

A Simple Guide:

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Preparing for the Final Journey

Based on the Classical Hanafi Fiqh Textbook

Nûr ul Idâh by Imâm Shurunbulâli

What to do when a person is dying?

The method of ghusl

The method of shrouding

Procedures for men, women and children

Checklist for preparing the body

The janâzah

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‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said, “I was one among ten people who came into the presence of the Prophet ﷺ. One Ansāri stood up and asked the Prophet ﷺ: *‘Who is the most intelligent and careful person?’* The Prophet ﷺ replied: *‘Those people who remember death most and prepare for it most. These are people who have excelled in the nobility of this world and the honour of the Hereafter.’*” (Tabarāni)

Excessive remembrance of death is a means of:

1. Restraining hopes
2. Preparing for death
3. Non-attachment towards the world (which is the actual objective)
4. To prevent amassing unused wealth
5. Helps to gather a treasure for the Hereafter
6. A thing which encourages repentance from sin, and
7. A prevention from oppressing others and not fulfilling their rights

(In ‘Remembrance of Death’: *Shaykh* Muhammad Zakariyyah Khandelwi رحمته الله)

We pray this brief guide will serve as a reminder to readers to prepare for death. May Allāh accept this effort and benefit all. Āmīn.

What to do When a Person is Dying?

It is a Sunnah to turn the dying person on their right side. However it is allowed to keep them on their back but incline their head towards the Qibla if possible. If it will cause the dying any inconvenience, they should not be moved.

It is recommended to encourage the dying to repent to Allāh, in saying ‘I seek forgiveness from Allāh, the One and Only’, etc.

There are numerous du’ās that can be recited by the dying person, such as:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَالْحِقْنِي بِالرَّفِيقِ الْأَعْلَى

“O Allāh, forgive me, and have mercy on me and join me with the companions who are in the highest stage.”

[Bukhāri, Muslim, Tirmidhi]

Do du’ā that Allāh eases the suffering and agonies of death for them. When the soul is departing, recite to them:

اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَ سَكَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ

“O Allāh, assist me through the difficulties of death.”

[Tirmidhi]

Most importantly, recite the Kalimah aloud without asking the dying to repeat it. Do not pressure the individual to recite the Kalimah as there is a fear that they may refuse or say something inappropriate in this difficult time.

**“Whoever’s last words were ‘Lā ilāha illallāh’ ‘There is no God but Allāh’,
he will enter Paradise.”**

[Abi Shaybah]

Avoid talking about any worldly matters; if the individual begins to talk about them, keep reciting the Kalimah. It would be better to remove any contact lenses etc at this stage.

Moisten the dying persons face and lips with water, as the thirst at the time of death is great.

Recite Sûrah Yâ-Sîn in their presence **“Recite over your dying Yâ-Sîn.”** [An-Nasâi]

Some scholars have also encouraged reciting Sûrah ar-Ra’d, **“...for verily, it makes easy the exiting of the soul.”** [Imām Suyûti Mandhûr]

Some Signs of Death Approaching

- Breathing becomes rapid
- The pulse becomes irregular
- The nose becomes transverse (bent)
- The forehead subsides (caves in)
- The feet become limp

Note that these signs are not applicable to all

After Death

It is disliked to recite the Qur'ān near the deceased until the ghusl is done. Closing their eyes gently, one should recite the Sunnah du'ā:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَ إِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
اللَّهُمَّ أَجِرْنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَ اخْلُفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا

"Verily to Allāh we belong and to Him shall we return.

O Allāh, reward me in my difficulty and grant me something better in exchange."

Close the mouth of the deceased and tie a wide bandage around the head and under the jaw. Loosen the joints by bending them, then straightening them. Also, flex the fingers in order to smooth the process of the washing and shrouding later. Both feet should also be tied together with a similar cloth.

It is recommended to place something heavy on the stomach of the deceased, to prevent bloating.

Remove any contact lenses and jewellery, including watches, earrings, studs, bracelets, necklaces, and in particular rings, as the body will swell up. Check the body to ensure nothing is left, including needles, catheters, etc.

The hands should be placed on the sides (not on the chest, as is the case with Ahl-ul-Kitāb).

Cover the body completely with a clean sheet. It is recommended at this point, to announce the death to the people in order to increase the amount of people who will perform the funeral prayer.

Make haste to prepare the deceased for burial.

Checklist for Washing and Shrouding the Body

Please note: This list is extensive, and it is preferred to have these items to hand in advance to ensure the washing process runs smoothly. However, the ghusl can take place without some of these if they are unavailable

- Two pieces of thicker material of any dark colour to cover the body (1 to be used during the wash, and 1 left dry to use at the end)
- Two large clean towels for drying the body and one smaller for drying the hair. It is better if the towels are not new, as previously used towels absorb moisture better
- Lukewarm water
- Cotton wool, cotton buds
- Shampoo, soap and liquid soap in a dispenser
- Sponge for washing, if available
- Nail polish remover, if required
- Two pairs of scissors
- Ground lotus leaves, frankincense (Lobān), camphor or 'Itr (non-alcoholic perfume)
- Bin bags
- Masking tape/sellotape
- Protective clothing such as aprons, gloves, stronger household gloves (2 or 3 pairs)
- Plastic jug and large bucket
- Preferably flip flop slippers
- Kafan material (explained in the Kafan section)

Some Points on Ghusl

- The closest relatives have the most right to bathe the deceased, and this is the last *khidmah* (service) they can do for this individual. The person who bathes the body of the deceased is as cleansed of sins as a new born child; and the person who dresses the deceased in a shroud will be dressed with the apparel of Paradise by Allāh Almighty (*Shaykh 'Abdul Hai 'Arīfi - Death and Inheritance: The Islamic Way*)
- Giving ghusl is a *Fard Kifāyah* (communal obligation) on the Muslims. If nobody comes forward to give the ghusl, it is a sin on all
- It is recommended that at least 4-6 people be present to help bathe, shroud and carry the body
- It is the responsibility of the man in preparing his deceased wife for the burial and shroud, even if he is in financial difficulty
- Whoever dies and has no money, then the cost of shrouding is to be paid by those who were legally required to assist him before he died (such as family); if there is no such person, the responsibility is on the treasury (*Bait ul Māl* i.e. the wealth of the Muslims); if there is no treasury, then the responsibility lies with the people who are able to donate funds and assist
- Only females should wash the bodies of females, and males should wash males
- It is permitted for either a man or a woman to give ghusl to a girl or boy who have not yet reached puberty
- The wife is permitted to wash her deceased husband - if the need arises - for the reason that she remains his wife for another 4 months and 10 days (*'iddah period*)
- However, the man is not allowed to wash his wife except by *tayammum* in cases of necessity, as the relationship between them has now ceased
- The body should be handled very gently throughout the washing and shrouding process

- It is disliked (*makrûh*) for a woman who is menstruating or in a state of *nifās* (period after child-birth), or for a man/woman who are in the state of ritual impurity to perform the ghusl
- It is better that the persons washing the body be in a state of wudhû'
- It is highly recommended that a person who has washed the body of a deceased person should take a bath themselves after it, however it is not compulsory

The Method of Ghusl

Washers should wear gloves and aprons for the sake of cleanliness and so not to touch the *satr* of the deceased directly.

Fumigate the washing platform with incense an odd number of times (3, 5 or 7) and then place the deceased on it.

During the wash, it is permissible to place the body in two positions:

Position 1: The feet of the deceased face the Qiblah

Position 2: The right side of the deceased faces towards the Qiblah

The nails, beard and hair of the deceased are not to be cut, trimmed or combed. Untie the hair of the deceased woman, and remove any makeup or nail polish.

The private areas should be covered (*satr* of a male: navel to knees / *satr* of a female: above the chest to the ankles) and all washing should be done without exposing or looking at them.

The clothes of the deceased should be removed with scissors and the stomach gently massaged allowing excrement that is near to be expelled out of the body.

With gloves on, wash the private areas and then clean them with cotton wool. The washer should change their gloves once this is done.



The nostrils, ears and mouth should be closed with cotton wool to prevent any water entering the body during ghusl, as wudhû' should be given without rinsing the mouth or nostrils. However, if the deceased is in a state of impurity (such as after sexual intercourse, menstruation, or postnatal bleeding), their nostrils and mouth should gently be rinsed or made wet with cotton wool.

Note: Children who have not reached puberty do not require wudhû'

After wudhû', wash the hair and beard, and dry with a towel. If soaps are not available, plain water is sufficient.

Tilt the deceased to their left side (as it is Sunnah to wash the right side first), and wash until the water reaches the part that touches the bedside. Water should be poured from head to toe and washed with soap if available. Place the body on the right, and repeat the wash. For the last rinse, camphor mixed with water should be applied on the body.

Incline the deceased in a sitting posture, where they are leaning slightly forward, and gently massage the stomach to clear away any remaining substances inside the body. Whatever exits the body should be washed away, but the washing process does not need to be repeated if substances exit the body at a later point.

'Ali ibn Abi Tālib  is reported to have said that when he bathed the Prophet , he began to trace out from him, which one traces from the deceased, but he did not find it. Thereupon he said, 'May my father be a ransom for you, you are the most pure, you were clean and pure in life, and you are clean and pure after demise.' [Ibn Mājah]

Cotton wool should be removed from the mouth, ears and nose. Dry the deceased with a cloth after removing the first dark sheet and replace it with the dry dark sheet.

Note: If a female dies amongst men, they should purify her by tayammum, and the person who conducts this should wrap a cloth around his hand (and not touch her body directly). The same applies if a man dies amongst women. If the one who died in either case is a mahram, then they can give the deceased tayammum without their hand covered.

The Method of Shrouding

It is obligatory to enshroud the deceased. Three bands should be put to a side to tie the kafan closed. (Sometimes, on large bodies, more ties may be necessary at the elbows and upper thigh. Generally speaking, three are adequate.)

Tie 1: *Above head*

Tie 2: *Middle chest*

Tie 3: *Below feet*

Depending on the height and weight of the deceased, the sizes for the following vary. Cut material according to need.

Sheet 1: *Qamees (shirt)* – extends from the base of the neck to the feet. Fold it in half and an opening should be cut to allow it to be put on as a shirt. It should not be hemmed, nor have sleeves or pockets

Sheet 2: *Izaar (inner shroud)* – its length is from the head to the feet with an allowance to tie knots at the end

Sheet 3: Lifaafah (outer wrapper) – its length should be longer than the body, extending beyond the head and feet with which the entire body can be wrapped, with an allowance made for the tying of the knots at both ends

Note: In cases where no shroud is available, it is sufficient to wrap the body in a single garment or whatever is available. However if all shrouds are available, it is Sunnah to use the specified shrouds above.

It is not allowed to include a turban with the shrouds.

The shrouds (whether for a man or woman) should be scented with aroma an odd number of times before the deceased is placed in them.

Procedure for Men: After Ghusl

First position the Lifaafah on the bench, then the Izaar, and lastly the Qamees. The portion of the Qamees which will cover the top of the body should be folded up and left on the head side. Set the deceased down on the three sheets, and then cover the top of the body with the folded part of the Qamees. Remove the cloths used to cover the Satr.

Rub 'Itr or Hanût (a balm made of lotus leaves) on the beard and head of the deceased.

The places that touch the floor in prostration (forehead, nose, hands, knees and feet) should be rubbed with camphor.

Fold the Izaar from the left side over the Qamees, followed by the right side (so that the right part will be over the left). Thereafter, fold the Lifaafah in a similar manner. Fasten the ends of the Lifaafah above the head, feet, and around the middle with the 3 ties.

Extra Procedures for Women:

For a woman, add the two additional cloths:

Sheet 4: *Sinaband (chest wrapper)* – extends from the chest area to the umbilicus, though it has also been said that it is to extend from the chest to the knees

Sheet 5: *Khimaar (veil)* - to cover the head, face, and her hair which will be placed over her chest

Note: If the Sinaband or Khimaar cannot be found, it is sufficient to use just the Qamees, Izaar and Lifaafah

Spread the Lifaafah, Sinaband, Izaar and Qamees in the same manner specified for males.

Note: The Sinaband may also be placed between the Izaar and Qamees, or over the Lifaafah

The places that touch the floor in prostration (forehead, nose, hands, knees and feet) should be rubbed with camphor.

Her hair should be divided into two folds, and placed over the right and left breast over the Qamees.

Cover the head and hair with the Khimaar without tying or knotting it.

Fold the Izaar, left flap first then the right, over the Qamees and Khimaar.

Close the Sinaband in the same manner, and finally the Lifaafah.

Fasten the ends of the Lifaafah above the head, feet, and around the middle with the 3 ties.

Note: The face of the deceased should not be kept visible after the kafan has been put on

The **still born child** should be washed, given a name, placed in a cloth and be buried in the graveyard. The same rule applies in a **miscarriage** if some limbs of the child are visible. If the limbs are not formed, no name will be given and there will be no ghusl. The child should be wrapped in a piece of cloth and buried. There is no Janāzah Salāh for a still born child.

If a **pilgrim** dies, they are to be washed in the same manner as a non-pilgrim, but should be shrouded in their ihrām. However, all restrictions of ihrām will still apply, so perfume for example cannot be applied.

For **martyrs**, no ghusl is performed and no shroud is required. They are to be buried in the state that they died.

Janāzah

The Janāzah (funeral) of the deceased should take place without delay.

It is disliked to transport the body over long distances, or to different countries, and is disliked to delay the Janāzah Salāh in order to wait for more people to join the congregation. Many Muslims are unaware of the procedures involved in the practice of ‘embalming’ that is done to the dead body before they are allowed to transport it to another country, which involves filling the body with impure substances.

For a deceased adult, the body should be placed on a bier and carried on the shoulders by 4 men (or more if required). The head should be towards the front. If the deceased is a child, the body should be carried in the arms individually by 4 different people.

All who carry the body should walk at a quick pace, but being careful so as not to

jolt the body.

Those who accompany the Janāzah should stay behind, and not in front of the body, and not sit before the body is lowered to the ground. The audible remembrance of Allāh is disliked when carrying the coffin and this includes audible recitation of the Qur'ān.

Mahrams or close family should lower the deceased into the grave. After placing the body into the grave, it is Sunnah to turn it onto its right side to face the Qiblah.

All present should participate in closing the grave with at least 3 handfuls of soil.

It is recommended that participants remain at the side of the grave and continue to recite the Qur'ān or make du'ā that Allāh keeps the deceased steadfast at the time of questioning by Munkar and Nakīr.

Gravestones

A common practice amongst Muslims is to build something strong over the grave after the burial, and this is disliked as the grave is a place of decay. Similarly, beautification of graves is prohibited.

“The Prophet ﷺ forbade the graves to be plastered, or used as sitting places or a building to be built over them.” [Muslim]

There is no harm in writing on or marking the grave so that it can be visited and respected, and serve as a reminder to others.

The custom of placing flowers, shrubs etc, is a *bid'ah* (innovation) and is not established from the Shari'ah.

It is not permissible to cover the graves with shingle, stones, pebbles etc.

The maintenance of the graves is a good act though not an obligation.

Consoling and Visiting the Family

It is recommended for men and women to offer their condolences to the family of the deceased.

Only Mahram women of the deceased male are permitted to see his face (wife, mother, sister, grandmother, paternal and maternal aunt, granddaughter, niece, daughter-in-law etc).

Similarly, only Mahram men of the deceased male are permitted to see her face (husband, father, brother, grandfather, paternal and maternal uncle, grandson, nephew, son-in-law, etc).

Kissing the deceased is permitted as is weeping quietly. Wailing is prohibited in Islām.

The Prophet ﷺ said, **“If the woman who wails does not repent before she dies, she will be raised on the Day of Resurrection wearing pants of tar and a chemise of scabs.”** [Muslim]

Wailing refers to raising the voice loudly when weeping and making un-Islamic remarks about the death of the individual such as questioning why this person has died. We should have firm belief in death and that a person will die when Allāh Wills.

One should only speak good things about the deceased.

It is only permissible to mourn the death of a person for 3 days, except the widow for whom it is 4 months and 10 days.

It is disliked to gather in the home of the deceased and remain there for days whilst people offer condolences. Rather, after the burial has been complete, people should go about their own matters allowing the family of the deceased to resume their duties.

The Muslim community should ensure that the family of the deceased are given food and support without expecting the burden of entertaining guests to be on the family.

What Helps the Deceased?

Any outstanding debts of the deceased should be paid as soon as possible.

“The soul of a believer is held tied to its debt until it is paid on his behalf.”

[Ahmad]

“If one of you voluntarily gives charity and makes it on behalf of his parents, then they will receive the reward and his reward will not be deducted.”

(Tabarāni fil Awsat)

This can be applied to all those who have died, regardless of whether the act is prayer, fasting, hajj, charity (sadaqa), recitation of the Qur’ān, invocations and all other righteous acts. All of these will reach the deceased and benefit them as mentioned by many ‘Ulamā’.

It is recommended to give in Sadaqah Jāriyah (on-going charity) on behalf of the deceased, which will continue benefiting them and oneself in the long term.

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