

# Adab of Janāzah

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Our attitude when attending the janāzah ṣalāh and burial of a fellow Muslim is quite shameful. There is frivolity and noise and chatter only moments before burying the deceased, which is the first stage of the long journey of the Hereafter. Within earshot of bereaved family members, many of us can be found cheerfully catching up with old friends and acquaintances. All talk is worldly talk and there is little, if any, respect shown to the deceased or their relatives. During the actual burial, a handful of people are engaged in it while the rest are busy passing time. Some even go to the extent of chatting on their mobile phones. Can we not even give the deceased an average level of respect by standing quietly while their last act on the surface of the earth is carried out?

We need to stop and think about the true significance of what the janāzah and burial entail. For example, if somebody we knew was summoned to appear before a court of law, we would remain concerned and anxious about the outcome of the proceedings. In the case of the deceased, they are about to face questioning by the angels of the grave, and their eternal future is to be decided, yet amazingly we behave as if we have no concern whatsoever.

When attending a janāzah and burial, we should remind ourselves of two important points in order to correct our behaviour:

1. We should remind ourselves of our own death. When it is certain that one day we too will face death, we should reflect on how much we have done to prepare for it. A janāzah is an ideal time to imagine ourselves in the place of the deceased. One day it will be our turn to be placed in front of the rows at the janāzah ṣalāh; to be lifted on the shoulders of those people among whom, until recently, we used to walk and talk; to be lowered into the dark emptiness of the grave; and to have the earth slowly cover us up. How apt is the saying:

يَا صَاحِبِي لَا تَغْتَرَّرَ بِتَنَعُّمٍ ، فَالْعُمُرُ يَنْفَدُ وَ النَّعِيمُ يَزُولُ  
إِذَا حَمَلْتَ إِلَى الْقُبُورِ جَنَازَةً ، فَاعْلَمْ بِأَنَّكَ بَعْدَهَا مَحْمُولٌ

*O my friend, don't be fooled by luxuries; For life will end and luxuries will disappear.  
When you carry the deceased to the grave; Know that after him it will be you who will be carried.*<sup>1</sup>

This remembrance of death will also help us to curb unlawful desires. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَ هَازِمِ اللَّذَاتِ يَغْنِي الْمَوْتَ

*Remember frequently the destroyer of pleasures i.e. death.*<sup>1</sup>

How pitiful is our condition that instead of taking advantage of this opportunity, we cannot let go of our preoccupation with the world. Even when seeing our fellow Muslim leaving the world, we do not take it as a warning and a wakeup call from Allāh ﷻ.

2. We should pray for the deceased and recite a portion of the Glorious Qur'ān or some other form of dhikrullāh and send its reward for the deceased. The very purpose of the janāzah ṣalāh we have gathered for is to pray for the deceased. He no longer has the ability to do any good deeds to benefit himself, so we should send for him as much reward as we possibly can. We all know our own condition: just how often do we remember our friends and family after they have been buried? Can we not spend the time before the ṣalāh and during the burial reciting some portion of the Glorious Qur'ān or reciting لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ as much as possible? My late father would always tell me to remember those who have passed away, through du'ā and ṭiṣāluth-thawāb. 'In return,' he would say, 'Allāh ﷻ will create people who will remember you when you die.'

After bearing these two points in mind, we should also try to ensure that all aspects of the janāzah and burial are in accordance with the sunnah of our Beloved Rasūl ﷺ. The following are a number of areas in which deficiencies are generally found in our society and where attention is needed:

- a. Even after the grave is filled and the burial is over, it is preferable to remain for a short while at the graveside praying for the forgiveness of the deceased and praying that they be given steadfastness during the questioning in the grave.<sup>1</sup> This is also a sign of concern and respect for our brother/sister who has departed and is comforting for the bereaved. Unfortunately, we tend to become preoccupied with eating arrangements etc., which is evident from an announcement regarding food being made as soon as the du'ā is over.
- b. Many people think that only the kalimah shahādah should be recited when lifting or carrying the deceased. This is incorrect; any dhikr will suffice.
- c. Many people make no attempt to throw soil into the grave and do not see it as a virtuous act. In many places machinery and the services of non-Muslims are used to fill up the grave.
- d. While placing the deceased in the grave, the following should be recited:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

*In the Name of Allāh and upon the way of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.*<sup>1</sup>

- e. The body of the deceased should be placed in the grave in such a way that the whole body faces the qiblah; it is not sufficient to place the body on its back and just turn the face towards the qiblah.
- f. It is impermissible for a non-maḥram male to look at the face of a deceased female and vice-versa. Similarly, while placing the body of a female in the grave, a sheet should be used to act as a screen.<sup>1</sup> This is only required, however, when there is no coffin. If there is a coffin then no sheet is needed.
- g. Many people cover the coffin with a sheet with Āyatul Kursī written on it. This is disrespectful to the verse of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, at the time of burial the sheet is wrapped up and thrown on the ground without care and respect.
- h. Many people do not do ta'ziyah properly and simply feel it sufficient to greet the bereaved straight after the burial. The custom of doing mu'ānaqah (embracing) with the bereaved before and after the janāzah is also groundless.
- i. Often, a close relative of the deceased holds on to the janāzah and walks with it all the way to the graveside. The Fuqahā have written that the sunnah method of carrying the janāzah is to walk ten paces supporting the front right-hand corner of the janāzah, then ten paces supporting the back right-hand corner, then the front left, and then the back left in the same way.<sup>1</sup>

My friends, let us try to correct our behaviour and earn the great rewards associated with attending a janāzah. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

مَنْ اتَّبَعَ جَنَازَةَ مُسْلِمٍ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا وَكَانَ مَعَهُ حَتَّى يُصَلِّيَ عَلَيْهَا وَيُفْرَغَ مِنْ دَفْنِهَا فَإِنَّهُ يَرْجِعُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ بِقِيرَاتَيْنِ كُلُّ قِيرَاطٍ مِثْلُ أُحُدٍ وَمَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ رَجَعَ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُدْفَنَ فَإِنَّهُ يَرْجِعُ بِقِيرَاطٍ

*Whoever follows the janāzah of a Muslim, with īmān and the hope of reward, and remains with it until the ṣalāh is performed and the deceased is buried, he returns with two qīrāt of reward, one qīrāt being equal to (Mount) Uḥud. And whoever performs the janāzah ṣalāh and then returns before the burial, he returns with one qīrāt (of reward).*<sup>1</sup>

When news of a janāzah reaches us, we should remember that it is a right of the deceased that we attend, and when we do attend, we should ensure that the occasion is fruitful for the deceased and for ourselves by remembering the advices outlined above. May Allāh ﷻ grant us all the ability to remember death frequently and, when our time comes, may He grant us a good death. Āmīn.

<sup>1</sup> Rūḥul-Bayān, part 5, p.218

<sup>2</sup> Sunanul-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth: 2462

<sup>3</sup> Raddul-Muḥtār 'alad-Durril-Mukhtār, part 2, p.237

<sup>4</sup> Sunan Ibn Mājah, Ḥadīth: 1532

<sup>5</sup> Raddul-Muḥtār 'alad-Durril-Mukhtār, part 2, p.236

<sup>6</sup> Raddul-Muḥtār 'alad-Durril-Mukhtār, part 2, p.231

<sup>7</sup> Ṣaḥīḥul-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 47

