

Ta'ziyah

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Islām is a way of life, which guides and assists mankind through every situation. Even for dealing with moments of grief, Allāh ﷻ has conveyed instructions through His Nabī ﷺ. There can be few instances that cause greater grief than the death of a loved one. Following the instructions of Rasūlullāh ﷺ will help lessen the grief and sorrow of the bereaved immensely, and make those who console them worthy of great reward. This is done through the sunnah of ta'ziyah.

What is Ta'ziyah?

Ta'ziyah means to console, comfort and give solace to someone who is suffering grief due to a death. The Islamic concept of ta'ziyah at the time of someone's death is one of consoling the bereaved with such words or actions that will remove or lessen their grief. The aim of ta'ziyah is to give strength to the broken-hearted and give them hope at a time when their hope may be waning; it is to lighten the load of the bereaved. To say or do things that increase or revive their grief is not ta'ziyah, it is taklīf (giving hardship to others).

Virtues of Ta'ziyah

There are great rewards for ta'ziyah. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

مَنْ عَزَى أَخَاهُ الْمُؤْمِنَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ، كَسَاهُ اللَّهُ خَلْلَ الْكَرَامَةِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

A Muslim who consoles his brother will be clothed with garments of honour by Allāh on the Day of Qiyāmah. ¹

مَنْ عَزَى ثَكْلَى كُوسِي بُرْدًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ

Whoever consoles a bereaved mother will be dressed with a (special) garment in Paradise. ²

مَنْ عَزَى مُصَابًا فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ

Whoever consoles an afflicted person will receive the same reward (as the sufferer will upon his patience). ³

When a Muslim is afflicted with a difficulty of any sort, be it the loss of a loved one or any other hardship, and he bears it patiently, then Allāh ﷻ rewards him for his patience. From this Ḥadīth we learn that one who consoles an afflicted person receives the same reward as the afflicted person receives for his patience. The patience exercised by a bereaved person, and consequently the reward, is obviously great; therefore, the reward of someone who consoles the bereaved through the sunnah of ta'ziyah is also great.

How to Carry Out Ta'ziyah

There are no set words for ta'ziyah. One should visit the bereaved and console them. Ta'ziyah can also be performed, out of necessity, over the phone or by letter. During ta'ziyah, keep the following points in mind:

- Encourage patience, reminding the bereaved of the virtues of patience.
- Make du'ā for the bereaved, asking Allāh ﷻ to grant them reward in return for their loss. A du'ā that can be read is:

أَعْظَمَ اللَّهُ أَجْرَكَ، وَأَحْسَنَ عَزَائِكَ، وَعَفَرَ لِمَيِّتِكَ

May Allāh increase your reward, and grant you good consolation, and forgive your deceased. ⁴

In cases where the deceased is a minor i.e. not yet bāligh, the last part of the du'ā (وَعَفَرَ لِمَيِّتِكَ) is omitted, as the question of forgiveness for a minor does not arise. In such cases, the parents should also be reminded that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said that when a child passes away in infancy, he/she will intercede for his/her parents before Allāh ﷻ and take them into Jannah. ⁵

- Make du'ā for the deceased, as this will bring happiness to the hearts of the bereaved.
- Mention the positive aspects of the situation for both the bereaved and the deceased. Sayyidunā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says that at the time of his father's death, a bedouin was able to console him as no one else had been able to. The bedouin recited a few couplets, the last of which was:

خَيْرٌ مِّنَ الْعَبَّاسِ أَجْرُكَ بَعْدَهُ، وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنكَ لِلْعَبَّاسِ

Better for you than 'Abbās is the reward you will receive after him; and Allāh is better for 'Abbās than you. ⁶

Through these words the grieving son was reminded that although he had suffered a loss, the gain brought by patience is superior to the loss. He was then reminded that his father may have lost the company of his son, but he had gone to meet his Creator. What is better for Sayyidunā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, being with his son or being with Allāh ﷻ?

- The meaning of the verse 'Indeed, to Allāh ﷻ we belong, and indeed, to Him we will return' should be explained. We all belong to Allāh ﷻ, so when He takes one of us away, we should not complain. And although we become separated from a loved one, it is only a temporary separation, for we will soon be reuniting with them. At the demise of his grandson, Rasūlullāh ﷺ consoled his daughter with the words:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ، وَلَهُ مَا أُعْطِيَ، وَكُلُّ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى، فَلْتَصْبِرْ، وَلْتَحْتَسِبْ

Indeed, whatever Allāh takes is His, and whatever He gives is His, and everything has an appointed time. So be patient and seek rewards. ⁷

For the deceased, it is simply a case of their appointed time having arrived; as for those left behind, it is a time to be patient and acquire great reward as a result.

- Inform the bereaved that you intend to do some optional good deeds and send the reward to the deceased. This will please and comfort the bereaved.
- When going for ta'ziyah do not enquire into the details of the illness or circumstances that preceded the death.

The Time for Ta'ziyah

According to the Dīn, there are only three days for ta'ziyah, i.e. it should only be carried out within the first three days after the death has occurred. There is an exception for people who live far away or are out of the country or sick, and so are unable to attend within the first three days, they may come for ta'ziyah even after three days. The intent of the Dīn is to allow people to forget their grief, not have them sitting around nursing it indefinitely. For this reason, it is sunnah for an individual to go only once for ta'ziyah. ⁸ The Fuqahā have written that as soon as the burial has been completed, the bereaved should get back into the normal routine of their lives. One benefit of this is that it prevents the prolonged coming and going of visitors, which only serves to keep the grief alive when it should be forgotten. ⁹ It is sunnah for neighbours or friends to prepare food for the immediate family of the deceased during their moment of grief. This should be done for one day, though it is also permissible to do so for the full three days. The objective is to lighten the burden of the bereaved and ensure that food is available for them at a time when they may be too distraught to keep track of mealtimes. ¹⁰

Sending Reward for the Deceased

Another important point to remember during the time of bereavement is ṭṣāluth-thawāb. This means to perform an optional good deed, e.g. tilāwah of the Qur'ān, tasbīh, ṣadaqah or nafl ṣalāh, and then to ask Allāh ﷻ to convey its reward to the deceased. When hearing of someone's demise, along with ta'ziyah, one's time is best spent in ṭṣāluth-thawāb. Ṣadaqah (giving in charity) is the best way of doing ṭṣāluth-thawāb, one reason being that by spending on something that will be of lasting benefit to people, the deceased will earn a perpetual reward. ¹¹ These points cover the sunnah method of ta'ziyah. It is a simple and effective way of helping those suffering loss. Any other practices or customs that are carried out in the name of ta'ziyah are baseless.

¹ Ma'rifatus-Sunan wal-Āthār, Ḥadīth: 7758

² Sunanut-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth: 1097

³ Sunanut-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth: 1094

⁴ Mirqātul-Mafātīh, part 4, p.193

⁵ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth: 2724

⁶ Iḥyā 'Ulūmid-Dīn, part 4, p.131

⁷ Ṣaḥīḥul-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 1294

⁸ Raddul-Muḥtār 'alad-Durril-Mukhtār, part 2, p.241

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Mirqātul-Mafātīh, part 4, p.194

¹¹ Mirqātul-Mafātīh, part 1, p.412

