

Janāzah Procession & Burying the Deceased

The Janāzah Procession

1. Proceeding with the Funeral Bier Quickly

a) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Hasten with the funeral bier (janāzah): if he were righteous, then you have brought him close to goodness (khayr); and if he were unrighteous, you have unburdened from your necks an evil” (Reported by al-Bukhāri & Muslim).

b) The Prophet ﷺ hastened forward (so quickly that) the heels of our sandals (ni‘āl) were hacked to pieces on the day Sa‘d b. Mu‘ādh died” (Reported by al-Bukhāri in his book *Tārikh*).

Legal Opinions:

i) The majority of scholars opine that hastening with the *janāzah* is *sunna* (‘recommended’).

ii) Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064 CE) of the Zāhirite school of law held that it is *wājib* (‘obligatory’).

Preferred View: That of Ibn Ḥazm, since the Prophetic command to hasten with the *janāzah* (see a above) is expressed in the imperative form of the verb, indicating an obligation. Allah knows best.

2. Following the Janāzah

To do so is *sunnah*. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whosoever follow the *janāzah* of a Muslim out of faith (*īmān*) and hope for reward (*iḥtisāban*). . . .” (Reported by al-Bukhāri).

3. Carrying of the Janāzah: Duty of Men not Women

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (may Allah be pleased with him!) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When the funeral is ready and the men carry it on their shoulders, if the deceased was righteous, he will say, ‘Present me (hurriedly); and if a person were to hear it, he would fall down unconscious” (Reported by al-Bukhāri).

4. Permissibility of Proceeding Ahead of Janāzah or to Its Side

The Prophet ﷺ said, “The rider’s position is behind the *janāzah* and the walker’s position is a short distance in front of it or to the right or left of it” (Reported by al-Ḥākim).

5. Traveling with the Janāzah

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was with a *janāzah*, when a riding animal was brought to him and he refused to mount it. (After the procession) another was brought to him and he mounted it this time. When asked about it, he said, “Truly the angels of Allah walk (with the *janāzah*), so I didn’t want to ride while they were walking. But when they left, I rode” (Reported by Abū Dawūd). This *ḥadīth* indicates that it is ‘permissible’ (*mubāḥ*) to use riding animals in the wake of the *janāzah* and, by extension, modern means of transportation like cars, etc.

6. Some Heretical Innovations (bida‘) in Following the Janāzah

a) Abū Mūsā, a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, stipulated the following instructions before he died, “Do not follow me (i.e. my *janāzah*) with a torch.” He was asked, “Where you hear something concerning this?” He replied, “From the Messenger of Allah ﷺ” (Reported by Ibn Mājah et al).

b) The Prophet ﷺ said, “He is not of us who strikes his cheeks, rips his garments, and invokes pagan invocations” (Reported by al-Bukhāri & Muslim).

c) Qays b. ‘Ibād (may Allah be pleased with him!) narrated that Companions of the Prophet ﷺ detested raising of voices during the funeral processions (*janā’iz*; sing. *janāzah*) (Reported by al-Bayhaqi).

7. Etiquette of Following the Janāzah

Imam an-Nawawi wrote, “Know that the correct way and the preferred choice and what the ‘righteous predecessors’ (*salaf*)—may Allah be pleased with them!—were upon is silence during the funeral procession. No voices should be raised loudly either with recitation of the Qur’an or ‘remembrance of Allah’ (*dhikr Allah*), and so forth. The wisdom of this is obvious: it is more conducive to his (the follower of funeral bier) reflection and more collected to his thinking on matters connected with the *janāzah*. It is what is required on the occasion, which is the truth and does not change in spite of those who contradict it!”

8. Can Women Follow the Janāzah?

Umm ‘Atīya (may Allah be pleased with her!) narrated, “We (i.e. women) were forbidden to follow the *janāzah* but not strictly prohibited” (Reported by al-Bukhāri).

The majority of Muslim scholars opine that it is ‘detestable’ (*makrūh*) for women to follow the *janāzah* but not unlawful (*ḥarām*). According to Imam an-Nawawi, “Imam ash-Shāfi‘ī and his followers held that it is ‘recommended’ (*sunna*) for men to follow the *janāzah* until its burial, which is the consensus of scholarly

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opinion based on authentic *āḥādīth* reported on the matter. For women, they held that it is ‘detestable’ (*makrūh*) for them to follow the *janāzah* but not ‘unlawful’ (*ḥarām*). That is the correct view.”

9. Standing Up for Janāzah when It passes by

‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with him!) used to order us to stand for the *janāzah*, then he used to sit after it went by, and then he would order us to sit (Reported by Aḥmad et tal).

Burial of the Deceased

1. Its Obligation

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Dig (the grave), deepen (it), and do it well” (Reported by an-Nasā’i & at-Tirmidhi).

2. Placing the Deceased in the laḥd (‘niche’) or shaqq (‘ditch’)

The Prophet said, “The laḥd is for us and the shaqq is for other than us” (Reported by an-Nasā’i, Ibn Mājah & at-Tirmidhi).

The *laḥd* is a niche, the size of the corpse, carved from the side of the grave facing the *Qiblah* (the direction of the Ka‘bah). In this way, the dugout earth is returned to the grave but not on top of the corpse.

The *shaqq* is a ditch in which the deceased is placed, and the earth piled up on top of it. Traditionally, the *shaqq* is carried out here in the Muslim community because of state law restrictions and other considerations.

3. Supplication (du‘ā) at the Time of Burial

The Prophet ﷺ used to say when a deceased was being buried: *bismillāhi wa ‘alā millati rasūli-l lāh* (“In the Name of Allah and in accordance with the creed of the Messenger of Allah”) (Reported by al-Hākim & Ḥibbān).

It is also narrated that the Prophet ﷺ, after the burial of a deceased, used to stand over it and say, “Seek forgiveness for your brother and ask blessings for him, for he is now being questioned” (Reported by Abū Dawūd).

4. How to Place the Deceased in the Grave

The deceased is entered from the end of the grave. It is narrated that Abdullah b. Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him!) placed the deceased from the foot of the grave and said, “This is from the Sunnah” (Reported by Abū Dawūd).

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him!) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ [when he died] was taken head foremost into the gave (Reported by ash-Shāfi‘ī in his *Musnad*).

And the deceased is placed on his or her right side, facing the *Qiblah*, as agreed upon by scholars. When al-Barā‘u b. Ma‘rūr (may Allah be pleased with him!) left instructions that he be made to face the *Qiblah* upon his death-bed, the Prophet ﷺ said (concerning that), “He has fulfilled the Sunnah (cited in Ibn Hajar’s *at-Talkīṣ*).

5. Throwing Dirt on the Grave of the Deceased

Abū Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him!) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ prayed over a *janāzah* and then he came over to the grave of the deceased and threw dirt over its head

three times (Reported by Ibn Mājah & Abū Dawūd).

It is also permissible to sprinkle water over the grave (see the next entry).

6. Some Innovations (bida‘) Connected with Burial

a) Elevation of the Graves:

It is narrated that ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with him!) was sent by the Prophet ﷺ to erase every idol and flatten every raised grave (Reported by Muslim & others).

Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him!) narrated that the Prophet ﷺ prohibited plastering over a grave, sitting on it and building over it (Reported by Muslim). At-Tirmidhi’s narration, “and inscribe over it and to be walked on.”

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sprinkled water over the grave of his son Ibrahim, placed gravel on it, raising it one inch (Reported by al-Bayhaqi in *mursal* form, but al-Bazzār authenticated the *ḥadīth*).

b) Burying in Coffins, Caskets, Wooden Boxes, etc:

According to Shaykh al-Albāni, “As far as the question of burial is concerned, where there is a fear that the body may have decayed to the point of disintegration, such that it cannot be lifted out of the coffin, then we say necessity dictates how far you go. If the condition of the corpse is known to the doctors, knowing the exact time the body was placed in the coffin and knowing how long it takes for the body to decay, and it is thought that it has most likely disintegrated, then it can be buried as is (in the coffin) by way of keeping away from the greater evil with the smaller evil. However, if it is thought that the body is likely to be virtually intact, for example, if the body was put into ice,

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as is done medically, and transported by air on a half-hour journey from another country, then it must be taken out of the coffin and buried. That is because burial of the body in the coffin is not allowed, for that is the practice of the Christians and it is not allowed to imitate them in anything including burial.”

7. Burying at Night

Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him!) narrated that someone died who the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to visit. It was during the night and the person was buried. When morning came and they informed him ﷺ, he ﷺ said, “Why didn’t you inform me? (i.e. so that I could have attended)” (Reported by al-Bukhāri).