

Funeral Guidance

According to the precept of Islam burial service upon a deceased Muslim should be performed without unnecessary delay.

The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, has said: "*Make haste in the funeral and burial: it is not desirable that the dead body of a Muslim should be held back by the people of the house for long.*"(Abu Da'ud)

Introduction

Upon the demise of a Muslim or a Muslimah, it is a collective responsibility of the family, friends, and/or the area Muslims to arrange, conduct, and participate in the funeral services for the deceased. Few members can fulfill this obligation, otherwise the entire area Muslim community would be held responsible in the sight of Allah, the Exalted. This requirement is termed as Fard Kifaya in Islam. This is a right of a Muslim and this is how a Muslim is honored after the death.

The funeral procedure is simple and described briefly below. There are slight variations in the procedure depending on the four Sunni school of thoughts in Islam. The funeral procedure consists of four major parts: Ghusl (Washing), Kafan (Shroud), Salat-ul Janazah (Funeral Prayer), and Dafan (Burial). In USA washing, shrouding, and transportation is carried out by a funeral home, Janazah prayer by a mosque, and burial by a cemetery. The following five steps are described to facilitate complete funeral service:

1. Arrangement of Kafan (Shroud) and Place of Ghusl (Washing).
2. Ghusl (Washing.)
3. Kafan (Shroud.)
4. Salat-ul Janazah (Funeral Prayer.)
5. Dafan (Burial.)

1. Arrangement of Kafan (Shroud) and Place of Ghusl (Washing).

a. Required Resources

- i. **Manpower:** 2 to 3 brothers or sisters, preferably family members of the deceased.
- ii. **Material / Supplies (Muslim funeral homes normally carry the following items, check with them first before arranging/purchasing):**
 1. Two tables or elevated flat places: 3 feet wide x 6 feet long.
 - a. One, for washing the body with warm/cold water beside it.
 - b. Second, clean & dry for placing and wrapping the body in Kafan (Shroud).
 2. Soap and camphor (optional).
 3. Disposable gloves.

4. Cotton (rolls/balls).
5. Three/four white sheets in addition to Kafan.
6. A pair of large and small towels.
7. A pair of scissors.
8. Kafan (Shroud): White cotton fabric about 4 feet wide x 22 feet long. Start the cut slightly by a scissor and tear the fabric into following pieces:
 - a. **Male Kafan** consists of three pieces while a **female's Kafan** is of five pieces as detailed below:
 - i. Sleeveless Qamees (Shirt): 4 feet x 6 feet.
 - ii. Izar (Body Wrap): 4 feet x 6 feet.
 - iii. Lifafa (Outer Piece): 4 feet x 8 feet.
 - iv. Chest Wrap (only for female): 4 feet x 4 feet.
 - v. Hijab (only for female): 4 feet x 4 feet.
 - vi. Three to six strings 4 Inch x 4 feet.
 - b. Adjust a Child's Kafan according to the size of the child.

b. Preparing the Kafan (Shroud)

- i. Place the pieces on top of the dry table to be ready for wrapping the body after ghusl.
- ii. Spread the Lifafa (Outer piece) first, then the Izar (Body wrap), and then the Qamees (Shirt) goes last (comes on top).
 1. Cut a small slot at the closed end of Qamees and tear the rest to make enough hole for the head of deceased to pass by.
 2. Roll up the front of the Qamees towards the head keeping the hole in the middle.
- iii. For female, Spread the Chest wrap evenly on Qamees after rolling the Qamees and keep the Hijab piece separately.

2. Ghusl (Washing the Deceased Body)

- a. Some rules and recommendations
 - i. Brothers will wash brother's body and sisters will wash sister's body.
 - ii. In case of a need, a spouse can participate in washing spouses' body.
 - iii. A minor's body can be washed by either a brother or a sister.
 - iv. The washer, male or female, must be trustworthy and pious person.
 - v. The washer should be clean preferably with wudu.
 - vi. Those who have washed deceased body should take a bath and change clothes.
- b. Prescribed procedure of washing:
 - i. The washers put on gloves and protective clothe as available.
 - ii. Place the deceased body straight on the washing table and remove clothes / garments. Assure the parts from naval to the knees are covered for privacy and not exposed to anyone.

- iii. If the deceased body is bleeding or leaking, cotton padding should be used to prevent bleeding/leaking to avoid kafan (shroud) from getting wet.
- iv. Massage or gently press the stomach area for excretion and clean it.
- v. Clean and wash the private parts of the body, its face, and its hands up to elbows, wipe the head, and then wash the feet as in wudu with disinfected lukewarm water. Assure full cleaning as much possible.
- vi. Stuff mouth, nose, and ears with cotton to prevent water entering in the body.
- vii. Wash with soap or some other disinfectant the head first, then the right side of the body followed by the left side.
- viii. Washing the dead body once is obligatory and washing it three times is preferred.
- ix. Turn the body on its left and pour camphor mixed water over complete body, preferably three times.
- x. Finally, dry the whole body well for shrouding.

3. Procedure for Wrapping the Body:

a. Male :

- i. Transfer the dry body of deceased onto the back of the Qamees (shirt), on other table.
- ii. Unroll upper part of Qamees (shirt) on the front of the body with head through the hole.
- iii. Wrap the body with Izar (body wrap).
- iv. Wrap the body with the Lifafa (outer wrap).
- v. Bring together the ends of the Lifafa (outer wrap) and tie above the head and below the feet with a strings. Then tie one string in the middle.
- vi. The body is ready for Salat-ul Janazah.

b. Female

- i. Transfer the dry body of deceased onto the back of the Qamees (shirt), on other table.
- ii. Unroll upper part of Qamees (shirt) on the front of the body with head through the hole.
- iii. Fold the Hijab in half and push half under the head.
- iv. Wrap the other half around the head without covering the face.
- v. Spread the end of the Hijab over the chest.
- vi. Wrap the body with Izar (body wrap).
- vii. Wrap the body with the Chest Wrap similarly.
- viii. Tie one string under the shoulders, one in the middle, and one above the knees
- ix. Cover the face with Hijab
- x. Wrap the body with the Lifafa (outer wrap) similarly.

- xi. Bring together the ends of the Lifafa (outer wrap) and tie above the head and below the feet with strings. Then tie one string in the middle.
- xii. The body is now ready for Salat-ul Janazah

4. **Salat-ul Janazah (Funeral Prayer):**

The Salat-ul-Janazah (Funeral Prayer) is a community prayer to Allah (SWT) for the Maghfirah (forgiveness) of the deceased. It is silent and is offered only standing with four takbeerat (Allah O Akbar). Only the imam says a takbeer aloud and others repeat it softly. There is no azan, iqama, ruk'u, or sujud. An odd number of lines/rows, three or more, are formed. Deceased's body is placed in front of the imam in such a way that the right side of the body or the head faces the Qibla. In case of a male, the imam stands in line with the head of the body, and moves to the middle if the deceased is a female.

5. **Dafan (Burial):**

Every effort should be made to bury the body in a Muslim cemetery or in a cemetery that has a designated Muslim section.

- **Grave:**

The grave should be opened in such a way that when the body is placed in it its right side faces the Qibla. It should be large enough to accommodate the body with or without a casket. Typically, for an adult, the opening is 3½ ft W x 7 ft L x 6 ft D. The excavation of the grave is mostly done by the cemetery workers and in accordance with their set procedure in USA. However, family can request minor changes in their procedures.

- **Lowering the Body in the Grave:**

Slowly and gently lower the body in the grave. Untie the strings. Turn the face toward the Qibla. Raise the head slightly by placing a stone or hard soil under the head / body. Replace the cover. Pour three handfuls (using both hands) of dirt / soil on the cover. First the family members and then the community pour dirt / soil. Then the cemetery workers fill the grave and shape it as desired by the family.

In concluding, one person should stand by the head of the grave and recite dua. The funeral is now complete. May Allah (SWT) accept our services and supplications and make the journey easy for the deceased in the grave. Ameen!

* Dr. M. Riaz Khan and Saleem Khan, Islamic Council of Massachusetts provided the outline of the article that is modified by NM Shah of Alim Foundation Inc.