2 OUR LORD

Muslim
Funeral Prayer
and Burial Service

ACCEPT OUR PRAYERS

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Dedicated to
the loving memory of
Mr. & Mrs. Sheikh Muhammad Latif
& Mr. Mir Osman Ali
May Allah grant them eternal peace. Ameen.
MUSLIM FUNERAL SERVICE
OR
NAMĀZ-I JANĀZA

Introduction

A faith in a life after death is the last of the basic principles of Islam. The word generally used in the Qur'an to indicate this life is al-ākhirah, meaning, that which comes after. According to the Qur'an, death is not the end of man's life; it only opens the door to another, a higher, form of life (56:60,61). Just as from the small life-germ grows the man, and he does not lose his individuality for all the changes which he undergoes, so from this man is made the higher man, his state being changed, and he himself being made to grow into what he can not conceive at present.

The opening chapter of the Qur'an, entitled the al-Fātiḥah, is not only looked upon as the quintessence of the Book but it is actually the chapter which plays the greatest part in creating a true Muslim mentality; for the Muslim must recite it in the five prayers, over thirty times daily. In this chapter God is spoken of as the "Master of the Day of Requital", and thus the idea that every deed must be requited is brought before the mind of the Muslim continually. This constant repetition of the idea of a requital of deeds, undoubtedly impresses on the mind the reality of a future life, when every deed shall find its full reward. The reason for attaching so much importance to a life after death is clear. The
greater the faith in the good or bad consequences of a deed, the greater is the incentive which urges a man to or withholds him from that deed. Therefore this belief is both the greatest impetus towards good and noble, and the greatest restraint upon evil or irresponsible deeds.

Funeral Service

A religious service is held over the dead body of every Muslim, young or old, even of infants who have lived only for a few minutes or seconds. When a person dies, the body is washed with warm water. Soap or some other disinfectant is used to cleanse it of all dirt and grime. In washing the dead body, the parts of the body which are washed in Wudzū are taken first.

But before the washing is started and the clothes of the deceased are removed, private part is covered with a piece of cloth wide enough to cover the body from navel to knees for men and neck to the knees for women. This is kept till the washing is complete.

Wudzū or ablution of the dead body is performed in the following manner:

1. Private parts are thoroughly washed.
2. Hands are washed upto the wrists.
3. Then the mouth is cleansed with a lump of cotton.
4. Then nostrils are cleansed also with cotton.
5. Then the face is washed from forehead to the chin.
6. Then the right arm and after that left arm is washed upto elbows.
7. Then the head is wiped or washed upto the back of the neck.
8. And lastly the feet are washed upto ankles, first the right foot and then the left.

After ablution, the whole body is thoroughly washed, preferably three times. In a funeral house where proper arrangements for pouring water through a rubber tube is available washing three times is not necessary. Then the whole body is dried up preferably with a new towel.

Then the body is made to wear something like an unsewn open shirt. It is a sheet with a round slit in the centre for the head to pass through and it covers the body from front to the back upto the knees. To further facilitate wearing of the open shirt, cuts are made over the shoulders, in case of a male, and a cut in the middle-front over the bosom, in case of a female. Then the body is wrapped in a big sheet long enough to cover the body from the top of the head down to the end of the feet, but the face remains uncovered. Finally the body is wrapped in a second big sheet, longer than the first one, and the two ends are tied above the head and below the feet. In case the body is placed in a coffin, tying of the two ends is dispensed with.
In the case of a woman there is an addition of a head-covering which should cover from head down to the navel. If she has long hair, then after combing them properly, they are placed in the front over the bosom. After the Janāza prayer is over, it is customary that people attending the funeral service, see the face of the dead body moving in a que and at that time the outer sheet is removed to show the face. But in a sealed coffin provided with a glass through which people can see the face, the outer sheet need not be wrapped so as to cover the face as well.

It is customary that camphor and sandalwood are rubbed over the body which are both disinfectant and provide sweet smell. But modern perfumes can also be used instead.

In the case of martyrs, or persons slain in a battle, the washing and wrapping in white sheet is dispensed with.

The dead body is then placed on a bier or in a coffin, and carried on the shoulders to its last resting place as a mark of respect; though the carrying of the body by any other means is not prohibited. The Holy Prophet stood up when he saw the bier of a Jew pass by. This he did to show respect to the dead, and then enjoined his followers to stand up as a mark of respect when a bier passed by, whether it was that of a Muslim or a non-Muslim.

Following the dead body to the grave and taking part in the Divine service held over it is regarded as a duty which a
Muslim owes to a Muslim, and so is also the visiting of the sick. Technically, taking part in Divine service is called *fard* *kifāya*, which means that it is sufficient that some Muslims should take part in it. Women are not prohibited from attending the Divine service or going with the bier. The service may be held anywhere, in a mosque or in an open space or in a graveyard if sufficient space be available or even in a funeral house where halls for this purpose are available.

**Funeral Prayer**

All those who take part in the service should perform *Wudū* or ablution. The bier is placed in front of the congregation; the *Imām* stands facing the middle of the bier and thus facing the *Qiblah* i.e. towards Makkah. The people form themselves into lines according to the number of those who take part, facing the *Qiblah*. The general practice is to have three rows at least. If the number of people is very small, there is no harm if they form only a single line. The number of rows should always be odd i.e., three, five, seven, nine and so on.

The prayer is offered only in a standing posture. The service starts with the *takbir* (saying *Allāhu Akbar* - Allah is Great) with the pronouncement of which hands are raised to the ears and then placed in the same position as in daily prayer. There are four *takbirs* in all, the final *takbir* being followed by a *Tasleem* as it is done at the end in the ordinary prayer.
First Takbir

After the first takbir the prayer called Thanā (praise to Allah) is recited followed by the opening chapter of the Qur’ān called Al-Fātiḥah are recited.

Thanā

Sub-haa-na-kal laa-hum-ma wa bi-ham-di-kā wa ta-ba- ra-kas mū-ka wa ta-‘aa-la jad-du-kā wa laa i-laa-ha ghay- ruk.

“Glory to Thee, O Allah, and Thine is the praise, and blessed is Thy name, and exalted is Thy majesty, and there is none to be served besides Thee.”

Al-Fātiḥah

A-‘oo-zubil-laa-hi mi-nash shay-taa-nir ra-jeem.

Bis-mil laa-hir rah-maa-nir ra-heem.

Al-ham-du lil-laa-hi rab-bil ‘aa-la-meen.


“Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the day of Requital. Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help.
Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray."

Second Takbir

Then follows a second takbir without raising the hands to the ears, and the following prayer known as as-salaah ‘alan Nabiyy, i.e. salutations to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, is recited:


"O Allah! exalt Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad, as Thou didst exalt, Abraham and the true followers of Abraham; Surely Thou art Praised, Magnified. O Allah bless Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as Thou didst bless Abraham and the true followers of Abraham, for surely Thou art Praised and Magnified."
The third *takbir* is then pronounced in a manner similar to the second *takbir*, and a prayer for the forgiveness of the deceased is addressed to God. Different forms of this prayer are reported as having been offered by the Holy Prophet, and it seems that prayer in any form is permissible.

**Third Takbir**

The following two prayers are the most well-known:
(either could be recited)

\[ \text{Al-laa-hum-magh-fir li-hay-yi-naa wa may-yi-ti-naa} \]
\[ \text{wa shaa-hi-di-naa wa ghaa-i-bi-naa} \]
\[ \text{wa sa-ghee-ri-naa wa ka-bee-ri-naa wa za-ka-ri-naa} \]
\[ \text{wa un-saa-na. al-laa-hum-ma man ah-yay-ta-hoo} \]
Mi'na fa'ahyee 'ala al-Islam
min-naa fa-ah-yi-hee 'a-lal is-laam,
wa man tuwfiqta minaa fatawfa
wa man ta-waf-fay-ta-hoo min-naa fa-ta-waf-fa-hoo
'ala al-ee-maan 'a-lal laa al-luum ma laa tahrimnaa
aj-ra-hoo wa laa taf-ti-naa ba-da-hoo.

"O Allah! grant protection to our living and to our dead
and to those of us who are present and those who are
absent, and to our young and our old folk and to our
males and our females; O Allah! whosoever Thou
grantest to live among us, cause him to live in Islam
(submission) and whosoever of us Thou causest to die,
make him die in faith; O Allah! do not deprive us of his
reward and do not make us fall into a trial after him."

Another prayer runs thus:
اللهُ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ
Al-laa-hum-magh-fir la-hoo war-ham-hu
وَ غَفِّه وَ اطْعِفْ عَنْهُ وَ أَكْرِمْ نَزْلَهُ
wa ‘aa-fi-hee wa‘-fu ‘an-hu wa ak-rim nu-zu-la-hoo
وَ وَسَعْ مُدَخْلَهُ وَ أَغْسِلَهُ
wa was-si mad-kha-la-hoo wa agh-sil-hu
بِالْمَاءِ وَ الْطَّلْجِ وَ الْبَرْدِ وَ نَقِهِ
bil-maa-i was-sal-ji wal-bar-di wa naq-qi-hee
مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا نَقِيتَ الْثُّوبِ
mi-nal kha-taa-yaa ka-maa naq-qay-tas saw-bal
الأَثِيضَ مِنَ الدَّنْسِ
ab-ya-da mi-nad da-na-si.
“O Allah! grant him protection, and have mercy on him, and keep him in good condition, and pardon him, and make his entertainment honourable, and expand his place of entering, and wash him with water and snow and hail and clean him of faults as the white cloth is cleansed of dross.”

Children

In the case of children, the following prayer is added:

Al-laa-hum-maj-‘al-hu la-naa fa-ra-tan-w waj-‘al-hu la-naa zukh-ran-w waj-‘al-hu la-naa shaa-fi-‘an-w wa mu-shaf-fa-‘aa.

“O Allah! make him a cause of recompense for us and make him a treasure for us on the day of Resurrection and an intercessor and the one whose intercession is accepted.”

Except for the takbirs and the Tasleem, the entire service is performed silently. The hands are raised to ears when the first takbir is said but not when the other three takbirs are said. The late comer can join the prayer at any stage by saying Allāhu Akbar.

Fourth Takbir and Tasleem

The prayers for the deceased are followed by a fourth takbir, after which comes the taslim as at the close of prayers i.e. As-sa-laa-mu ‘a-lay-kum wa rah-ma-tul-laah.
“Peace be on you and the mercy of Allah.”

These words are uttered first turning the face to the right and again turning it to the left.

When the service is finished, the bier is taken to the grave and buried. The grave is dug in such a manner that the dead body may be laid in it facing Makkah. It is generally between four and six feet deep, and an oblong excavation is made on one side, wherein the dead body is to be placed. This is called the lahd. The dead body is made to rest in the lahd facing the Qiblah. If the dead body is contained in a coffin, the lahd may be dispensed with. The grave is north-south and so the dead body is laid in the same direction, head pointing towards north.

Lowering the Body

The following words are reported in a hadith as having been uttered by the Holy Prophet when the dead body is lowered in the grave:

Bis-mil laa-hi wa bil-laa-hi wa ‘a-laa sun-na-ti ra-soo-lil laah.

“In the name of Allah and with Allah and in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.”

Last Prayer

The grave is then filled in and a prayer is again offered for the dead one and the people then depart.
Janāza Ghāibāna

A similar religious service may be held in the case of a dead man when the dead body is not present. It is called Janāza ghāibāna.

Patience enjoined

Islam forbids indulgence in intemperate grief for the dead. It requires that all affliction be borne patiently. On hearing of the death of a relative or a friend or of any other affliction, a Muslim is enjoined to say In-naa lil-laa-hi wa in-naa i-lay-hi raa-ji-‘oon: “We are Allah’s and to Him we shall return.” These words are a source of unlimited solace and comfort in bereavement. Hence it is forbidden that one should indulge in regular mourning or ostentatious grief.

When visiting a cemetery, the following words are recommended:


“Peace be on you, O residents of this world from among the faithful and the Muslims, and we will surely join you, if it please Allah. We pray to Allah for security for you and for ourselves.”
A very large number of innovations has grown up about what may be done for the benefit of the dead. There are traditions speaking of the Qur’an being read to the dying person; but there is no mention at all of its being read over the dead body or over the grave. The Holy Prophet is, however, reported as having prayed for the dead when visiting their graves.

The serving of food on the third or tenth or fortieth day to visitors after death is also an innovation. There is no mention of it in any tradition. It is, however, recommended that food should be prepared and sent to the family of the deceased by others. Mourning at the most may be observed for three days and people can visit the house of the deceased to offer their condolences. After three days all members of the family may dress and attend to their work in normal manner. Alms may, however, be given on behalf of the deceased, and doing deeds of charity is the only thing allowed.

\textit{‘Iddah or Waiting Period}

It means a waiting period of four months and ten days. It is usually considered that during this period the wife of the deceased is supposed to confine herself to her home and even to her room. That is absolutely wrong. The purpose of this waiting period is to ascertain existence of pregnancy, if any, and in that case the \textit{‘Iddah} will end at the delivery of the child. So the only restriction on the wife of the deceased is that she is
not allowed to enter into any marital negotiation or contract before the expiry of ‘Iddah. Otherwise there is as such no restriction on her movement as far as her work place duties, or her social and house-hold matters are concerned. To emphasise the point one should note that there is no ‘Iddah for older women or women who have no intention of marrying again.
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