shroud?

Shafi'i scholars do not permit it, because Qur'anic verses would be exposed to the impurities of the body. Prayers for the deceased are spoken aloud, not written on cloth.

May the shroud be a colour other than white?

A coloured shroud is still valid if it covers the whole body, but white is preferred on the basis of the hadith. Avoid silk for men.

Who pays for the shroud and the handling of the deceased?

It is taken from the deceased's estate before debts and bequests. For a wife, her husband pays if he is able, according to the final position of the Shafi'i school. Many death-benefit committees (khairat kematian) also help; ask your local parish committee.

07

CHAPTER 7

The funeral prayer: a complete reference

Four takbirs, without bowing or prostration: the community's last intercession and supplication for their brother.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا
بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

﴿١٠﴾

"And those who came after them say: 'Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed. Our Lord! Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful.'"

Surah al-Hashr 59:10

The ruling, merit and conditions

The funeral prayer is a communal obligation (fard kifayah) for every deceased Muslim, except the martyr of battle (Chapter 5). Its reward is great: whoever attends a funeral until the prayer is offered receives one qirat, and until the burial receives two qirats, each like a great mountain (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The Prophet ﷺ said that if a Muslim dies and forty people who do not associate anything with Allah pray over him, Allah accepts their intercession for him; in another narration, one hundred Muslims (both in Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).

-
- **Conditions:** the usual conditions of prayer: purity from minor and major impurity and from filth, covering the awrah, facing the qiblah.
 - **Special conditions:** the deceased has been washed (or had tayammum performed), and for the funeral prayer offered in person, the body is in front of those praying.
 - Women may also offer the funeral prayer, whether in congregation or alone.
-

The pillars of the funeral prayer (Shafi'i school)

- ✓ **1. Intention** to pray over the deceased, a communal obligation
- ✓ **2. Standing** for those able
- ✓ **3. Four takbirs**, including the opening takbir (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim)
- ✓ **4. Reciting al-Fatihah**, best after the first takbir (Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him: "so that you know it is the sunnah", al-Bukhari)
- ✓ **5. Blessings** upon the Prophet ﷺ after the second takbir
- ✓ **6. Supplication for the deceased** after the third takbir
- ✓ **7. The salam** after the fourth takbir
- ✓ **Recommended:** raising the hands at every takbir, quiet recitation, a supplication after the fourth takbir, congregation and many rows

The intention: wording and place

The intention is the purpose in the heart. In the Shafi'i school, saying the intention aloud before the takbir is recommended to help the heart; other schools do not encourage it, and all agree that it is the intention in the heart that is the pillar.

Examples of wording commonly used in Malaysia (said in Malay):

- **Deceased man:** "I intend to pray over this deceased man, four takbirs, a communal obligation, as a follower, for the sake of Allah the Exalted."
- **Deceased woman:** "I intend to pray over this deceased woman, four takbirs, a communal obligation, as a follower, for the sake of Allah the Exalted."
- **Imam:** replace "as a follower" with "as imam".
- **Several deceased:** intend the prayer over the deceased persons in front of him.
- **Absent funeral prayer:** intend the prayer over the absent deceased, so-and-so (say the name).

How to pray: the four takbirs

1

Position of the imam

The imam stands level with the head of a deceased man and the middle of a deceased woman (al-Bukhari, Muslim; Abu Dawud, sahih).

2

Takbir 1 → al-Fatihah

Raise the hands, say the opening takbir, recite the ta'awwudh and al-Fatihah quietly.

3

Takbir 2 → blessings

Say the takbir, then send blessings. The shortest: "Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad."

4

Takbir 3 → supplication for the deceased

Say the takbir, then pray for the deceased. The shortest: "Allahummaghfir lahu."

5

Takbir 4 → short supplication

Say the takbir, then the supplication "Allahumma la tahrimna ajrahu..." (recommended).

6

Salam

Give the salam to the right and to the left (Shafi'i school). There is no bowing, prostration or tashahhud.

Second takbir: blessings

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

"O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim; truly You are Praiseworthy, Glorious. And bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim; truly You are Praiseworthy, Glorious."

Hadith of Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah (may Allah be pleased with him); Arabic wording according to Sunan an-Nasa'i (sahih)

Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad wa 'ala ali Muhammad, kama sallaita 'ala Ibrahim wa ali Ibrahim, innaka hamidun majid. Wa barik 'ala Muhammad wa 'ala ali Muhammad, kama barakta 'ala Ibrahim wa ali Ibrahim, innaka hamidun majid.

This is the Ibrahimiyah blessing, the same as in the final tashahhud. Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet (Surah al-Ahzab 33:56). The shortest suffices: "Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammad."

Third takbir: supplication for the deceased

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ وَعَافِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ وَأَكْرِمْ نُزُلَهُ وَوَسِّعْ مَدْخَلَهُ وَاعْسِلْهُ
بِالْمَاءِ وَالتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ وَنَقِّهِ مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا نَقَّيْتَ الثَّوْبَ الْأَبْيَضَ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ
وَأَبْدِلْهُ دَارًا خَيْرًا مِنْ دَارِهِ وَأَهْلًا خَيْرًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَزَوْجًا خَيْرًا مِنْ زَوْجِهِ
وَأَدْخِلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَنَجِّهِ مِنَ النَّارِ

“O Allah, forgive him, have mercy on him, give him well-being and pardon him. Honour his resting place, widen his entrance, wash him with water, snow and hail, and cleanse him of wrongs as You cleanse a white garment of dirt. Give him in exchange a home better than his home, a family better than his family and a spouse better than his spouse. Admit him to the Garden and save him from the Fire.”

The Prophet's ﷺ supplication in the hadith of 'Awf ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)); Arabic wording according to Sunan an-Nasa'i (sahih)

Allahummaghfir lahu warhamhu wa 'afihi wa'fu 'anhu, wa akrim nuzulahu, wa wassi' mudkhalahu, waghsilhu bil-ma'i wath-thalji wal-barad, wa naqqihi minal-khataya kama naqqaith-thawbal-abyadha minad-danas, wa abdilhu daran khairan min darihi, wa ahlan khairan min ahlihi, wa zawjan khairan min zawjihi, wa adkhillul-jannah, wa najjihi minan-nar.

For a deceased woman, the pronoun “hu” is usually changed to “ha” (for example “Allahummaghfir laha warhamha”). If you have not memorised it, “Allahummaghfir lahu” suffices.

Fourth takbir: short supplication

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تُضِلَّنَا بَعْدَهُ

“O Allah, do not deprive us of his reward, and do not lead us astray after him.”

Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih), part of the Prophet's ﷺ supplication during the funeral prayer

Allahumma la tahrinna ajrahu wa la tudhillana ba'dahu.

Shafi'i fiqh books usually give the wording “Allahumma la tahrinna ajrahu wa la taftinna ba'dahu” (and do not put us to trial after him), and in Malaysia “waghfir lana wa lahu” (forgive us and him) is commonly added. The meanings are close; this supplication after the fourth takbir is recommended, and any good wording suffices.

The opening of the same supplication in this hadith may also be recited after the third takbir: *“Allahummaghfir li hayyina wa mayyitina, wa saghirina wa kabirina, wa dhakarina wa unthana, wa shahidina wa gha'ibina...”* (O Allah, forgive our living and our dead, our young and our old, our males and our females, those present and those absent).

The latecomer, the absent prayer and other situations



Latecomer (masbuq)

Say the takbir and recite al-Fatihah; follow the imam's takbirs. After the imam gives the salam, complete the remaining takbirs and their recitation.



Absent funeral prayer

The Prophet ﷺ prayed over an-Najashi, who died in Abyssinia (al-Bukhari, Muslim). Permitted in the Shafi'i school.



Prayer at the grave

One who missed it may pray at the grave; the Prophet ﷺ did so (al-Bukhari).



Prayer in the mosque

The Prophet ﷺ prayed over Suhail ibn Baida' inside the mosque (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).



Several deceased

They may be prayed over together in one prayer; intend the prayer over all the deceased present.



Not memorised the supplications

The shortest supplication suffices; what matters is that the pillars are fulfilled sincerely.

The absent funeral prayer: differing views

The basis of the absent funeral prayer is the Prophet's ﷺ prayer over King an-Najashi on the day he received news of his death, with four takbirs together with the Companions at the prayer ground (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The Shafi'i school permits the absent funeral prayer for a deceased person who is elsewhere, even if he has already been prayed over where he is, and this is what is practised in Malaysia. **Some scholars** limit it to a deceased whom no one has prayed over in his own place, since there is no clear report that the Prophet ﷺ prayed over every Companion who died elsewhere. **The Hanafi and Maliki schools** do not prescribe it in general.

-
- The practice in Malaysia following the Shafi'i school is valid and has evidence. Respect the differing views.

Do & avoid: the funeral prayer

Do

- ✓ Perform ablution and attend with humility
- ✓ Increase the number of those praying
- ✓ Memorise at least the short supplications
- ✓ The latecomer completes the remaining takbirs
- ✓ Offer the absent prayer or pray at the grave if you missed it

Avoid

- ✗ Praying without ablution
- ✗ Bowing or prostrating out of the habit of other prayers
- ✗ Standing in front of the deceased during the prayer in person
- ✗ Chatting or playing with the phone in the row
- ✗ Leaving before the salam without excuse

Common questions

May women offer the funeral prayer at home before the body is taken to the mosque?

Yes. Women may offer the funeral prayer in congregation among themselves or alone. 'A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) herself prayed over Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) when his body was brought into the mosque (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).

I missed the first and second takbirs. What should I do?

Join with the takbir and recite al-Fatihah. Follow the imam's following takbirs. After the imam gives the salam, complete the remaining takbirs with their recitation before giving the salam.

May the funeral prayer be offered at a time disliked for voluntary prayer?

In the Shafi'i school, the funeral prayer may be offered at any time, including after Fajr and Asr, because it is a prayer with a cause.

08

CHAPTER 8

Carrying and burying the deceased

From the earth we were created, and to it we return: with courtesy, supplication and calm.

﴿مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى﴾ ﴿٥٥﴾

"From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again."

Surah Ta-Ha 20:55

Carrying the deceased to the grave

1

Quick and calm

Carry at a brisk pace, but without shaking the deceased (al-Bukhari, Muslim).

2

In turns

Many people may take turns carrying; it is an honour and brings reward.

3

Silent, remembering in the heart

Speak less; remember death and pray for the deceased.

4

Do not sit first

Those accompanying do not sit until the deceased has been laid down (narrated by al-Bukhari).

5

Vehicle

If it is far, a funeral van is used; the same courtesy is still observed.

The lahd and the shaqq

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The lahd is for us, and the shaqq for others” (Sunan Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah; sahih). As he was dying, Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) instructed: “Make a lahd for me and set up bricks over me as was done for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ” (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana’iz)).

Lahd is a recess in the wall of the grave on the qiblah side, in which the deceased is laid. **Shaqq** is a trench in the middle of the floor of the grave. The lahd is preferred if the soil is firm; if the soil is soft and collapses easily, a shaqq or supporting boards are used, as is common in many cemeteries in Malaysia.

-
- The grave is dug deep enough to prevent odour and animals. The usual measurements are decided by the cemetery manager.
-
- Cemetery rules, including structures and headstones, are set by the religious council and the local authority.

Lowering and burying

1

Lowered gently

By men, best of all relatives; for a woman, her husband or a mahram is preferred.

2

Say the supplication

"Bismillahi wa 'ala millati Rasulillah" (Ibn Majah, sahih; next page).

3

Lay on the right side

Face towards the qiblah; propped so that he does not fall onto his back.

4

Loosen the ties

The ties of the shroud are loosened; the cheek may be brought close to the earth (practice of the Shafi'i school).

5

Close the lahd

Close with boards or bricks so that soil does not fall directly on the deceased.

6

Three handfuls of earth

The Prophet ﷺ scattered earth three times from the head side (Ibn Majah, sahih).

7

Fill in and mark

Fill in and raise it slightly. The Prophet ﷺ placed a stone to mark a grave (Abu Dawud, hasan).

Supplication when laying the deceased down

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَىٰ مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

"In the name of Allah, and upon the religion of the Messenger of Allah."

Sunan Ibn Majah (sahih); in the narration of Abu Dawud: "...wa 'ala sunnati Rasulillah" (upon the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah)

Bismillahi wa 'ala millati Rasulillah.

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet ﷺ recited this supplication when the deceased was placed in the grave. It is said by the one lowering the deceased, and the others may say "Amin".

After burial: istighfar and talqin

اسْتَغْفِرُوا لِأَخِيكُمْ وَسَلُّوا لَهُ الثَّابِتَ فَإِنَّهُ الآنَ يُسْأَلُ

"Ask forgiveness for your brother, and ask steadfastness for him (in answering), for he is now being questioned."

Sunan Abu Dawud (sahih) — the words of the Prophet ﷺ when he finished burying the deceased

What is agreed: standing at the grave for a while, asking forgiveness and steadfastness for the deceased.

Talqin after burial is a matter of difference. Shafi'i scholars, among them Imam an-Nawawi, regard it as recommended while acknowledging that its hadith is weak, relying on the practice of some of the early generations (salaf) and the general encouragement to pray for the deceased; it is widely practised in Malaysia. Some other scholars do not recommend it because there is no sound hadith about it, and consider istighfar and supplication sufficient. Both sides present arguments; avoid blaming one another.

Etiquette in the cemetery



Give the greeting

Greet the people of the graves with the supplication for visiting (Chapter 9).



Do not sit on graves

"Do not sit on graves and do not pray facing them" (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).



Step carefully

Avoid stepping on graves; use the paths provided.



Supplication and istighfar

Fill the time at the grave with supplication, not idle conversation.



A modest grave

Excessive construction over a grave is disliked in the Shafi'i school; follow the rules of waqf land.



Sprinkling water and fronds

See the discussion in the common questions below.

Do & avoid: at the grave

Do

- ✓ Help fill in the grave and scatter earth
- ✓ Seek forgiveness and steadfastness for the deceased
- ✓ Mark the grave with a modest headstone
- ✓ Keep to the paths and keep the area clean
- ✓ Remember death and improve yourself

Avoid

- ✗ Sitting on or stepping on graves
- ✗ Joking or idle talk
- ✗ Wailing or screaming at the graveside
- ✗ Building large structures over the grave
- ✗ Blaming those who do the talqin or those who do not

Common questions

May women accompany the funeral to the grave?

Umm 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "We were forbidden to follow funerals, but it was not made strict upon us" (al-Bukhari, Muslim). The majority of scholars regard it as disliked, not forbidden. Visiting graves by women with proper conduct is permitted according to many scholars. Follow the local practice and the mosque's instructions.

May burial take place at night?

Yes. In the time of the Prophet ﷺ, some deceased were buried at night, and he later prayed over them at the grave (narrated by al-Bukhari). What matters is that the arrangements are carried out properly.

Is sprinkling water and placing a frond or flowers on the grave a sunnah?

Sprinkling water on the grave is recommended in the Shafi'i school. As for the frond, the Prophet ﷺ once planted a date-palm frond on two graves (al-Bukhari); some scholars extend this by analogy to green plants, while others hold that it was specific to him. Scholars differ on this; respect both views.

09

CHAPTER 9

After the burial

Love does not end: supplication, settling what is owed, and visiting graves with courtesy.

وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي
صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

"And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'"

Surah al-Isra' 17:24

Supplication that does not end

The Prophet ﷺ said: “When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him” (Sahih Muslim, Book of Bequests (Kitab al-Wasiyyah)).

The Qur'an teaches a supplication for those who have gone before: “Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith” (Surah al-Hashr 59:10), and a supplication for parents (Surah al-Isra' 17:24; Surah Ibrahim 14:41; Surah Nuh 71:28).

-
- Deeds that reach the deceased, such as charity, the pilgrimage performed on his behalf and the payment of debts, are explained in **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, Chapter 15.
 - Condolences and the etiquette of comforting a grieving family: **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, Chapter 15.
 - The waiting period ('iddah) and mourning (ihdad) of a widow: **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, Chapter 15; a widow's rights in law: **Your Legal Rights**, Chapter 8.
-

The order of claims on the deceased's estate

1

Rights attached to the property

For example, property that has been pledged or zakat not yet paid, are given priority (Shafi'i school).

2

Funeral expenses

Washing, shroud and burial in a modest manner, from the deceased's estate.

3

Debts

Debts to people and debts to Allah such as zakat and vows are settled.

4

Bequests

Carried out up to one third of the remaining estate; to an heir only with the consent of the other heirs.

5

Faraid

The remainder is divided among the heirs according to the faraid (Surah an-Nisa' 4:11–12).

Tahlil, memorial feasts and Qur'an recitation

These practices are widespread in Malaysia, and scholars differ about them.

Qur'an recitation, remembrance and tahlil whose reward is gifted to the deceased: many Shafi'i scholars, especially in the Malay world, permit it with a supplication that Allah convey its reward; some other scholars hold that the reward of recitation does not reach him, and that what certainly reaches him is supplication and charity. See **Finding Peace in the Hereafter**, Chapter 15.

A feast given by the deceased's family: some scholars, including in the Shafi'i school, dislike the deceased's family preparing a meal for the crowd, based on the words of Jarir ibn 'Abdillah (may Allah be pleased with him): "We considered gathering at the home of the deceased's family and preparing food to be a form of wailing" (Sunan Ibn Majah, sahih). Other scholars permit it as charity on behalf of the deceased.

-
- The common ground: do not burden the bereaved family, and do not use the estate before it is divided, especially the share of orphans (Surah an-Nisa' 4:10).

Supplication when visiting graves

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ
لَاحِقُونَ نَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ لَنَا وَلَكُمْ الْعَافِيَةَ

"Peace be upon you, O people of this abode among the believers and Muslims. And we, if Allah wills, will follow you. We ask Allah for well-being for us and for you."

Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz); Arabic wording according to Sunan Ibn Majah (sahih)

*Assalamu 'alaikum ahlad-diyari minal-mu'mininina wal-muslimin, wa inna insha-
Allahu bikum lalahiqun, nas'alullaha lana wa lakumul-'afiyah.*

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I used to forbid you from visiting graves, so (now) visit graves" (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)). Visiting graves reminds one of death and the hereafter.

The first weeks: a checklist for the family

- ✓ Gather the records of debts owed and due; announce them to the family
- ✓ Settle the debts promptly from the deceased's estate
- ✓ Identify any written will and the executor (wasi)
- ✓ Obtain the death certificate and copies of important documents
- ✓ Apply for the faraid certificate at the Syariah Court before dividing the property
- ✓ Do not divide or use the estate before the heirs' rights are determined
- ✓ Make sure the widow and orphans are provided for in housing and maintenance
- ✓ Maintain ties with the deceased's friends and family
- ✓ Continue prayers and charity for the deceased

Do & avoid: after the burial

Do

- ✓ Pray for the deceased continually
- ✓ Settle debts and carry out the will
- ✓ Divide the estate by faraid and the law
- ✓ Visit graves with proper conduct
- ✓ Be gracious about differing views on tahlil

Avoid

- ✗ Burdening the bereaved family with feasts
- ✗ Using orphans' property without right
- ✗ Delaying the settlement of the deceased's debts
- ✗ Quarrelling over property until family ties are cut
- ✗ Blaming families who practise differently

Common questions

How long may the family mourn?

No more than three days, except a wife whose husband has died: four months and ten days (al-Bukhari, Muslim). Grief in the heart has no limit; what is limited is ihdad, which is leaving off adornment.

May the deceased's money be used for a tahlil feast?

After the funeral expenses and debts, the estate belongs to all the heirs, including orphans. It may not be used without the consent of the adult heirs, and the share of orphans may not be taken. It is safer to use your own money as charity.

Who must pay the debts of a person who left no estate?

The heirs are not obliged to pay from their own property, but it is strongly encouraged, because the believer's soul is held back by his debt. The creditor may also forgive it, which is a great good.

10

CHAPTER 10

Why this, why that

Questions often asked about the deceased, with short answers from the evidence.

... فَسْئَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

"...ask of those who possess the Message."

Surah an-Nahl 16:43

Why: at the moment of death

Why must the funeral be hastened?

The Prophet ﷺ said: if he was righteous, you are hastening him to something good; if not, you are removing a burden from your shoulders (al-Bukhari, Muslim). Hastening also preserves the body and eases the family.

Why are the deceased's eyes closed?

The Prophet ﷺ closed the eyes of Abu Salamah and said: "Truly, when the soul is taken, the sight follows it" (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)). It also preserves the deceased's appearance.

Why is the dying person turned towards the qiblah?

The qiblah is the direction of a Muslim's worship. Shafi'i scholars encourage turning the dying towards the qiblah, and the deceased is buried facing the qiblah, following the practice of Muslims since the time of the Prophet ﷺ. If it troubles the patient, he is not forced.

Why: washing and shroud

Why an odd number of washes?

The Prophet ﷺ ordered his daughter to be washed three, five or more times (al-Bukhari, Muslim), and in another narration "in an odd number" is mentioned. He also said that Allah is Witr (One) and loves the odd (al-Bukhari, Muslim).

Why camphor in the last wash?

Because of the Prophet's ﷺ instruction in the hadith of Umm 'Atiyyah. Scholars explain the wisdom: camphor perfumes, cools and helps preserve the body for a while.

Why is the shroud white?

"Wear your white clothes... and shroud your dead in them" (at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud; sahih). White symbolises cleanliness and makes rich and poor alike.

Why: the funeral prayer

Why is the funeral prayer without bowing and prostration?

That is how the Prophet ﷺ taught it: four takbirs with recitations, then the salam (al-Bukhari, Muslim). Scholars explain that its essence is supplication and intercession for the deceased, and its brief form makes it easy for many people to join.

Why does the imam stand at the head of a deceased man and the middle of a deceased woman?

Because that is what the Prophet ﷺ did: he stood at the middle of a woman who died in childbirth (al-Bukhari, Muslim), and Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) stood level with the head of a man and the middle of a woman, and said that this is what the Prophet ﷺ did (Abu Dawud, sahih).

Why is the battle martyr not washed and not prayed over?

The Prophet ﷺ ordered the martyrs of Uhud to be buried in their blood, without washing and without prayer (al-Bukhari). Their blood is a witness to their sacrifice on the Day of Resurrection.

Why: at the grave

Why are women not encouraged to follow the funeral to the grave?

Based on the hadith of Umm 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her): "We were forbidden to follow funerals, but it was not made strict upon us" (al-Bukhari, Muslim). The majority regard it as disliked, not forbidden. Scholars mention the wisdom: sparing women from the crush and extreme grief. This view does not prevent women from visiting graves with proper conduct.

Why a lahd rather than an ordinary pit?

"The lahd is for us, the shaqq for others" (Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi; sahih). The lahd protects the deceased from being struck directly by the earth. If the soil is soft, a shaqq or boards are used.

Why are three handfuls of earth scattered?

The Prophet ﷺ scattered earth on the grave from the head side three times (Ibn Majah, sahih). In this way everyone takes part in burying their brother.

Why: after the burial

Why stand and seek forgiveness after the burial?

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Ask forgiveness for your brother and ask steadfastness for him, for he is now being questioned” (Abu Dawud, sahih).

Why is the grave marked with a headstone?

The Prophet ﷺ placed a stone at the head of the grave of 'Uthman ibn Maz'un (may Allah be pleased with him) and said: “By it I will know the grave of my brother” (Abu Dawud, hasan). A modest headstone suffices.

Why are the deceased's debts settled before the faraid?

The Qur'an says the division of inheritance takes place “after the bequests that were made or debts” (Surah an-Nisa' 4:11–12). The Prophet ﷺ once did not pray over a deceased who had debts and left no estate to settle them, until someone took them on (al-Bukhari).

Why: other questions

Why must we not sit on graves?

“Do not sit on graves and do not pray facing them” (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana’iz)). A Muslim’s honour remains after his death.

Why do practices differ between mosques or states?

Some matters, such as talqin, the recitation of Yasin and the absent funeral prayer, involve differences among respected scholars, and local practice follows the Shafi’i school and state fatwas. Follow the practice of your mosque, and respect those who differ.

Why must we ask rather than guess?

“So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know” (Surah an-Nahl 16:43). For your particular situation, consult your state Islamic religious office, mosque or state mufti’s office.

Do & avoid: when asking and when differing

Do

- ✓ Ask the imam or the religious office when in doubt
- ✓ Put the obligatory before the recommended
- ✓ Follow the Shafi'i practice in your area
- ✓ Respect the differing views of scholars
- ✓ Give priority to the rights of the deceased and the family

Avoid

- ✗ Debating in the deceased's home or at the grave
- ✗ Condemning others' practices as astray
- ✗ Spreading hadith without a clear source
- ✗ Delaying the arrangements because of differences of opinion
- ✗ Imposing views on a grieving family

A. Checklist for the heirs

Tick each step when it is done. The order may differ according to circumstances.

Step	Reference	Done
Prompting the dying, facing the qiblah, supplication beside the dying	Chapter 3	☐
Close the eyes, tie the jaw, cover the body, say <i>istirja'</i>	Chapter 4	☐
Confirmation of death and the document permitting burial	Chapter 4	☐
Contact the imam / death-benefit committee (<i>khairat kematian</i>); arrange the grave plot	Chapter 4	☐
Washing the deceased	Chapter 5	☐
Shrouding the deceased	Chapter 6	☐
Funeral prayer (and inform distant heirs for the absent funeral prayer)	Chapter 7	☐
Burial, supplication and <i>istighfar</i>	Chapter 8	☐
Register the death with the National Registration Department (JPN) and obtain the death certificate	Chapter 4	☐
Gather the debt records; settle them	Chapter 9	☐
Check the will and the executor (<i>wasi</i>)	Chapter 9	☐
Faraid certificate and division of the estate	Chapter 9	☐

B. Short supplications



When struck by calamity

"Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un"
(Surah al-Baqarah 2:156).



Visiting the sick

"As'alullahal-'azim, rabbal-'arshil-'azim, an yashfiyak" — 7 times (Abu Dawud, sahih).



Prompting the dying

"La ilaha illallah" (Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz)).



After the soul departs

"Allahummaghfir li (name of the deceased), warfa' darajatahu fil-mahdiyyin..." (Abu Dawud, sahih).



Laying the deceased in the grave

"Bismillahi wa 'ala millati Rasulillah"
(Ibn Majah, sahih).



Visiting graves

"Assalamu 'alaikum ahlad-diyari minal-mu'minin wal-muslimin..."
(Ibn Majah, sahih).

C. Summary of differing views

Matters on which respected scholars differ. Local practice following the Shafi'i school has evidence; respect the other views.

Matter	Shafi'i school / practice in Malaysia	Other views
Reciting Yasin beside the dying	Recommended	Its hadith is judged weak; not a specific sunnah
Talqin after burial	Recommended (an-Nawawi)	Not recommended; istighfar and supplication suffice
Absent funeral prayer	Permitted for a deceased elsewhere	Only for one not yet prayed over; or not generally prescribed
Combining prayers because of illness	Final position: not permitted	Permitted for illness that causes hardship (some Shafi'i scholars, Hanbali)
Reward of Qur'an recitation for the deceased	Reaches him with supplication (many scholars)	What certainly reaches him: supplication and charity
Feast by the deceased's family	Disliked by some; permitted by others	Do not burden the family; do not use orphans' property
Women following the funeral	Disliked (majority)	Visiting graves with proper conduct is permitted

D. Glossary



Fard kifayah

An obligation on the community; if some carry it out, it lapses for the rest.



Dying (nazak)

The state close to death, when the soul is about to depart.



Talqin

Saying the words of tawhid so that they are repeated; or the reminder read at the grave after burial.



Lahd / shaqq

Lahd: a recess in the grave wall on the qiblah side. Shaqq: a trench in the middle of the grave floor.



Qirat

A measure of reward for attending a funeral; one qirat is like a great mountain.

D. Glossary (continued)



Masbuq

A follower who arrives late and misses the start with the imam.



Absent funeral prayer (salat ghaib)

The funeral prayer over a deceased who is not in front of those praying.



Tayammum

Purification with the dust of the earth in place of ablution or bath when there is an excuse.



Ihdad

Mourning by leaving off adornment for a set period.



Wasi

The person appointed to carry out the deceased's will.



Khilaf

Differences among scholars over a ruling.

CLOSING

Closing

Death is a door that each of us will pass through. When the turn of someone we love comes, we are not left without guidance: the Prophet ﷺ taught how to visit, prompt, wash, shroud, pray over and bury, along with the supplications that accompany them.

Handling the deceased is our last service to a fellow believer, and at the same time a reminder to ourselves. Do it gently, promptly and sincerely. On matters where scholars differ, choose what is practised where you are and be generous towards the others.

May Allah forgive all who have gone before us, and take us in a state of Islam.

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾

"O our Lord! cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness – me, my parents, and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established!"

Surah Ibrahim 14:41

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