

Funerals in Islam

Allah says in the Quran: Whatever is on it (the earth) will perish (26-55).

So glory to the living God who will never perish. Death will enter every house, because death is an inevitable fact. Thus each Muslim who believes in Allah and the last day has to prepare for the day of departure and to meet his end. For indeed this worldly life is nothing but a transit station leading to eternity, either to the everlasting pleasure of Allah, to eternal life in Paradise or to the scorching Hell fire. O Allah, we don't ask you to reverse the decree but to shower us with your gentleness in passing it. O Allah! If you keep us alive, keep us with faith, and if you cause us to die, make us die in Islam.

We deal with this topic, death, although it is both painful and fearful, but it is true and we have to believe in it as the truth; this is part of our deep faith in Allah the Almighty and so we have to be ready to leave on a day when eyesights will be dazzled due to terror, a day when neither wealth nor children will avail anyone, except those who go to Allah with a sound heart.

Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. clarified to us that one of the rights of every Muslim, which is also a duty of all Muslims, is to follow funerals. Let us start from the moment when death approaches a person whose soul is about to leave his body. It is the duty of attending Muslims to encourage the dying one to say La ilaha illa Allah, as our beloved Messenger p.b.u.h. teaches us

in the following tradition: On the authority of Abu Said al Khudry may Allah be pleased with him, who said: the Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h. said: teach your dying ones La ilaha illa Allah. Reported by Muslim.

"La ilaha illa Allah", Glory be to the Most High. This statement leads to Paradise as it is the slogan of Islam; upon it we live and upon it we die, and with it we meet Allah, Lord of the Worlds. This is why Muath ibn Jabal may Allah be pleased with him said: The Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h. said: He whose last words are La ilaha illa Allah will enter Paradise.

Dear Muslims:

If you attend a dying Muslim who is one of your relatives or friends then say only what is good and appeal to Allah to support you in your misfortune and to compensate you with what is better, because angels confirm what you say with amen meaning Oh Allah please accept. All of us will return to Allah one day. So the dying ones are only our predecessors and we shall follow them.

The Prophet p.b.u.h guides us to receive the occasion of death with good faith and to say the best words. This is clear in the following tradition reported by Ummu Salamah R.A.A. who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h saying: Every slave (of Allah) who suffers from a misfortune and says we belong to Allah, and unto Him we shall return. Oh Allah! Reward me in my misfortune and compensate me with what is better than it, Allah will surely reward and protect him and will grant him better than it. So, when

Abu Salamah died I said what the Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h commanded me to say, and thus Allah compensated me with one better than him i.e. The Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h.

As for him who loses a dear one and thanks Allah and says, "We belong to Allah, and unto Him we will return" and seeks the reward of Allah and asks Allah to grant him patience and firmness then Allah will grant him Paradise as a reward for his patience. Abu Musa R.A.A., confirms this. Reporting the Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h who said: When the son or daughter of a slave of God dies Allah says to His angels: You have taken the life of my slave's child. They will say: yes. He will say: You have restored the fruit of his heart, they will say: Yes. He will ask: what did my slave say? They will say: He praised you and said, "Unto Allah we belong, and unto Him we will return". Then Allah will say: Establish for my slave a house in Paradise and call it the house of praise. Reported by Al-Tirmithy.

As for performing the funeral prayer on the dead Muslim and escorting him to his grave, all this becomes a bound duty on other Muslims; for here is an abundant reward from Allah SWT. This is clear from the tradition reported by Abu Hurairah RAA who quoted the Prophet p.b.u.h who said: whoever witnesses a funeral until the prayer is performed for it, he will have a carat worth of reward, and he who witnesses it until it is buried will have the equivalent of two carats. When he was asked about the carats the Prophet p.b.u.h

said: like the two great mountains. Agreed upon.

In another similar tradition, also reported by Abu Hurairah, the Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h. said: whoever follows a funeral of a Muslim in good faith seeking God's reward and stays with it until it is prayed upon and is buried, will return with a reward of two carats, each carat is equal to the mount of Uhud, and he who prays upon it and returns before it is buried will return with one carat. Reported by Al Bukhari.

As for the method of the funeral prayer it is recommended to perform it by a large number of righteous worshippers who do not associate anything with Allah, so that they may intercede for their deceased brother or sister or son, thus Allah would accept it from them and grant their intercession. This is confirmed by the following tradition of the Messenger of Allah who said: No Muslim person dies and forty people who do not associate any partner with Allah attend his funeral but Allah will grant them intercession for him.

The funeral prayer has a number of conditions and pillars, which should be applied and never neglected or abandoned. For many among us do not know how to perform funeral prayer, which we shall briefly mention in the following: First: Everyone performing it should have ablution like any other prayer; Second: It is a congregational prayer without any bowing or prostration. Every one should say four times Allahu Akbar after the imam. After the first one he should recite the Opening chapter of the Quran. After the

second "Takbir" he should recite the second half of Ibrahim's prayer (always said toward the end of each prayer). After the third Takbir he should pray for the dead one as well as Muslims the following supplication or what is similar to it. This is reported from the Prophet p.b.u.h. quoted by Abu Abdirahman ibn 'Awf ibn Malek R.A.A. who said: The Messenger of Allah p.b.u.h. prayed on a funeral and I memorized from his supplication the following: O Allah. Forgive him and have mercy on him. Relieve him of all evils and pardon him, honor his status, and expand his entrance, wash him with water, ice, and hail, and purify him of sins as You purify a white garment of filth. Grant him an abode better than his abode, a family better than his family, a spouse better than his spouse, and let him enter Paradise and protect him from the torment of the grave and the punishment of Hell. "Hearing this. I wished I had been that dead person", said the narrator. Reported by Muslim.

The worshipper then makes the forth Takbir and prays for all Muslims. One of the best supplications is the following: O Allah. Don't deprive us of his reward, don't exercise any trial on us after him, and forgive us and him. There are many traditions in this context but it is recommended to make a lengthy prayer for the dead one seeking God's forgiveness for him as well as for all dead and alive Muslims.

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