



CULTURE VS ISLAM

BIRTH & DEATH

EXPOSING COMMON
CULTURAL PRACTICES
WITHIN ISLAM

UTRUJJ COURSE

Delivered by Sh. Haytham Tamim

Transcribed by Ayesha Khan



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, the final prophet of Allah, and upon his family, his companions, and his followers.

Culture vs Islam

Understanding which cultural practices are in line with Islam.

Delivered by Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Transcribed by Ayesha Khan

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Why do we need to think about culture?

Why do we need this course? When we read the verses of the Quran, we come across many which talk about culture - to the extent that people have rejected divine truth because it goes against their culture. In Surah Baqarah, it says:

When some people are asked to follow the revelations of God, they say, "We would rather follow what our fathers have followed," even though their fathers had no understanding and could not find the true guidance. (2:170)

When we are not familiar with certain practices, we struggle to accept them and we are hesitant to adopt them. Whereas when we are familiar with them, we are more likely to adopt them and repeat them.

Over time, practices change, societies change and customs change, which is why Allah Almighty sent messengers to bring people back on track, back to the straight path. When they went off track, Allah Almighty would send guidance to clarify what was acceptable and what was not.

In every era, every century and every country we have cultural issues, and it troubles me a lot when these cultural traditions and customs conflict with our Islamic principles. As time goes on these practices become entrenched. Worse still, these practices become synonymous with Islam, they acquire an Islamic wrapper and become so prevalent that it is hard to tell culture apart from Islam. Certain customs become so familiar and accepted as Islamic that we find it hard to distinguish where Islam ends and culture starts.

Over the last 25 years I have accumulated a catalogue of common issues which affect people from different backgrounds – the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and others, and I decided to collate it and deliver a course on this, to separate the two.

The fact we have cultural issues is not a modern problem, cultural issues existed during the prophetic time itself. When the Prophet (peace be on him) was sent with the Quran and the shariah, he did not abolish the existing culture and create a new one. It is wrong to believe this was the case. To give an example, the Prophet (peace be on him) was born in an Arab community and they dressed a certain way. The Prophet (peace be on him) dressed as they dressed; he did not invent a new way of dressing. He followed the culture, but he introduced guidelines on how to dress more appropriately from the shariah. In the sunnah, on different occasions he gave specific instructions on the length or colour or fabric that could be worn, but by and large, he accepted their dress and dressed in the same way.

Cultural issues go beyond dress, they cover our transactions, our beliefs, our collective worship, and how we assess marriage proposals (*rishtas*), conduct weddings and marital relationships themselves etc. What is Islamic and what is not?

Are culture and Islam incompatible?

Islam and culture are not incompatible. Islam is a set of values that can embrace any culture which operates within those values. Wherever there is no conflict between a cultural practice and Islamic principles, Islam is unfettered by that culture and accommodates that culture. Any practice is Islamic as long as it doesn't cross boundaries set by Islam. There is no such thing as pure Islam or 'Islamic culture'. Every culture is Islamic; as long as a practice is not haram, it is okay, whether it is Arab, Asian or English.

There are plenty of cultural issues in our lives, but I will focus on two of the three topics I covered in our course in this booklet, how society deals with arriving and departing from this world, so we will examine common practices dealing with:

- Birth
- Death

Each topic itself could fill a course but we will look at the main dos and don'ts. I will provide the definitions and then look at the common issues.

Before we look at these, we will discuss the theory behind deciding what is acceptable within a culture and what is not. Let's start by asking what is culture?

Defining Urf

How do you define culture?

In Arabic, when you open the dictionary the word 'urf is comprised of three letters ع ر ف , which come from the root origin 'arafa (to know), and ma'rifa which is knowledge. They both also mean to be familiar with something. You might also come across the synonym of 'urf which is 'aadah or 'adaat, the culture of a people or nation (though there are some exceptions), but basically it means what people are familiar with.

How does the Quran define culture?

In the Quran, when you search under 'urf it is not found as 'urf, but ma'roof' and bil ma'roof'. Allah Almighty says in Surah Al A'raf:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾

Forgive people, command what is good, and turn away from the ignorant. (7:199)

Allah Almighty tells people to refer to the 'urf. We need to be aware that there are different types of 'urf and that we do not accept them all, so we need to learn how to distinguish between the two.

What references are there to culture in the Sunnah?

In the sunnah we also have references to 'urf. The word *ma'roof* is familiar to us. One day Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and said her husband was miserly. He did not spend on her and her children, so what could she do? The Prophet (peace be on him) said she could take money from him, without telling him, whatever was *bil maroof* (sufficient) for her and her children.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that Hind bint `Utba said:

'O Allah's Messenger! Abu Sufyan is a miser and he does not give me what is sufficient for me and my children. Can I take of his property without his knowledge?'

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

'Take what is sufficient for you and your children, and the amount should be just and reasonable.' (Bukhari)

Though this may resonate with many women, of course the best scenario is to have mutual respect and a good relationship between husband and wife, rather than going behind his back to take from him or check his iPhone.

What examples of 'urf are there in the Quran?

Further examples from the Quran are:

﴿ وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَاءً أَنْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَنْتُمْ لِلَّهِ وَالْعَالَمِينَ أَنْ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴾

Mothers will breast feed their babies for two years if the fathers want them to complete this term. The father has to pay them reasonable expenses... (2:233)

﴿ وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ مَتَّعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

The divorced women have the right to receive **reasonable** provisions. It is an obligation for the pious. (2:241)

وَابْتَلُوا لِيَنَّمَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنَّ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَن يَكْبُرُوا وَمَن كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٦﴾

Before returning orphan's property to them, make sure that they have reached maturity. Do not consume their property wastefully until such a time. The rich (guardian) should not take any of his ward's property. However, a poor (guardian) may use a **reasonable** portion. When you return their property, make sure you have witnesses. God is perfect in taking accounts. (4:6)

Can 'Urf be used as a source of law?

'Urf is a huge and serious topic. It is a topic that is studied in Masters and PhDs in all languages. In the 11th century hijri, Ibn 'Abideen, a scholar in the Hanafi school, wrote a *risalah* (paper) on 'urf that is about 100 pages long, addressing different matters related to 'urf.

From the Quran and Sunnah, scholars have accordingly derived 'urf as a reference, and consider it as one of the sources of shariah.

The sources of shariah are divided into two: agreed upon sources and disagreed upon sources. The agreed sources of ruling are Quran, Sunnah, *ijma* ' (consensus) and *qiyas* (logical deduction). These are the agreed sources of ruling. We have around ten disagreed sources, among these is 'urf, which not all four schools accept as a source of ruling. The Maliki school considers 'urf as an essential source of shariah and the Hanafi school accepts it as one of the sources. The Shafi'i and Hanbali schools consider 'urf only as a source in certain cases. Hence, it is mainly the Maliki and Hanafi schools which refer to 'urf.

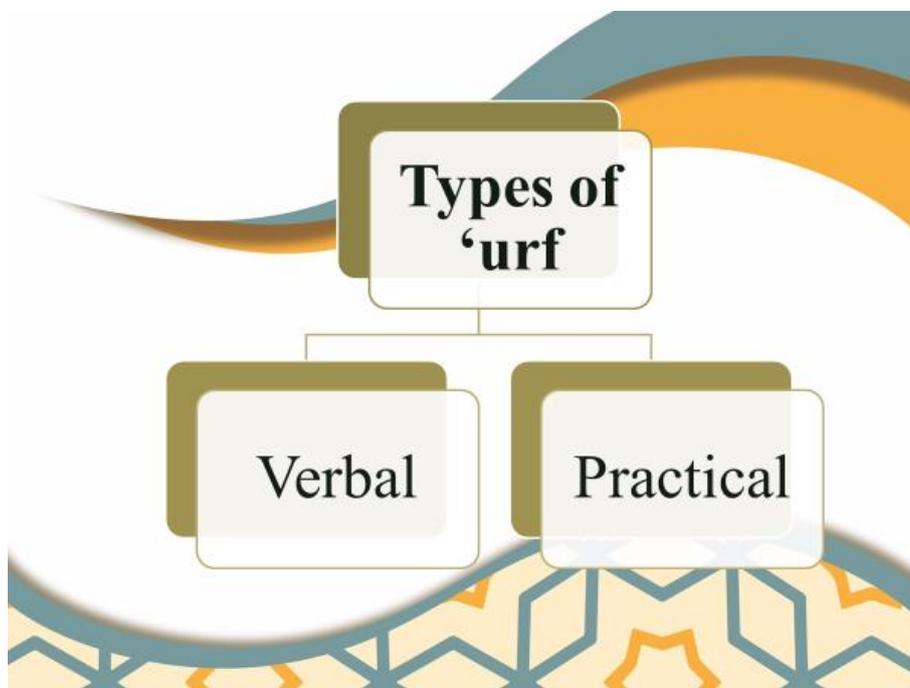
Can 'urf be used as a source of ruling if there is no ayah about an issue which is common in the community and does not contradict the Quran and Sunnah?

The Hanafi and Maliki schools say, yes. The Maliki refer to it as '*Amalu ahli Madinah* - the Practice of the People of Madinah. In the book *Al Muwatta*, in which Imam Malik classified hadith and *fiqh* issues, there are plenty of issues referring to the practice of the people of Madinah. This is because the people of Madinah lived with the Prophet (peace be on him) and saw how he lived. And he saw them doing certain things and he accepted their ways, thereby showing tacit approval – this is known as *iqrar*.

'Urf is unwritten law – it is what people are familiar with, prevalent and common. It has been established by commonality and popularity. Bear in mind that popularity does not always make a concept accepted or rejected. Populism is the flavour of the times these days. Yet popularity does

not make something or someone acceptable. We need only look to our modern leaders whose popularity is no reflection of their intelligence or integrity! It is clear therefore that being popular does not make something acceptable in shariah.

What is the difference between verbal *'urf* and practical *'urf*?



Verbal *'urf*

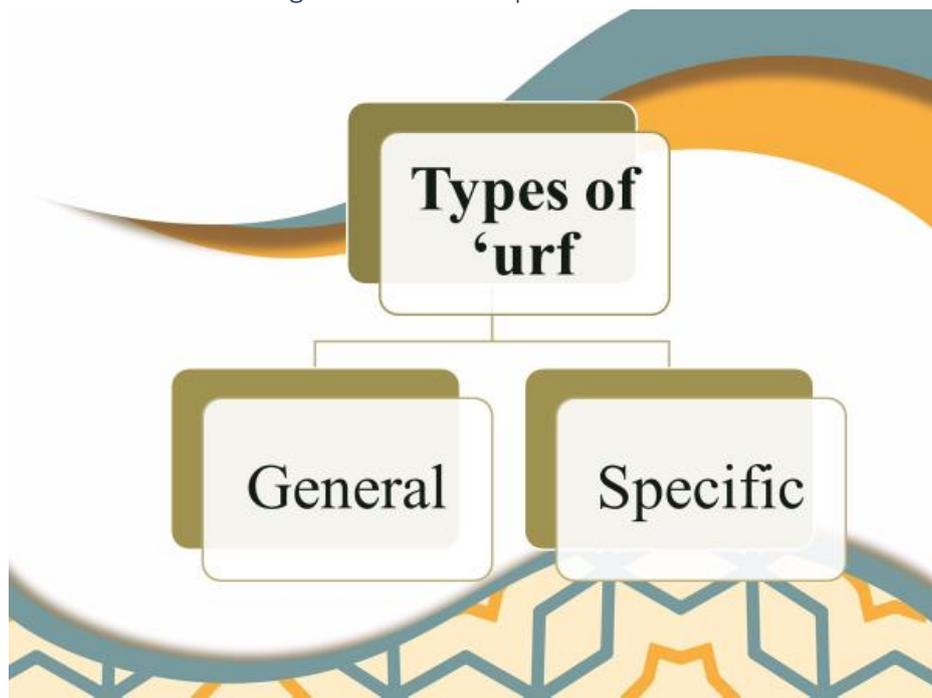
This is the meaning understood by society. What people understand.

An example of verbal *'urf*: When someone makes an oath and swears by Allah that he will not eat meat, and then eats fish, has he broken his oath? From a linguistic point, yes, he has. From an *'urf* point of view, we ask what is the meaning of 'meat' in this city? In many cities, fish is not considered meat. If that is the case, he did not break his oath. The validity of his oath is therefore assessed according to what the people in his community understood it to mean. This is verbal *'urf*.

Practical *'urf*

An example of practical *'urf*: When you buy something, do you have to pay extra for its delivery or not? For instance, if you buy a fridge, the *'urf* is that it is delivered for free. If the seller claims the buyer should pay extra for the delivery, we check the *'urf*, and see what is normal practice in that town. If the common practice is that it is free, then the seller cannot ask for more payment, even though he did not stipulate whether delivery was included or not, as it is generally expected that delivery is included in the price.

What is the difference between general 'urf and specific 'urf?

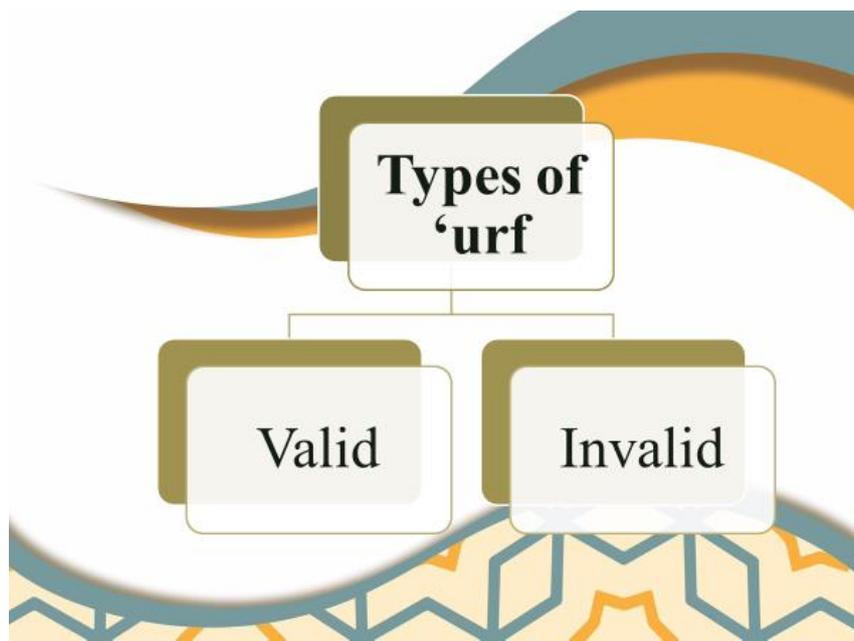


'Urf can also be categorised as general and specific. When we look at *urf* from another angle, we can divide it into two: general (*'aam*) and specific (*khaass*).

General 'urf all is what everyone is familiar with. Specific 'urf is peculiar to a certain group, or profession. For example, in the stock market or foreign exchange, financial transactions are not instant, they can be T+1, T+2, and T+3 (i.e. transaction date plus one day, plus two days, and plus three days respectively). 'T' is the transaction date. This is the 'urf of their profession. In other fields this is not the usual condition.

In manufacturing, we have the concept of guarantee - when you buy a product it comes with a one-year warranty. If you have a new laptop, you automatically get a one-year warranty. If a salesman sells it, and you find a fault, he cannot claim it has no warranty, because the 'urf, or standard practice in the market, is to have a one-year warranty.

What are the bases of rulings in Islam? When is it permissible to use 'urf in the shariah? The more serious part of the classification of 'urf is understanding which 'urf is valid and which is invalid. This is what we need to understand clearly and we will refer to when we decide which practices are permissible and which are not.



'Urf which we do not accept is known as *faasid* (invalid) and 'urf which we accept is called *saalih* (valid).

A valid 'urf is when something is permissible in Islam; it does not go beyond the boundaries of the shariah and is therefore deemed valid. Invalid customs do not become halal due to their widespread usage, no matter how extensively they are practiced.

For example, *riba* (lending with interest) is haram. Allah Almighty made trade halal, but *riba* haram. The Quran is crystal clear on this matter:

*But those who take usury will rise up on the Day of Resurrection like someone tormented by Satan's touch. That is because they say, 'Trade and usury are the same,' but **God has allowed trade and forbidden usury.** Whoever, on receiving God's warning, stops taking usury may keep his past gains- God will be his judge- but whoever goes back to usury will be an inhabitant of the Fire, there to remain.*
(2:275)

If a practice involves taking or paying interest, it is unacceptable, no matter how many people are engaged in it.

Some people are permissive about this and brush the issue of *riba* aside, saying 'Allah Almighty is talking about a different *riba* which existed 1400 years ago. It was different from *riba* today'.

The valid 'urf is the one which does not change the haram to the halal or vice versa.

For example, if clothes cover 'awrah (private parts) then they are acceptable, but if they do not cover the 'awrah it is not halal. This is why Allah Almighty said in Surah Ma'idah:

Say, 'Not equal are the evil and the good, although the abundance of evil might impress you.' So fear Allah, O you of understanding, that you may be successful.
(5:100)

Anything crossing the boundaries, anything changing the haram to the halalis not acceptable. No matter how many people approve it or adopt it.

Qawa'id Fiqhiyya – Maxims of Jurisprudence

Qawa'id is the plural of *Qa'ida* which means base. Scholars derive from Quran and Sunnah the *Qawa'id Fiqhiyya*, which is a science of jurisprudence consisting of maxims.

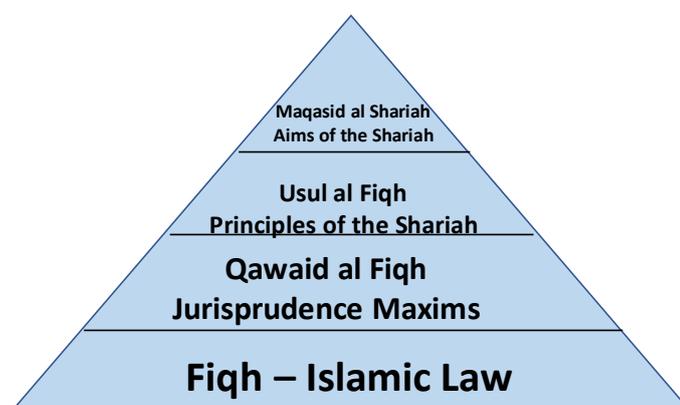
The pyramid of knowledge

In Islam, we have a pyramid of knowledge. On the base we have *Fiqh* which is Islamic law (how to pray, pay zakat, perform hajj etc) When a student studies *Fiqh*, he studies rulings. Any act can be Fard/Waajib, recommended (Sunnah/Mandoob/Mustahabb), neutral (Mubaah), disliked (makrooh), or forbidden (haram/mah-dhoor). These rulings are called *Fiqh*. *Fiqh* is necessary for the Muslims to practice Islam properly. Without *Fiqh*, we wouldn't know if our deeds are valid or not.

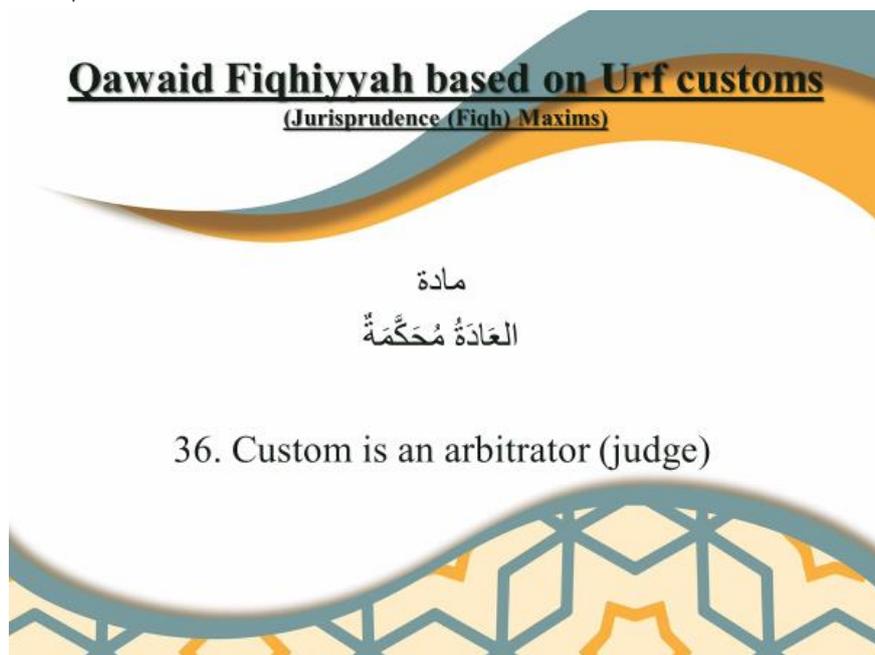
Usool al-Fiqh, on the other hand, is a study of methodology. *Usool al-Fiqh* are the methods of determining the rulings. How a top scholar comes to the conclusion that something is fard for instance by connecting the Quran, hadith (or potentially other forms of evidence) to decide what the Shariah says. *Usool al-Fiqh* is why we have different madhhabs. As the method of analysis of Abu Hanifah was different from Imam ash-Shafi, though they were both looking at the same Quran and the same hadith.

Qawa'id al Fiqh, which is like a thread that connects the various rulings across the religion into wider principles, known as maxims, for instance, the concept that necessity dictates ease.

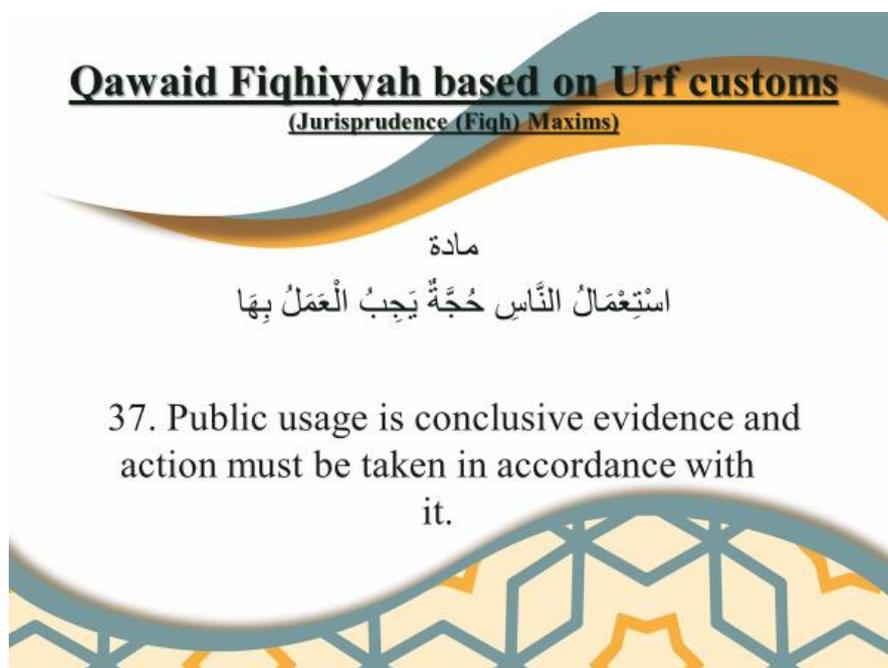
At the top we have *Maqasid al Shari'ah*, the aims of the shariah. Each of these sciences is a stand-alone science.



The Maxims of Fiqh



If we have a disagreement, then we use 'urf as a means of judging. We ask what is the norm? For example, is delivery free or not? If the norm is free delivery, then that settles the matter. The 'urf has resolved the issue. It is the method of arbitrating.



Public usage is conclusive evidence and action must be taken in accordance with it. If people generally follow a particular practice day in and day out and it is not harmful, it is accepted in law.

Some rulings, particularly those based on *'urf* do change over time. 200 years on there will be rulings which have changed. There is the concept of what is flexible and inflexible in *fiqh*. We cannot change what is fixed, but rules that are based on *'urf* are generally mutable. Though there are some scholars who do not understand this, who say, 'No. This is the shariah.' They do not recognise that the shariah was based on an old *'urf* which has since changed, so we need to update it. Of course, only qualified people can do this. Not anyone who is pretending he has knowledge and wants to reform and change the religion.

Qawaid Fiqhiyyah based on Urf customs

(Jurisprudence (Fiqh) Maxims)

مادة

لا يُنكَرُ تَغْيِيرُ الْأَحْكَامِ بِتَغْيِيرِ الْأَزْمَانِ

39. It cannot be denied that rulings vary over time.

Qawaid Fiqhiyyah based on Urf customs

(Jurisprudence (Fiqh) Maxims)

مادة

إِنَّمَا تُعْتَبَرُ الْعَادَةُ إِذَا اطَّرَدَتْ أَوْ غَلَبَتْ

41. Custom is only considered established if it is consistent or prevalent.

Custom is only considered established if it is consistent or prevalent. If it is a one-off it cannot be considered as the basis of a ruling. We cannot build a case on an exception. For example, if someone paid for delivery on one occasion, it does not mean the next delivery should be paid as well, as the common practice is free delivery. This is different from UK law which is case law.

An *'urf* is only a custom when the majority follow it. If 80% of people follow a practice, we cannot use the 20% as a means of arbitrating. A practice by 2% of people is not considered *'urf*, even though the difference between Brexiteers and Remainers was 2%! It has to be significant majority – almost everybody.

Qawaid Fiqhiyyah based on Urf customs

(Jurisprudence (Fiqh) Maxims)

مادة

المَعْرُوفُ عُرْفًا كَالْمَشْرُوطِ شَرْطًا

43. A matter recognised by custom is regarded as a stipulated condition.

A matter which is recognised as *'urf* is an unwritten condition. For example, if the contract did not stipulate free delivery, free delivery is still expected because it is the *'urf*. It does not need to be put in the contract, because everyone is familiar with it. It is expected without being stipulated. If the seller insists that the delivery should be paid for, the judge can invite experts and ask them for the *'urf*. If the expert witnesses say free delivery is the norm, the case is closed.

Birth rites

What are the 7 sunnahs that should be carried out at the birth of a baby?

When we have a new-born, we are grateful to Allah Almighty for the blessing. It is the sunnah to do 7 things when the baby arrives.

1. Announce the good news (*bishra*)

Announce the arrival of the baby to your relatives and friends, so they can share the happiness that you have been blessed with a healthy baby.

2. Recite *adhan* and *iqamah* in the baby's ears

Recite the *adhan* in the baby's right ear with a gentle voice and the *iqamah* in the left ear. This is authenticated in the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him).

Abu Rafi' reported: I saw the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) pronounce the call to prayer in the ear of Hasan ibn Ali after Fatimah gave birth to him.
(Tirmidhi)

3. Do *tahneek*

When people would bring their new-born to the Prophet (peace be on him) he would take a date, chew it in his own mouth and then rub it in the baby's mouth. Not necessarily the whole date, but a part of it. Abu Moosa (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

I had a baby boy, and I brought him to the Prophet (peace be on him). He named him Ibrahim, did tahneek with some dates and prayed for Allah to bless him, then he gave him back to me. (Bukhari and Muslim)

As the Prophet (peace be on him) is not among us, what is the sunnah? You can ask any righteous person in the community to do the *tahneek*. It could be anyone who is pious and has a good reputation, it could also be a shaykha, a hafiz of the Quran, or a *wali* in the community. Hopefully your baby will be among those who follow the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be on him).

After the *tahneek*, the righteous person makes du'a for the new-born, that Allah Almighty makes them from the righteous, keeps them on the straight path, opens their heart and guides them to the truth, and that you will be proud of them in the *dunya* and *akhirah*.

4. Shave the baby's head

On the seventh day, shave the baby's head. Can this be done before the seventh day? Yes, but it is better to do this on the seventh day as the baby's head is still soft in the first few days. The Prophet (peace be on him) asked his daughter, Fatima to take the hair of Hasan's

head (may Allah be pleased with him), weigh it and give the equivalent amount of gold or silver in *sadaqah*. According to Imam Shafi, Malik and Hanbali it is the equivalent in silver, and in Tabarani and other books of hadith it says equivalent in gold. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said it can be given in the equivalent of silver or gold. If it is the equivalent of gold it will carry more reward. The amount would come to around £50-£100. Some people think this is *bid'ah* (an innovation) but it is authenticated from the sunnah. Ali ibn Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) sacrificed a sheep on the seventh day for al-Hasan and said, 'Shave his head, Fatimah, and give the weight of his hair in silver as sadaqah.' So they weighed it and it amounted to a dirham or part of a dirham.
(Tirmidhi)

There is some discussion whether this applies only for boys. It applies to both boys and girls. In some cultures, it is not common practice to shave the head of girls, that is OK, but the sunnah is to shave both girls and boys.

5. Name the baby

Samurah ibn Jundub reported the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

A boy is in pledge for his aqiqah, sacrifice is made for him on the seventh day, his head is shaved and he is given a name. (Sunan of Abu-Dawood)

There is a big discussion on this issue among scholars, as Imam Ahmad was of the opinion that if you don't do an aqiqah and the child passes away, he will not be able to give intercession for his parents. Therefore it is a must. It is recommended that the sacrifice is performed on the seventh day, but it can be performed earlier or later.

The name of the baby does not have to be given on a particular day, but should preferably be chosen by the seventh day. Who has the right to name the child? The parents. However, naming the child, should be by mutual agreement. The husband and wife might decide that the husband chooses the boys' names and the wife chooses the girls', although there is the chance they could have all boys or all girls! Or they could take turns.

Does the person who names the child influence the personality of the child? No.

Most importantly, choose the right name for your child. Your name reflects you. Your first impression is your name. It is the label by which you are known throughout your life. It is recommended, and indeed it is the baby's right, that you choose the right name for them.

Whenever I meet anyone, I ask them what their name means. I am surprised by people who do not know the meaning of their name. This is what you have been carrying for so many years, you should know what it means. Arabs say: *al isma ya lu musama* 'Your name is like and umbrella above you'. It goes with you wherever you go, like your own personal cloud. They also say *li kullin naseebun minismihi*, 'Everyone has a share from his name'. This is why the Prophet (peace be on him) was keen on choosing the right name.

When Fatima gave birth to the Prophet's (peace be on him) first grandchild, he was overjoyed. He asked what name they had chosen for him. His son in law, Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) was a warrior and accordingly chose *Harb*, which means war. But the Prophet (peace be on him) changed his grandson's name to mean handsome, fine, pleasing.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

When Hasan (i.e. Ali's first son by his wife Fatima, the Prophet's daughter) was born, I named him Harb (war). The Prophet (peace be on him) came to visit us and said, 'Show me my son. What have you called him?'

I said, 'Harb.'

He said: 'No. He is Hasan.'

Then, when Husayn was born, I named him Harb. When the Prophet (peace be on him) came to visit us, he said, 'Show me my son. What have you called him?'

I said, 'Harb.'

He said, 'No. He is Husayn.'

When the third was born, I also called him Harb, and the Prophet (peace be on him) came to visit us and said, 'Show me my son. What have you called him?'

I said, 'Harb'. He said, 'No. He is Muhassin.' He then added, 'I have called them by the names Aaron called his sons, Shabar, Shubayr and Mushabbir.'

(Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Al-Hakim, Ahmad and others).

There are many hadith which show that when the Prophet (peace be on him) met people (including adults) whose names had negative meanings and connotations, he changed them, such as man called *Hazn*, meaning tough. He suggested name *Sahl*, which means easy, but he refused. Imagine trying to do a deal with someone called 'Tough!' Not all people are like their name, but at least the name should have a good meaning.

Sa'id bin Al-Musaiyab (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

When his grandfather, Hazn (tough) visited the Prophet (peace be on him) the Prophet (peace be on him) said (to him), "What is your name?" He said, "My name is Hazn." The Prophet (peace be on him) said, " But you are Sahl." He said, "I will not change my name with which my father named me." Ibn Al-Musaiyab added: So we have had roughness (in character) ever since. (Bukhari)

Abu Dawud said that the Prophet (peace be on him) changed the names al-'As, Aziz, Atalah, Shaytan, al-Hakam, Ghurab, Hubab, and Shihab and called him Hisham. He changed the name Harb (war) and called him Silm (peace). He changed the name al-Munba'ith (one who lies) and called him al-Mudtaji' (one who stands up). He changed the name of a land Afrah (barren) and called it Khadrah (green). He changed the name Shi'b ad-Dalalah (the mountain path of a stray), the name of a mountain path and called it Shi'b al-Huda (mountain path of

guidance). He changed the name Banu az-Zinyah (children of fornication) and called them Banu ar-Rushdah (children of those who are on the right path), and changed the name Banu Mughwiyah (children of a woman who allures and goes astray), and called them Banu Rushdah (children of a woman who is on the right path).

It is worth noting also that the Prophet (peace be on him) did not advise keeping names which were overly complimentary.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

Zainab's original name was "Barrah (pious)," but it was said' "By that she is giving herself the prestige of piety." So the Prophet (peace be on him) changed her name to Zainab. (Bukhari)

Imam Suyuti (849 AH – 911AH/1445-1505 CE) wrote an 8 page booklet on the 41 companions whose names were changed by the Prophet (peace be on him) called, 'Those Sahaba from whom the Prophet (peace be on him) changed their name.'

Why do people give their child unwieldy, multiple names? I have noticed this trend among people from the Indian subcontinent. In Arab culture we tend to only give one name. Short names are easy. Why overload a child with three names?

Once I received a phone call before midnight. The man said he was discussing names for his child with his in laws...! (He wished to know if he could name his child 'Silver')? The reply to this is as long as a name does not have a bad meaning it is fine. Silver is metal and it is not a bad choice, so that is an acceptable name. One does not have to overcomplicate matters as a parent in naming their child.

When one chooses a name from another language then always, always double check its meaning. Some people call their child Abdul, but Abdul means slave or servant. The complete name would be slave of Allah, Abdullah, or for instance Abdur Rahman, without it the name does not have a good meaning. Moreover, there are other names that have bad meanings. Parents should have checked this out. If one opens the Quran and pluck out a word with their eyes closed, they might pick the word donkey, or 'Laa rayb' which means 'no doubt' This will make them a laughingstock in the Arab world, so one must be careful.

There is no necessity to take an Arab name. New converts can keep their original names as there is no compulsion to take an Arab name or wear Arab clothes. Is it correct to westernise names, for instance naming a child Noah instead of Nuh? If you choose to do this to protect the name from being mispronounced that it is fine. However, if you are doing it to make your child fit in, then it is a sign of insecurity about your identity. Be proud of your identity. Do not change your name just to fit in.

There are some people who are proud of their names, but find they are discriminated against. They do not get invited for job interviews because of their name. This is unfortunate. In general, we should not shorten Muhammad to Mo, as we see with Mo Salah and Mo Farah. It is sad that we have a hostile environment where you cannot always get a

job because you are called Ahmed. However, where possible we should be proud of our identity and maintain it.

We face plenty of challenges and not everyone has the capacity to deal with them, but it is by communal effort, not individual effort, that we preserve our identity. Modern societies are diverse and are made up of multifaith and multicultural communities. We should endeavour as much as possible to identify with our faith and avoid compromising our values. In some cases, it will be lost or diluted, but this should be the exception, and not the norm.

There is no doubt that Muslims should be proud of their beliefs, heritage and identity. We do not follow all trends in society, we should be discerning enough to know when something is a good trend or a sinful trend. We should not be so fluid that we take the shape of any container. However, we should acquire the knowledge of what makes something halal and haram. And we should also make our children own heritage and values.

6. Circumcision

Circumcision is only for boys and is from the sunnah. We have different practices in the Arab and Asian world, and it is usually carried out on the seventh day or a month later. Though it is easier to get this done at an early age. The Turkish community carry it out as a celebration with a special outfit and even a parade. The boys are between 5-11.

Female genital mutilation is NOT from the sunnah. Narrations used to justify it are not sound. We cannot rely on weak narrations. It is not from Islam - it is a purely cultural practice. It causes long lasting physical and mental harm to women and it is both haram and illegal.

7. *Aqiqah (sacrifice an animal on the occasion of the birth)*

Out of all these sunnahs related to birth, *aqiqah* (sacrifice) is a must (see hadith in item 5 above). The Prophet (peace be on him) made *aqiqah* for himself. There are differences of opinion on how many animals should be sacrificed, but the minimum is one for boys and girls and the common practice is two for boys. The meat can be distributed as you like - to family, friends, and the needy. The parents can also eat from it, but should not keep it to themselves.

Should the *aqiqah* be done in the country where the baby was born or where there is greater need? You can do it where there is more need.

Can you hold a baby shower?

Is it halal or haram to hold a baby shower? Baby showers are not from the Quran or sunnah or part of traditional Arab culture. If there is a cultural practice which does not contradict the Quran or sunnah we can accept it.

If you can afford it and are not being wasteful, or spending excessive amounts on it, nor carrying it out due to any religious or superstitious practice, baby showers are acceptable. It celebrates your happiness that you are expecting a baby. However, would it not be better to celebrate the birth of

the baby once it is safely in the world, than when it has not yet arrived? Some people may pledge an amount to charity when the baby has arrived safely. This is an acceptable form of *nadhr* (oath).

It is not acceptable to throw a lavish party and waste money for the sake of a few of hours of fun. This is haram. It is squandering wealth. In Hindu culture, there is a ritual celebration in the seventh month of a pregnancy and gifts are given out of superstition. Such celebrations related to superstitions are haram.

Is it haram to celebrate birthdays?

Birthday parties are not haram in themselves. There is nothing haram about celebrating the day someone was born, as long as that celebration does not involve doing anything prohibited, for instance serving alcohol or wearing inappropriate dress that reveal the body.

The Prophet (peace be on him) celebrated his own birthday by fasting. When asked why he fasted on Mondays, he replied that it was the day of his birth:

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) was also asked about fasting on Monday, and he replied, 'This is the day on which I was born and the day on which I was sent (with the Message of Islam) and the day on which I received revelation.' (Muslim)

Birthdays are not related to worship or belief. It is a common misconception among Muslims that celebrating birthdays is haram because it is imitating non-Muslims. Some scholars usually quote the hadith of Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) who narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

He who imitates any people is considered to be one of them. (Abu Dawud and Ibn Hibban)

The prohibition on imitating non-Muslims is related to following them in matters of belief. However, birthdays, exchanging cards and gifts, are not related to belief. It is a common practice around the globe, which is not done with the intention of worship. It is not an *aqeedah* issue.

Some people say it is haram because the tradition may stem from various pagan traditions going back millennia. Unless there is authentic evidence of this, we can dismiss these as unverified claims. No one celebrating a birthday today believes they are partaking in a pagan ritual. They are merely commemorating the fact they have lived another year.

Should you prevent your child from celebrating their birthday?

Parents may choose not to have birthday parties because it has become the trend and they will be rewarded for making that decision. However, there is nothing in the Sunnah that forbids celebrating birthdays as long as it does not go against Islamic principles. Celebrating birthdays can be a positive thing in many ways. It does not necessarily mean that one is copying the actions of the 'disbelievers' or kafirs, as is misinterpreted by some scholars. Having food and cake and wishing well for someone is not about losing your identity or copying disbelievers.

Birthdays are a day of enjoyment for children, and it is an opportunity to educate them on the importance of being a year older. If they are too young, you can simplify the language for them and explain that with every year they grow a little more, just like the trees, with Allah's help.

Is it permissible to have candles on a cake?

There is nothing haram about having candles on a cake, it is a matter of personal choice. Of course, one should be careful, especially with sparklers on cakes as they can be dangerous.

Though it may not be hygienic to blow over the cake, we cannot call something haram unless there is evidence to call it haram.

Maintain family relationships

Birthdays are often an opportunity for families to get together and this is a good thing, as well it being a day to recognise how much people are loved and appreciated. Of course, we should show our love and appreciation throughout the year and not leave it for one day. In addition, one should not go overboard and spend beyond their means to mark this day. It is not part of the sunnah to be extravagant. However, we do like to spread joy and share our happiness with others as this strengthens the community.

Make Eid special

During the year, in countries where birthdays, Christmas and Halloween are surrounded by much excitement and hype, one should make an effort to make Eid a day of fun and happiness for our children, without indulging in excessiveness and making it focused on materialism and consumerism.

Abu Wa'il reported that Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

*"Whoever acts to show off, Allah will show him off. Whoever acts to be heard, Allah will make him heard. Whoever lengthens himself to aggrandize himself, Allah will debase him. Whoever humbles himself reverently, Allah will raise him. **Whoever was extravagant in the world, he will be deprived in the Hereafter.** Whoever was deprived in the world, he will be extravagant in the Hereafter. One is either relieved or relieved from." They said, "Who is relieved?" Ibn Mas'ud said, "The believer is relieved when he dies. As for one relieved from, it is one who wrongs people and cheats them in the world. When he dies, he is relieved from."*
(Al Zuhd wal Raqa'iq)

This hadith means that the one who shows off will be exposed and humiliated by Allah in the hereafter.

Our children should look forward to Eid and also understand its religious significance. They should not have the impression that Islam is boring or yearn instead for non-Islamic festivals.

Death

Death is the inevitable reality of our lives. No one can escape death.

Allah Almighty talked about death in many verses in the Quran, and it is frequently mentioned in the Sunnah, for instance:

Every soul shall taste death. You shall be paid your wages in full on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is removed from Hell and is admitted to Paradise shall prosper, for the worldly life is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion. (3:185)

Before dying

Is it alright to ask for death?

Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Do not wish for death, for the horror that the dying person experiences at the moment of death is too difficult to bear. Living a long life and being guided by Allah to turn to Him and repent is a sign of being blessed. (Musnad Ahmad)

Do not wish for death, for you will surely die; rather ask Allah for well-being.

Is euthanasia permissible?

Euthanasia, also known as mercy killing, is haram. Do not confuse this with switching off life support when someone is dying, that is not euthanasia.

Ask for a good end

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ خَيْرَ عُمْرِي آخِرَهُ ، وَخَيْرَ عَمَلِي خَوَاتِمَهُ ، وَخَيْرَ أَيَّامِي يَوْمَ أَلْقَاكَ

Allaahumma-j'al khayra 'umree aakhirahu, wa khayra 'amalee khawaatimahu, wa khayra ayyamee yawma alqaaka

O Allah, make the end of my life the best part of my life, my best deeds my last ones, make the best of days the day in which I meet you. (Majma'uz Zawaid)

What sort of death should you ask for?

1. Ask for a timely end

We ask Allah for our life span to be good and to take our souls when it is the best time for them to depart, as Allah is the only one who knows when that is.

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

لَا يَتَمَنَّيَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ ضَرِّ أَصَابَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَابِدَ فَاعِلًا فَلْيَقُلْ: اللَّهُمَّ أَخْبِنِي مَا كَانَتْ الْحَيَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي وَتَوَفَّنِي إِذَا كَانَتْ الْوَفَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي

No one of you should wish for death because of some harm that has befallen him. If he must wish for it, then let him say: 'O Allah, keep me alive so long as living is good for me, and cause me to die when death is good for me. (Bukhari and

Muslim)

2. Ask to be saved from a decrepit old age

The Prophet (peace be on him) taught us to seek refuge from dementia and senility, from becoming like a baby: weak in body and mind unable to carry out obligatory duties, or even care for one's self. We ask Allah not to let us become dependent upon our family; or a burden to those around us.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَالْجُبْنِ وَالْبُخْلِ وَالْهَرَمِ وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا وَرَكَّهَهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ رَكَّاهَا أَنْتَ وَلِيُّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ وَمِنْ دَعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهَا

Allaahumma innee a'oodhu bika minal-'ajzi wal-kasali wal-jubni wal-bukhli wal-harami wa 'adhaabil-qabr. Allaahumma aati nafsee taqwaahaa, wa zakkihaa, Anta khayru man zakkaahaa, Anta Waliyyuhaa wa Mawlaahaa. Allaahummaa innee a`oodhu bika min 'ilmin laa yanfa'u, wa min qalbin laa yakh-sha'u, wa min nafsin laa tashba'u, wa min da'watin laa yustajaabu lahaa.

O Allah! I seek your refuge from incapacity, laziness, cowardice, miserliness, decrepit old age, and the punishment of the grave. O Allah! Grant my soul its dutifulness (taqwa), and purify it, You are the best One to purify it: You are its Guardian and its Lord. O Allah! I seek Your refuge from knowledge that does not benefit, and from a heart that is not humble, and from a soul that is never satisfied, and from a supplication that is not answered'. (Ahmed, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i)

3. Ask to be saved from a sudden death

Many people pray for a death while they are not incapacitated. Whilst we wish not to be become dependent on others, we should be careful not to pray for a sudden death. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to seek refuge from a sudden death, as it strikes without warning, so one does not have a chance to prepare one's affairs.

Allah often blesses those close to Him with insight that their death is approaching.

Allaahumma innee a'oodhu bika min mawtil fuja'ah.

O Allah! I seek your refuge from sudden death.

Usually death is preceded by illness, which gives one a window to prepare for death and organise their legacy as well as check their account.

4. Ask to be saved from a horrific death and Shaytan

We ask Allah to grant us a gentle death and spare us from a death which is violent and horrific. We also ask that we are taken in a state of righteousness, in which Allah is pleased with us, rather than a state of obedience to Shaytan, engaged in sin.

It was narrated that Abu'l-Yusr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) used to say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْهَدْمِ (وَالْغَمِّ) وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ التَّرَدِّي وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْغَرَقِ وَالْحَرَقِ وَالْهَرَمِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ يَتَخَبَّطَنِي الشَّيْطَانُ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَمُوتَ لَدَيْعًا

Allaahumma innee a'oodhu bika min al-hadmi (wal ghamm) wa a'oodhu bika min at-taraddee wa a'oodhu bika min al-gharaq, wa'l-hareeqi, wa'l harami, wa a'oodhu bika an yatakhabbatani'sh-shaytaan 'inda al-mawti, wa a'oodhu bika an amoota fi sabeelika mudbiran, wa a'oodhu bika an amoota ladeeghan

O Allah, I seek refuge in You from my house falling on me (and from sorrow), I seek refuge in You from falling into an abyss, I seek refuge in You from drowning, burning and decrepitude. I seek refuge in You from the Devil harming me at the time of my death, I seek refuge in You from dying in Your path while retreating, and I seek refuge in You from dying of the sting of a poisonous creature.

(Abu Dawood, Ahmad, Tabarani in al-Kabir)

In another narration:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ التَّرَدِّي وَالْهَدْمِ وَالْغَرَقِ وَالْحَرِيقِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ يَتَخَبَّطَنِي الشَّيْطَانُ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَمُوتَ فِي سَبِيلِكَ مُدْبِرًا وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَمُوتَ لَدَيْعًا ”

Allaahumma innee a'oodhu bika min al-taraddee wa'l-hadmi wa'l-gharaq wa'l-hareeq, wa a'oodhu bika an yatakhabbatani'sh-shaytaan 'inda al-mawti, wa a'oodhu bika an amoota fee sabeelika mudbiran, wa a'oodhu bika an amoota ladeeghan

O Allah, I seek refuge with You from falling from a high place, being crushed (beneath a falling building etc), drowning and burning, and I seek refuge with You from being overpowered by the Shaytan at the time of death, and I seek refuge with You from being killed (in jihad) for Your sake when fleeing from battle, and I seek refuge with You from dying from a scorpion sting or snake bite. (Nasa'i)

If someone is critically ill, what is the best surah to recite?

Recite the surahs that they love.

What are the signs of a good death?

You cannot judge someone based on how they died. Dying in your sleep is not necessarily a good death, but might be, as you do not know what they experienced in their sleep. Meanwhile, a lingering death does not mean the person dying was a bad person. A good person may also suffer as a means of expiating their last sins or as a means of elevating them and rewarding them for their patience.

However, it is a very good sign if you end your life with the shahadah on your lips. And if you died in sujud or reciting Quran that is good, because you will be resurrected in that position.

What should you do when someone is dying?

- The talqeen (pronouncing the shahadah to remind or prompt the dying person) should be made before the dying person takes their last breaths. i.e. *La ilaha illallah* (There is none worthy of worship but Allah)
- Encourage the dying person to pronounce the shahadah. Be careful not to insist that the dying person says the kalimah, as they may not be mentally present and may be drifting in and out of consciousness, so they might seem to refuse to say it. Instead, those present should repeat it aloud in front of the dying person, to remind them to recite it.
- Once the dying person utters the shahadah, all who are present should remain silent. The dying person should not be drawn into any worldly discussions, but if he discusses any worldly matter, then the talqeen should be repeated.

Can the dying see the angels before death?

When people are dying there are many stories of them being aware that the angels have come to take their souls. Shaykh Muhammad Metwalli al-Sha'rawi (rahimahullah) before he passed away, took a bath, dressed nicely, put on perfume and lay down in his bed. He was very ill, but he could still move and talk. He said 'I'm ready now. I'm waiting'. Then a few minutes later, he told his children 'They are here now. Just leave me'. A few minutes later he passed away. He had seen the angels coming and he had prepared himself to receive them.

This is not the case for all people.

What can you do at the bedside of the one who is dying?

The one who is dying is called, *al muhtadar*, because they are leaving the dunya. They are in a state of *ihtidar*, leaving the world.

- **Positioning the body of the dying:**

If possible, raise the head of the person who is dying with pillows or cushions. It is sunnah to let him lie on his right side facing the Qiblah. It is permitted that he be positioned to lie on his back with his feet towards the Qiblah, and the head slightly raised with a cushion so that it faces the Qiblah. All the bed linen must be tahir (ritually clean). If moving the muhtadar causes him any discomfort then leave him in any convenient position.

- **Fragrance in the room of the dying:**

It is desirable to leave luban (frankincense), itr (perfume) or any other aromatics that are tahir in the room.

- **Be clean and not in a state of janabah in the room of the dying:**

Anyone who is in the state of janabah (impurities), hayd (menstrual bleeding) or nifas (postnatal bleeding) recommended (in the Maliki) not to stay in the same room. There is a difference of opinion and some scholars say it is fine. Others say it is not, but it depends on their link to the person; if they are a wife or daughter, there is room for ease on this.

- **Recite Surah Yasin**

The Prophet (peace be on him) said the recital of Surah Yasin is recommended for the dying person, so be sensitive not to recite it at the bedside of someone who is ill but not dying, as it may upset them. However if they are happy for you to recite it, then that is fine.

Ma'qil bin Yasar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

"Recite Yasin over those who are dying." (Abu Dawud, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Hibban graded it as Sahih)

Ma'qil bin Yasar reported God's Messenger as saying, "iqra'oo yaaseen alaa mawtaakum":

"Recite (sura) Yasin over your dead." (Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah. Weak narration)

There is some discussion among scholars regarding the authenticity of this narration. Though some narrations have a weakness, in general the narrations are valid and good or authentic and high.

Should the whole surah be recited?

If you are allowed to stay that long and it is not troubling the deceased, take into consideration the circumstances around you, and if appropriate, recite it. You might not be able to because it is in ICU and you are not allowed to stay long.

How should you react to the death?

Though the experience of losing someone is filled with shock and sorrow, the sign of believers to accept trials with patience. Make du'a for forgiveness and to be rewarded for your patience. The two main conditions in order to be rewarded are to be patient and to expect reward from Allah Almighty, and in addition have ridaa (acceptance), because the One who sent this trial is Allah Almighty. Do not rail against it, 'Why me?!'

Achieve these three conditions and inshallah Allah Almighty will replace it with something better, give you reward, and give you tranquility to overcome your anxiety.

Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) saying, "When a person suffers from a calamity and utters:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

'Innaa lillaahi wa innaa ilayhi raaji'oon

We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.

اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلَفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا إِلَّا أَخْلَفَ اللَّهُ لَهُ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا "

Allaahumma-'jurnee fee mooseebati, wakhluuf lee khayran minhaa

O Allah! Compensate me in my affliction, recompense my loss and give me something better in exchange for it), then Allah surely compensates him with reward and better substitute." (Muslim)

What du'a should you say for the deceased?

The Prophet (peace be on him) mentioned may du'as.

One may read:

اللهم اغفر لي وله، واعقبني منه عقبة حسنة. رواه مسلم.

Allahumma yassir alayhi amrahu wa sah-hil alayhi ma ba dahu wa as'id hu bi liqa'ika waj al ma kharaja ilayhi khayram mimma kharaja 'an hu

O Allah! Ease upon him his matters, and make light work for him whatever comes hereafter and honour him with Your meeting, and make that which he has gone to better than that which he has come out from) (Ad-Dur Al-Mukhtar)

All the individuals of the deceased's family may read:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلَهُ، وَأَغْفِبْنِي مِنْهُ عَقْبَةً حَسَنَةً. رواه مسلم.

allaahumma-ghfirlee wa lahu wa a'qibnee minhu 'uqbaa hasanah

O Allah! Forgive me and him and grant me a good replacement after him. (Muslim)

These are prophetic supplications and we should memorise them and repeat them until we know them.

'Awf bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) offered the funeral prayer, and I memorised this supplication (that he said for the deceased):

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ، وَارْحَمْهُ وَعَافِهِ، وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ، وَأَكْرِمْ نُزُلَهُ، وَوَسِّعْ مَدْخَلَهُ، وَاغْسِلْهُ بِالْمَاءِ وَالتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ، وَتَوَقَّهِ مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا تَتَّقِي الثُّوبَ الْأَبْيَضَ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ، وَأَبْدِلْهُ دَارًا حَيْرًا مِنْ دَارِهِ، وَأَهْلًا حَيْرًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ، وَأَدْخُلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَفِي فِتْنَةِ الْقَبْرِ وَعَذَابِ النَّارِ

Allaahumma-ghfir lahu, wa-rhamhu wa'aafihi, wa'fu 'anhu, wa'akrim nuzulahu, wawassi' mudkhalahu, waghsilhu bilmaa'i wath-thalji walbaradi, wanaqqihi min al-khataayaa kamaa naqqayta-th-thawba-labyada min ad-danasi, wa'abdilhu daaran khayram min daarihi wa'ahlan khayram min ahlihi, wa'adkhillu-ljannata waqih fitnata-lqabr wa'adhaaba-naar

'O Allah! Forgive him/her and have mercy on him/her. Grant him/her ease and respite. Make his/her resting place a noble one, and facilitate his entry. Wash him with the most pure and clean water, snow and hail. Purify him/her from sins as a white garment is cleansed of dirt. Give him/her in exchange a home better than his/her home (on earth) and a family better than his/her family. Grant him/her entrance to Paradise and protect him/her from the trials of the grave and the torture of Hell Fire.' (Muslim)

How do you prepare the dead body?

It was narrated from Shaddad bin Aws that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

"When you come to your dead ones, close their eyes, for the sight follows the soul. And say good things, for the angels say Amin to what the members of the household say." (Ibn Majah)

As soon as a person dies, their eyes should be gently closed. The one who closes the eyes may read:

Bismillaahi wa 'alaa millati rasooli-laaahi sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam

In the Name of Allah and on the creed, religion and faith of Rasul Allah (peace be upon him) (Al-Hakim)

عَنْ شَدَّادِ بْنِ أَوْسٍ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - " إِذَا حَضَرْتُمْ مَوْتَاكُمْ فَأَغْمِضُوا الْبَصَرَ فَإِنَّ الْبَصَرَ يَتَّبِعُ الرُّوحَ وَقُولُوا خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تُؤْمِنُ عَلَى مَا قَالَ أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ " رواه ابن ماجه.

1. Gently push the chin upward while holding the top of the head. Then place a strip of cotton under the chin and around the head, tying it firmly at the top.
2. Remove any jewellery such as rings, necklaces, bracelets and nose studs (it is especially important to remove rings before swelling occurs).
3. Straighten the limbs carefully and gently. If they will not straighten (e.g. due to stroke), do not force them, as this could cause breakage. In this situation it is better to leave the limbs as they are.
4. Place the toes together and bind the ankles together carefully.
5. Do not cut nails or remove any hair from the body.
6. Until the time of bathing, the body must remain covered by a *tahir* (clean) sheet.

Janazah and ghusl

There are not many cultural issues related to this. They are generally performed in line with the sunnah. The culture of showing the face of the deceased is new to me. There are two opinions, one allows this and one does not. As long as we have two opinions it covers the practice.

Is it ok to use zamzam for the sick or deceased?

Zamzam water has barakah in it, but it will not change your destiny. If your life span is 65 years and 10 days, it will not make it more. But you can use it and hope that it eases their situation.

Can a husband perform ghusl for his wife?

It is a point of discussion. It is permissible for the husband or wife to wash their spouse's body according to the majority of jurists including those from the Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali schools, provided the couple were in an valid Islamic marriage at the time of the spouse's demise. Jurists from the Hanafi school permit the wife to wash her deceased husband, however they forbid the husband from washing his deceased wife's body due to the fact their Islamic marriage terminates

upon her demise. In the case of the husband's death, the wife remains in the marriage until the expiry of the 'iddah (waiting period).

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said to her:

"If you die before me, I will wash you myself." (Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad)

Can a woman on her period do the ghusl for the deceased?

Yes. Wudu is not a requirement to give ghusl to the deceased. It is recommended that one should be tahir (in a state of ritual purity) but it does not affect the validity of the action if one is not tahir.

Do not divulge the secrets of ghusl

There are some etiquettes that those performing ghusl and preparing the shroud should observe. They should not reveal the secrets that they saw during this, especially if they witnessed something negative, such as their face changing. They should not expose them. However, if they see good things, such as the deceased was smiling or had light coming from their face, they can share this with the family.

Where is the soul when the body is having ghusl and in the mortuary?

The soul is roaming. As per the hadith, it is ascending and returning to the body. Therefore we should not delay the burial, unless it is unavoidable. The sunnah is to bury the body ASAP unless the timing is not in our control.

Can you transfer the body of a person from one country to another?

If there is a need, you can do it, but it is not the sunnah. The deceased might say bury me in Baqi', there are two opinions whether this is acceptable.

There was someone who loved Khadija (may Allah be pleased with her) and he wanted to be buried by her. He passed away and after they did his ghusl and janazah, they carried his body to the cemetery and someone came and said 'Do you intend to bury him next to Khadija?' and then he took them there, and that is where he was buried. If you are very sincere, and Allah wants something for you, then it can happen.

Does the deceased feel pain?

This is not an agreed upon matter. There are some narrations that they do feel pain but they cannot express this as they cannot speak. This is not confirmed by clear ayah or hadith in the sunnah, it is from the experiences of tabi'een, and ijtihad.

Aisha narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said:

"Breaking the bone of a deceased is like breaking it while he is alive." (Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah)

According to the narration some scholars understand this hadith to mean that the deceased person feels pain as if he were alive, so much so that when giving them ghusl we are to use lukewarm water

to avoid burning them, just as if we were to bathe a child. Cremation would be acutely painful. Other scholars say it is a metaphor.

[If a body is being transported abroad, can the janazah be prayed twice?](#)

Yes, you can pray janazah multiple times. The Prophet (peace be on him) had his janazah prayed many times.

The janazah salah

[Why is it important to participate in a janazah prayer?](#)

Holding the janazah prayer is a communal obligation (*fard kifayah*)

Praying the janazah prayer over the deceased is a communal obligation. This means that as long as someone has done it on behalf of the community it is accepted. However, if no one from the community prayed it, they are sinful.

The janazah prayer must be offered in congregation.

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

"If a Muslim dies and forty people, none of whom associates anything with Allah in worship, participate in the funeral prayer over him, Allah will accept their intercession for him." (Muslim)

In another narration, Malik ibn Hubayrah said the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

If any Muslim dies and three rows of Muslims pray over him, it will assure him (of Paradise). When Malik considered those who present at the janaza to be a few, he divided them into three rows in accordance with this tradition. (Abu Dawoud Ibn Majah and Tirmidhi)

Malik ibn Hubayrah used to divide the congregation into three rows to help the deceased.

[What are the requirements of a janazah?](#)

It is recommended that the imam arrange the people in at least three rows, as it was the practice of the Prophet (peace be on him).

All participants in the funeral prayer must be in a state of wudu.

Abdullah Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "No one should pray over a dead person unless he is in a state of wudu." (Muwatta Imam Malik)

In the Hanafi school, if you are in mosque and the janazah prayer is starting, but you do not have wudu, you are permitted to do tayammum, so that you do not miss the janazah. This tayammum is not valid to pray any additional fard, sunnah or nawafil until he does his wudu.

[Should a son lead the janazah for his father?](#)

Only if he knows how to do this. If he does not, then it is not good.

How do you perform the salatul janazah?

- There is no adhan or iqamah.
- If there are multiple bodies then:
 - a) The male bodies should be placed immediately before the imam (even if it is a child)
 - b) Female bodies should be behind the male bodies, i.e close to congregation.
- You may pray one janazah prayer over multiple people.
- The imam should stand:
 - a) Opposite the head of the dead male
 - b) Opposite the middle of the dead female
 - There are different opinions on where the imam should stand.
- Women are permitted to attend salatul janazah.
- Funeral prayer consists of 4 takbeers
- The prayer begins with the first takbeer known as takbeeratul-ihraam after which the hands are folded (as in normal prayer) and Thana' is read:

سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك وتبارك اسمك وتعالى جدك وجل ثناؤك ولا إله غيرك

Glory to You Allah, and all Praise, and Blessed is Your Name, and Exalted is Your Majesty. And there is no other object of worship beside You.

This is in the Hanafi school. In the Shafi'i school you simply recite Surat al Fatihah.

- After the second takbeer recite al-Salat al-Ibrahimiyyah:

اللهم صل على محمد وعلى آل محمد ...
- The imam then recites the third takbeer and du'a (supplication) should be made for the deceased adult (male or female).

*اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيَاتِنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرْنَا وَأَنْثَانَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَغَائِبِنَا اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَيِ
الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَيِ الْإِسْلَامِ*

*Allaahumma-ghfir lihayyinaa wamayyitinaa, wasagheerina wakabeerinaa,
wadhakarinaa wa'unthaanaa, washaahidinaa waghaa'ibinaa. Allaahumma man
ahyaytahu minnaa fa'ahyih 'alaa-l-eemaan waman tawaffaytahu fatawaffahu
'alaa-l-islam*

O Allah, forgive those of us who are living and those of us who are dead, our young and our old, our male and our female, and those of us who are present and those of us who are absent. O Allah, to whomsoever of us Thou gives life, grant him life as a believer, and whomsoever of us Thou takes in death, take him in death as a follower of Islam.

- The imam then recites the fourth takbeer and says:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تُضِلَّنَا بَعْدَهُ

Allaahumma laa tahrinnaa ajrahu walaa tudillanaa ba'dahu

O Allah, do not forbid us their reward (of faith) and do not lead us astray after his death

- Conclude the prayer by doing Salam on both sides.

There are two valid narrations, one with two salams and one with one salam.

Salatul gha'ib

Can you pray salatul gha'ib?

Normally, one should go to the mosque to pray salatul janazah, however there are reasons not to attend the salatul janazah in person at the mosque, for instance a risk of infecting or getting infected by a disease during a pandemic, or a flood blocking the way to the mosque. One should assess the risk and the situation and decide what is best on that occasion.

Performing the funeral prayer when the body is not there is known as salatul gha'ib, as the body is not present.

It is generally not permitted in the Hanafi and Maliki madhhabs, though it is permitted in the Hanbali madhhab, and is recommended in the Shafi'i'i madhhab.

The evidence on which the permissibility of praying the janazah in the absence of the body is based is that Abu Hurayrah narrated:

The Prophet (peace be on him) gave the people news of the death of the Negus on the day on which he died, took them out to the place of prayer, drew them up in rows and said "God is most great" four times. (Bukhari and Muslim.)

This means the Prophet (peace be on him) offered the funeral prayer for Negus even though he was in a different country.

Moreover, as the Prophet (peace be on him) offered the salah in congregation, it meant that it was permissible for his companions (may Allah be pleased with them) do so as well. Therefore, this was not an act exclusive to him.

The default position is that people should go to the mosque when there is a janazah, though the janazah was usually prayed in the open. In East London mosque they have created a window to the outside where the body is placed on the other side of the mihrab, so the congregation within the mosque can see it.

As long as the salatul janazah has been attended and prayed by someone, there is no sin.

If there is some reason they could not attend, then they may pray at home.

How do you perform salatul janazah when the deceased is absent?

Those who could not attend may perform salatul janazah individually or in congregation, at home or in a mosque, from anywhere around the world, though we have different opinions on this matter.

If they do so, they should face the qibla and offer it as if the deceased's body was present.

Can a salatul janazah be live streamed?

If you are praying salatul gha'ib, it does not have to be performed at the same time as the salatul janazah is performed live. However, salatul janazah can be joined by live video streaming from any location in the world. The time difference does not matter.

How long after the burial can salatul janazah be prayed?

Salatul gha'ib can be prayed after the ghusl has been performed, and should be prayed before the body has deteriorated.

At the graveyard

Does a body have to be buried in a Muslim cemetery?

Ideally, yes. However, if a Muslim cemetery is not available a body can be buried in the Muslim section of the graveyard.

Though the sunnah is to remove the body from the coffin, you have to follow the law and the regulations of burials in England. In some areas you are not allowed to take the body out of the coffin, but if you are allowed to do this, it is preferable.

What is the reward for attending the burial?

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "من شهد الجنزة حتى يصلى عليها، فله قبراط، ومن شهدا حتى تدفن، فله قبراطان" قيل: وما القيراطان؟ قال: "مثل الجبلين العظيمين" ((متفق عليه)).

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said, "Whoever follows the funeral procession and offers the funeral prayer for it, will get a reward equal to one Qirat, and whoever attends it till burial, will get a reward equal to two Qirat." It was asked, "What are two Qirat?" He replied, "Equal to two huge mountains." (Bukhari and Muslim)

The amount of reward for attending a janazah is two huge mountains.

What are the etiquettes of burial?

The sunnah is to recite this du'a when lowering the body into the grave, as by Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

"When you place your deceased in the grave, say:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، وَعَلَى مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Bismillaahi wa'ala millati rasoolillaahi sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam

'In the Name of Allah, and in accordance with the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger (peace be on him). (Ahmad, Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i)

The shar'i (legitimate) method of burial (dafn)

- The deceased (*mayyit*) should be buried as soon as possible.
- The *mayyit* should be carried and placed at the Qiblah side of the grave. The head should be on the right side of the grave if one faces the Qiblah.
- It is desirable that *maharim* or close relatives (of a female *mayyit*) enter the grave to lower the body.
- It is *mustahabb* (recommended) to hold a sheet over the grave while lowering and burying a female. If there is fear of her *kafan* opening then it is *wajib* to do so.
- After placing the body into the recess of the grave it is *masnun* to turn it onto its right side to face the Qiblah. (There are two types of grave, *lahad* is where the grave has a recess on the qiblah-side to accommodate the body).
- The strips of cloth tied at the head, chest and ankles should now be untied.
- The recess should then be covered with unbaked bricks, bamboo or timber.
- In Syria, it is not the practice to show the face of the deceased to mourners. However there are two valid opinions on this.
- Have respect for the moment of death. It is a very sad moment, and unless there is a good reason, it is not an occasion to be taking photos. Take photos discerningly and not for the purpose of broadcasting or creating disquiet. Remain within the limits of what is acceptable. Do not let this be open for abuse.

It has been related by Uthman that after the Messenger (peace be upon him) buried the dead, he paused and said, "Beseech forgiveness from Allah for your brother and ask for steadfastness for him, because he is now being questioned." (Abu Dawud, al-Hakim)

Talqeen at the graveside

Should you recite the talqeen at the graveside?

Talqeen is to remind the deceased of the two shahadahs. There is much disagreement on this topic and scholars are divided in their opinion. Some say it should be done and others say it should not. I usually do not argue with either side. You may say one side has weak evidence, but you cannot abolish either opinion. Do not call the practice *bid'ah* or haram. They are practices within the community.

Imam Nawawi states:

Many of our companions (scholars) said that it is desirable (mustahabb) to make talqeen to the dead Muslim after his or her burial. From those companions (an-Nawawi's) is al-Qadi Husayn in his Ta'leeq, his friend Abu Sa'id Al-Mutawalli in his book At-Tatimmah, ash-Shaykh Imam Abul-Fath Nasr bin Ibrahim bin Nasr al-Maqdisi, Imam Abul-Qasim Ar-Rafi'i and others. Qadi Husayn also conveyed that matter from the way of his companions.

Shaykh Nasr said the following:

“Once one finishes burying him, one stands at his head and says “Ya fulaan ibn fulaan” (calling him)! Remember the covenant by which you exited this world; the testification that there is no god but Allah, Who has no partners, and the testification that Muhammad is the Messenger and slave of Allah. Also remember that Judgment Day is coming, no doubt, and that Allah resurrects those in the graves. Say: ‘I have accepted that my Lord is Allah, that Islam is my religion, that Muhammad, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, is a true Prophet, that the Ka’bah is the true direction for prayer, that the Quran is my guide, and that the believers are brethren’.

عن أبي أمامة : إذا أنا متُّ فاصنعوا بي كما أمرنا رسولُ الله صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أن نصنعَ بموتانا ، أمرنا رسولُ الله صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فقال : إذا مات أحدٌ من إخوانكم فسويتم الثرابَ على قبره ، فليقلُّ أحدكم على رأس قبره ، ثم ليقلُّ : يا فلانُ بنُ فلانةَ ، فإنه يسمعه ولا يجيبُ ، ثم يقولُ : يا فلانُ بنُ فلانةَ ، فإنه يستوي قاعدًا ، ثم يقولُ : يا فلانُ بنُ فلانةَ ، فإنه يقولُ : أرشدنا يرحمك اللهُ ولكن لا تشعرون ، فليقلُّ : اذكرُ ما خرجت عليه من الدنيا شهادةً أن لا إلهَ إلا اللهُ وأنَّ محمَّدًا عبدهُ ورسوله . وأنتَ رضيتَ باللهِ ربًّا ، وبالإسلامِ دينًا ، وبمحمَّدٍ نبيًّا ، وبالقرآنِ إمامًا ، فإنَّ مُنكرًا ونكيرًا يأخذُ كلُّ واحدٍ منهما بيد صاحبه ، ويقولُ : انطلق بنا ما يُعِدُّنا عند من لئن حُجَّته فيكون اللهُ حجيجه ، قال : فقال رجلٌ : يا رسولَ اللهِ ، فإن لم يعرف أمه ؟ قال : ينسبهُ إلى أمه حواءَ ، يا فلانُ بنُ حواءَ الراوي: أبو أمامة الباهلي المحدث: ابن حجر العسقلاني المصدر: التلخيص الحبير الجزء 2/698 حكم المحدث: إسناده صالح وله شواهد

In a hadith transmitted by Imam at-Tabarani, the Prophet of Allah (peace be on him) said:

“When one of your brethren dies and you have flattened the earth on his grave, let one of you stand at the head of his grave and say: “O so-and-so (say the dead person’s name) son of so-and-so (say the dead person’s mother’s name)” and he will hear it but will not answer. Then he should say: “O so-and-so (say the dead person’s name) son of so-and-so (say the dead person’s mother’s name)” and he will sit up. Then he should say: “O so-and-so (say the dead person’s name) son of so-and-so (say the dead person’s mother’s name)” and he will say: “Give us guidance, may Allah have mercy on you,” but you will not be aware of it. Then he should say: “Remember the covenant by which you exited this world; the testification that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger and slave of Allah, and that you are pleased with Allah as your Lord, with Islam as your religion (deen), with Muhammad as your Prophet, and with the Quran as your guide”, Then Munkar and Nakir will take each other by the hand and say: “Let’s go. What is there to keep us sitting beside somebody who has been coached in [expressing] his proof.” and Allah will be the one who argues the case against him) instead of the two of them. Then a man asked: “O Prophet of Allah! What if he does not know the mother of the deceased?” Then the Prophet of Allah (may peace be upon him) replied: “Then let him relate him to his mother Hawwa (Eve) (saying): O so-and-so son of Hawwa.”

Can the talqeen be said in the language of the deceased?

Yes.

Can women go to the graveyard?

We have to be aware that there are two opinions.

The first time I saw women following the janazah at a distance and attending the burial, a man told them off and said they were cursed. He was standing over the grave and telling them off, which was not the right time to do it.

Allah has cursed women who frequent graves (Ahmed and Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah)

There are different opinions on this and we should acknowledge our differences.

However, there is another equally valid narration, in which the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"I (once) had forbid you from visiting graves, (and I now enjoin) you to do so, so that the visit may serve as a beneficial reminder." (Muslim and others)

and in the version of al-Haakim:

'for (such visits) soften the heart, bring tears to the eyes, and serve as a reminder of the Hereafter, (but be careful) not to speak forbidden expressions (i.e. while visiting).' (Sahih al-Jaami')

The later hadith abrogates the earlier one.

Women are permitted to visit the graveyard irrespective of whether they attend the janaza or not.

Can a woman go to the graveyard on her period?

Yes.

Can pregnant women attend janazah prayers and go to the graveyard?

It depends on the individual, whether she feels fit enough for it or not. If she can, it is rewarding.

Is it permissible to visit daily?

Some people go on a daily basis when they lose someone, but usually they stop going so frequently after a short while.

Can a daughter visit her deceased father by herself?

You do not need a mahram to visit the graveyard, however for your own safety it is better for a young lady to take someone with her, such as a friend.

Is it ok to take children to the graveyard?

It depends. It might cause them anxiety and give them nightmares. Sometimes if you explain it nicely to them, they can understand.

What are the etiquettes of the graveyard?

When you enter the graveyard, say a general salam to all the believers and then make du'a:

السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَيَرْحَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُسْتَفْتِمِينَ مِنَّا وَالْمُسْتَأْجِرِينَ وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لِلْآجِفُونَ

Peace be upon the believers and Muslims among the inhabitants of the abodes, and may Allah have mercy on those of us who have gone ahead, and on those who will come later on, and we shall, God willing, join you. (Sahih Muslim)

Buraidah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to teach them (i.e., the Companions) whenever they came out to visit the graveyard to say:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَلْجُفُونَ أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ لَنَا وَلَكُمْ الْعَافِيَةَ

As-salaamu 'alaykum ahlad-diyyaari minal- mu'mineena wal-muslimeena, wa innaa in shaa' allaahu bikum lalaahiqoon. as'alu-llaaha lanaa wa-lakumul- 'aafiyah

Peace be on you, O believers and Muslims among the inhabitants of the abodes, and if Allah pleases, we shall join you. We ask Allah for well-being for ourselves and for you. (Muslim)

When you stand by the grave side, stand by the foot of the grave, as if the person in the grave is still alive and able to hear you, and you are facing them.

You can recite whatever of the Quran you are able to, with the intention of the reward going to the deceased.

Do mourners have to restrain their emotion?

In Jahiliya times there was a culture of displaying unbridled outpourings of grief. This is not from Islam. We are not allowed to go wild in our grief. We cannot shout, scream and wail. This is haram. This was Jahiliya culture so the Prophet (peace be on him) was teaching them to control their emotions. If they can control their emotions, they can go.

When you go to the graveyard, can the deceased hear you?

There are many narrations on this. The Prophet (peace be on him) could hear the voices of two people in their graves being punished. We cannot hear them. This is why we recommend not to bury a Muslim in a non-Muslim graveyard.

How often should one visit the graveyard?

The moment you feel you are attached to the dunya, visit the graveyard. It reminds you of the akhirah. You can visit every week. Always observe the right etiquettes of visiting the cemetery. Do not display uncontrolled emotion, such as wailing loudly.

Should we plant flowers on top of graves?

It is not a general practice, but on one occasion the Prophet (peace be on him) placed green plants on a grave, because he mentioned the green leaves do tasbih and the deceased would benefit from their tasbih. You may remove weeds and keep the grave tidy.

Mourning the deceased

Should you wear any specific mourning colours?

Wearing black is not an Islamic practice, but a cultural one. Generally, one should not wear bright colours as they are associated with happiness and celebrations. You do not want to look like you are going to a wedding. In Arab culture the wedding dress is white, so white is not associated with mourning.

Should you feed mourners?

When a family member died, the Prophet (peace be on him) would tell the companions to make food for the deceased's family, because they would be busy mourning. The custom was not that the deceased's family would feed their visitors. They are the ones needing comforting, and they should not feel that they are under any duress to host their guests.

The sunnah is for mourners to cook for the family. They have been afflicted by loss, so we comfort them. It is not the other way around, with them comforting their visitors. That would be inflicting double pain: they lost a beloved one, and they are burdened by cooking and spending money to feed their guests. We have twisted the sunnah and made the lives of the family even more difficult. This is the wrong culture. It is the opposite of the sunnah. You can see from the hadith:

Abdullah bin Ja'far said that when the news of the death of Ja'far came, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Prepare some food for the family of Ja'far, for indeed something has happened to them that will keep them busy. (Tirmidhi)

Funerals should not be the equivalent of weddings, and yet, in certain Muslim communities, there is an expectation that the family of the deceased should provide a banquet, to the extent that in some communities if the food has not been ordered from the leading caterer people feel the funeral was not up to scratch.

This is not just unnecessary, but a pointless expense when the family are grieving and coming to terms with their loss.

Over time, the tradition has gone from bringing food for the family, to the family feeding those who have travelled to visit them, and more often than not, for the family to distribute food on behalf of the deceased as sadaqah. Therefore, practices have become somewhat warped and onerous, and a burden on the deceased's family, particularly when there are large numbers of visitors over three days, and the cost escalates.

Is it acceptable to bless food?

The words of the Quran put barakah in whatever they are recited on, whether this is over your own self, or it is blown on water, or food that is eaten. We wipe over our body with the verses when we do *ruqyah*, which is to protect ourselves from illness or envy. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to recite the three *quls* (Surat Ikhlas, Surat al-Falaq and Surat an-Nas), blow into his hands, and wipe over himself with them. <https://www.utrujj.org/how-to-perform-ruqya-for-shifa/>

This is the concept of barakah. If you recite the words of the Quran on water or food, they become blessed. When you recite, the angels and mercy descend, and these permeate your food, drink, and home, so there is nothing wrong with it.

Should food be distributed?

People recognise that distributing food is regarded as a charity, but it must be within one's limits. If people have to borrow money to fulfil society's expectations, or to fulfil cultural needs, by procuring food from expensive restaurants to feed mourners, this is not acceptable and we should fight such cultural practices.

What can you do for the deceased?

You can recite the Quran, do an umrah, go for hajj, build a mosque or hospital on their behalf, or sponsor an orphan or knowledge seeker. All good deeds are sadaqah jariyah (ongoing charity) for the deceased.

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

When the human being dies, his deeds end except for three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for him. (Sahih Muslim)

Another hadith mentions that Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah said to the Prophet (peace be on him):

"My mother has died. Can I give to charity on her behalf?" The Prophet (peace be on him) said: "Yes." Sa'd said: "Which type of charity is best?" The Prophet (peace be on him) answered: "To provide drinking water." Sa'd carried out a project to provide drinking water in Madinah, which continued to be known by his family's name for a long time.

How long is the mourning period ('iddah)?

Mourning lasts for three days for everyone except the widow. The widow has to stay in mourning for four months and ten days. The Quran states this clearly:

And those of you who die and leave wives behind them, they (the wives) shall wait (as regards their marriage) for four months and ten days. (2:234)

This is regardless of how old the widow is. Even if she is 80 she has to observe 'iddah for four months and ten days.

If a woman dies, the mourning period for her husband and children is three days. Only Allah Almighty knows the wisdom in this. It is not about pregnancy, it is a command from Allah Almighty. We have to accept this. After all, our slogan as Muslims is 'we hear and we obey'.

How long is the 'iddah of a pregnant woman?

If a woman is pregnant, her 'iddah is until the delivery of her baby, whether it is one day after the janazah or months later. 'Iddah is a means of ensuring there is no pregnancy before any subsequent marriage, as well as an indication of loyalty, coming to terms with the end of the marriage and honouring the relationship.

And for those who are pregnant, their 'iddah (prescribed mourning period) is until they lay down their burden' (65:4)

What does 'iddah involve?

During 'iddah the widow is not meant to beautify herself, such as wearing make-up or bright clothes. It is recommended she stay at home until the waiting period ends.

Umm Salamah narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

A woman whose husband has died must not wear clothes dyed with safflower ('usfoor) or with red ochre (mishq), nor ornaments. She must not apply henna or kohl. (Abu Dawoud)

- Do not wear bright clothes. Wear dull colours, such as black, green and blue.
- Do not wear jewellery, gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, etc. Do not wear watches which are jewellery/adornment.
- Do not wear kohl and makeup.
- Do not wear perfume, unless you are purifying yourself after a period, then you may use a light fragrance.
- You can go out for what you need, such as going to court, to the hospital, or the market.
- She can not dye her hair.

The wife's mourning ('iddah) is overloaded by culture, dictating what she can do and what she cannot do. In the hadith, the Prophet (peace be on him) mentioned that she should not put on makeup, or go outside and meet non-mahrams, unless there is need. However, some cultures go far beyond this.

Oppressive cultural practices force the widow to cover up her mirrors, not comb her hair, not take a shower, not watch TV, or even look out of her window or receive visitors. Such practices have been acquired from other cultures, and have no basis in Islam and constitute maltreatment of the woman. These are extreme dictates and a widow can feel suffocated by such cultural practices.

Can a widow leave her home during her 'iddah?

In shariah, a new widow is given due time to settle back into the normal humdrum of daily life. She is not meant to get involved in socialising, such as attending weddings or celebrations. The shariah rulings are in the interest of the woman and to safeguard her from any hurt. Her life is not supposed to continue as usual, so she should not attend a wedding, or celebration, but should be able to do anything else that helps her cope, which is within limits.

Within limits, the mourning wife can leave her home, for example she is permitted to go to work if she has no provider. She is permitted to go for a walk, go to visit her children, and to buy her

groceries. If she cannot sleep at home because she is alone, she can stay at her son or daughter's house? And she can attend the janazah of her family member during 'iddah.

Holding a khatm

Can you hold a Khatm al Quran or recite the Quran for the deceased?

The practice of holding khatms is so widespread in the community. Probably more than 80 percent of people do this. Is it permissible? In a nutshell, in our time, the entire ummah, barring a small minority, say that it is permitted to recite Quran for the deceased and gift the reward to them. As long as you hold a khatm without adding any haram elements to it, it is permitted to recite the Quran and gift the reward to the deceased. This is the majority opinion. Muslims have a tendency to insist that only one viewpoint on an issue is right, but Islam can accommodate multiple opinions on certain matters at the same time. Therefore, if some people prefer not to hold a khatm, while others do, they are both within their rights, and should not criticise others for holding a different opinion to themselves.

The modern opinion that khatms are bid'ah

Fifty years ago, the senior committee of ulema in Saudi Arabia declared that it is bid'ah – an innovation after the death of the Prophet (peace be on him) – to recite the Quran and pass its reward to the deceased. Their opinion has been very vocal. It is based on the ayah that you will only receive reward for what you have earned yourself:

..man shall have nothing but what he has strived for. (53:39)

No previous scholars called it bid'ah. They simply accepted that there were different scholarly views on the matter.

The history of the two opinions

Abu Hanifa and Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, and the majority of the pious predecessors, believed that the good deeds of the living, such as reciting the Quran, can reach the deceased. By contrast the Shafi'i and Maliki schools used to believe that these good deeds did not reach them. However, later the Shafi'i and Maliki schools revised their opinion and agreed with the position that you can gift the reward of reciting the Quran to the deceased.

The Shafi'i school

Imam Shafi'i's original opinion that you cannot gift the reward of reciting the Quran was based on the famous hadith that a person's good deed end when they die, except for three things which continue to bring reward. Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

When the human being dies, his deeds end except for three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for him. (Sahih Muslim)

Imam Shafi'i did however agree that one is permitted to fulfil any acts of ibadah, such as Hajj, that were not fulfilled by the deceased, based on another hadith in which a woman came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and asked:

“My mother had vowed to perform Hajj but she died before performing it. May I perform Hajj on my mother’s behalf?” The Prophet (peace be on him) replied, “Perform Hajj on her behalf. Had there been a debt on your mother, would you have paid it or not? So, pay Allah’s debt as He has more right to be paid.” (Bukhari)

One of the scholars who believed it was not possible to gift the recitation was Imam Nawawi (died 676 AH), who took the early Shafi’i position that the reward of recitation could not be gifted to the deceased. However, the Shafi’i school moved away from this opinion later and revised it to say that it may be gifted. The influential Dar al Ifta school in Egypt follows the revised opinion.

The Maliki school

The early Maliki school held the opinion that you could pass on monetary good deeds to the deceased, such as charity, building wells, mosques, schools and give qurbani (udhiya), but not gift imaan, tawheed and the kalima, to anyone else. But they revised this opinion, and the majority of the scholars of Andalus, where the Maliki madhab flourished, believed that the deceased benefits from the recitation of the Quran of the living.

The Hanafi school

The Hanafi madhab hold the opinion that any good deed can be gifted to the deceased (and even to the living), including siyam, hajj and recitation of the Quran. They also believe that you can decide this before or after the deed is completed. If you gift your reward to someone else, Allah Almighty is generous. So we expect that He would multiply the reward, rewarding the one who gave it and the one who received it. If you don’t want to do it, fine. It is not sinful. It is your choice. This is based on the ayah at the end of Surah Baqarah:

Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. (2:286)

According to this view point, you own what you have earned, and it is your property – whether it is recitation or fasting. If it is your property, you are free to gift the reward to others. With the exception of salah, which is obligatory. My opinion is that as long as the gathering does not involve anything haram – it is simply a gathering, with dhikr, du’a and recitation – that is fine. The reward may be gifted to the deceased on the basis that you can own the reward of the recitation, therefore it is in your possession to pass on if you wish.

The Hanbali school

The Hanbali school holds the opinion that when the Quran is recited over the deceased and gifted, its reward goes to the reciter and to the deceased. Some ‘ulama said that if you recite the Quran over the deceased, they do not get the reward of the recitation, but the barakah of the recitation. Ibn Qudamah al Maqdisi said there is ijma’ (scholarly consensus) on the topic:

It is the unanimous action of the Muslims in every era and in every land, they come together and they recite the Quran and gift the Quran to their dead, without any one criticising them.

Ibn Taymiyyah, who is from the Hanbali school, and Ibn Qayyim, his student, said explicitly that all goods can be gifted to the deceased, including the recitation of the Quran. This is based on the fact

that when the Prophet (peace be on him) was asked if the deceased would benefit from good deeds performed on their behalf, he said yes. This suggests that other good deeds in addition to the ones he was asked about, would also be acceptable.

Ibn al Qayyim's proofs that you can gift the reward of recitation

In his Kitab al Ruh, Ibn al Qayyim said, a thousand years ago, that you can prove the reward of the good deeds reach the dead, because the Prophet (peace be on him) allowed people to fast, perform hajj, give sadaqah, and make du'a and istighfar on behalf of the dead, but there is no evidence that there is any difference between these and reciting the Quran. He says, furthermore, that the fact the famous hadith says the deeds of the deceased end does not mean that the deeds of the living on behalf of the deceased end. Therefore, there is no contradiction between the hadith and the transfer of good deeds from the living to the dead as a voluntary gift.

Can you mark a death anniversary?

It is not from the sunnah to mark specific anniversaries after someone has died. However, if people want to come together, recite the Quran, and gift the reward of that to the deceased, there is no harm in that.

Post-mortems and organ donation

Is it ok to permit a post-mortem?

If a post-mortem is a coroner's decision, then it is not your choice. If there is any unclear reason for death, it will be necessary to do it as per the coroner's decision. However, if there is a normal death it is not necessary and should not be done. The main principle is that we are not allowed to mutilate the body, as this would be deformation. This principle will be extended over the question of organ donation.

I am frequently asked whether it is permissible to donate organs in Islam. The answer is that, apart from certain restrictions, it is a matter of personal choice, and is permissible as long as it is in line with the shariah.

What is organ donation?

Organ donation is the removal of any 'organ' (tissues, cells, blood and so on, such as the cornea) from the donor and its transplant to the recipient in order to keep the beneficiary alive or to keep some essential or basic function of his body working.

There are four types of organ transplant:

1. Transplant of an organ from a living person
2. Transplant of an organ from a dead person
3. Transplant from a foetus
4. Transplant from an animal

Is organ donation permitted in Islam?

As the possibility of donating organs is a modern scientific development, there is no specific mention of it in the Quran and Sunnah. Therefore, the fatwas that exist are from *ijtihad* (juristic interpretation) based on Islamic principles of fiqh.

In brief, scholars hold different opinions. The majority opinion is that organ transplantation and donation is permissible in Islam with conditions, however there are dissenting opinions among prominent scholars.

Among the councils, in 1988 the Islamic Fiqh Council in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia approved organ donation. In 2000, the [Fatwa of the European Council for Fatwa and Research](#) ratified the resolutions of both the Islamic Fiqh Council in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA) of the Muslim World League.

Based on widespread fatwahas, organ donation is a valid choice as long as it meets the conditions set out by the scholars and is up to the individual. It is not compulsory, but if one does it with the hope of reward it will be rewarded insha'allah, and there is no sin if one does not do it. It is your personal choice.

There is great reward for the one who preserves human life. Allah Almighty states in the Quran:

"...and if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people..." (5:32)

What are the conditions required for organ donation?

Organ transplantation is performed when there is an urgent need to save the life of the patient, in critical and crucial situations or to enhance someone's life who is experiencing hardship.

The transplant should have a high chance of success.

In heart transplantation, the death of the donor must first be ascertained. Physicians differ on whether brain death can be considered true death. However, the majority agree that brain death is true death, not heart death, as once there is brain death, it is irreversible. The Egyptian Islamic Research Assembly adopted this opinion in 2009.

Necessary actions must be taken so that no human killing and organ trading are involved. The organs must be donated freely and willingly, without any coercion or payment. Trafficking organs is haram. Offering compensation or honouring the donor is subject to *ijtihad*.

Permission must be obtained from the donor prior to transplantation (in cases of normal death) or from the family members (in cases of death resulting from accidents).

The donation needs to be carried out with sincere intention and be beneficial to the recipients' quality of life.

The governing principle is that the benefit should outweigh any possible harm. If the harm is greater, then the donation is haram.

It is haram to transplant an organ on which life depends, such as transplanting the heart from a living person to another person. These are generally singular organs, such as the heart, unlike the kidneys.

Harm to the donor should be negligible or relatively minor, such that it does not disrupt the life of the donor. They should not be inflicted with disabilities such as loss of hearing, sight, or mobility. The donor must be informed of the harm involved beforehand, and they should be able to bear the procedure physically, psychologically and materially, based on the opinion of qualified physicians.

It is haram to remove organs which would cause major detriment to the donor, such as removing both corneas or both kidneys. This would cause an essential function to cease, even though life does not depend on it, based on the consultation of trusted consultants.

Apart from singular organs, like the heart, the transplant of a testis or ovary is prohibited as one of the aims of the shariah is the preservation of lineage. The transplanted organ must not in any way lead to confusion regarding one's lineage.

Why is organ donation permissible?

It is permissible because organ transplantation and donation fulfil the requirement of the preservation of human life, which is one of the five objectives in *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of the Islamic law), and removing hardship from someone's life.

1. Deeds are judged by their goals and purpose

Under this legal maxim, the purpose of organ donation is saving a life.

2. Harm must be eliminated

A patient has the option to receive organs from a donor in order to replace their damaged organs. In this context, preventing harm takes priority over preserving the body of the deceased.

3. Hardship begets facility

Organ transplantation grants ease to patients with end-stage organ failure. Allah Almighty states in the Quran:

"...Allah intends every facility for you He does not want to put you to difficulties..." (2:185)

4. Necessity permits prohibited matters

Islamic law permits one who is in an urgent situation to do the unlawful (haram) in order to eliminate the harm he faces, under the condition that there are no other lawful options available. As Allah Almighty states in the Quran:

"...But if one is forced by necessity without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits—then is he guiltless. For Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful." (2:173)

5. The living take precedence over the dead

As established in fiqh (jurisprudence), the living take precedence over the deceased. We know this from the rule that a pregnant mother's life takes precedence over her unborn foetus.

Who can give permission for organ donation?

The deceased before his death, or his heirs after his death, or the authorities in charge if the identity of the deceased is unknown or he has no heirs.

The donor must be a person who is in full possession of their faculties and able to make a sound decision by themselves.

The donor must be an adult.

The donor must have chosen this with their own free will without any external pressure exerted on them.

As such, permission cannot be given by children, mentally incompetent people, or individuals who are confused, under pressure, or coerced to donate.

Is donating organs a violation of the deceased?

There has been a shortage of organ donors from ethnic minorities in the UK, since the body of the deceased has to be cut to remove their organs, and they do not want to violate the sanctity of the body.

And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with (definite) preference. (17:70)

'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) heard the Prophet (peace be on him) say:

"Verily the act of breaking the bones of the deceased is the same as breaking the person's bones while he is alive." (Musnad Ahmad)

We are prohibited from causing any humiliation to the body of the deceased. One must be treated with respect in life and in death. Breaking the bones of the deceased is regarded as an act of torture when it is carried out with malicious intent. However, organ donation and transplants are carried out with benevolent intent. Organ transplantation is not performed with the intention of humiliating or agonising the deceased. Instead, it is carried out with the intention of saving a life, as a final resort, or as a means of removing hardship from someone's life, for instance the one who is on kidney dialysis.

When balancing the principles of the shariah, the need to preserve life would take precedence over any reservations about removing the organs, when done with virtuous and benevolent intent.

"...But if one is forced by necessity without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits—then is he guiltless." (2:173)

Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi said that the act of donating parts of a deceased's body does not violate the dignity of the deceased.

Who can receive organs?

Anyone can receive organs. When one opts in as donor, one does not have the control over where one's organs will go. Some people will be concerned that their organs may end up in the body of someone who will sin. This is the case when one donates blood, as one does not know who will be the recipient and beneficiary of one's donation, but where they have the ability to choose the recipient, they wish to express the condition that a Muslim receives it.

When one opts in with the intention of saving another human life, one should do so holding a good opinion of others, with optimism that Allah Almighty will choose the best recipient for one's organs and trust Him.

One should also bear in mind, that if you are prepared to receive transplanted organs, it is only fair that you are prepared to donate your organs.

Do you have the right to donate your body parts?

As a Muslim, we believe that the body that we have is a gift and a trust from Allah Almighty. This means that we need to take care of our body and to duly give our body its rights both during life and death. According to [Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt](#), who produced a fatwa, 'Organ Donation and Transplantation in Islam: An Opinion':

The life and body of the individual combines both a right of the individual and a right of God [in terms of public interest over which no one individual has an exclusive claim]. The individual enjoys the right of disposal until such disposal conflicts with the right of God. The question thus remains as to where public interest, which is a function of the balance of benefits and harms, lies in the issue of homotransplantation. As long as public interest is served and the benefits to the recipient outweigh the harms to the donor, homotransplantation cannot be deemed to be impermissible on account of a lack of self-ownership.

Will the donor bear the sins of the persons who receive his/her organs?

No, because every *mukalaf* (a person who has reached the age of maturity and of sound mind) is responsible for his own deeds. Allah Almighty says in the Quran:

Say: "Am I, then, to seek a sustainer other than God, when He is the Sustainer of all things?"

And whatever [wrong] any human being commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden. And, in time, unto your Sustainer you all must return: and then He will make you [truly] understand all that on which you used to differ. (6:164)

What is the reward of donating?

Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi holds the opinion that those who donated their organs will be rewarded because the act of donating organs is one of the three deeds that is continuously rewarded even after his death. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

“When the human being dies, his deeds end except for three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for him.” (Muslim)

Will organ donors be raised on the Day of Judgement with the organs that were donated?

On the Day of Judgement Allah Almighty will resurrect mankind in a new form, so the organs of the previous body will not be part of them, as Allah stated in the Quran:

Say, “He will give them life Who created them for the first time, for He is Well versed in every kind of creation! (36:79)

Can Muslims receive organs from non-Muslims?

There are no restrictions in Islam to transplant organs from non-Muslims to Muslims or vice-versa as one does not classify body parts as Muslim or non-Muslim. They are tools used by humans to perform their religious duties and a means of living. When an organ is transplanted from a non-Muslim to a Muslim, that organ becomes part of the new body. A person’s faith does not depend on his organs, but his soul.

Can Muslims donate organs to non-Muslims?

There is a disagreement among scholars on this opinion. There is one opinion which says that it is only fair to be prepared to donate your organs if you are prepared to receive them from non-Muslims:

“Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just.” (60:8)

The Prophet (peace be on him) also reminded us that Muslims should always give to others and help those who are in need, he did not restrict this charity to Muslims.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah placed the sacrifice of the body and soul as the highest level of sacrifice from ten categories of sacrifices that he mentioned in *Madarij al-Salikin*. Organ donors can be categorised under the sacrifice of body and soul, because the donors willingly donated their organs to patients who were in need. Saving human lives is also one of the objectives of Islamic law.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) says:

Whoever helps a brother in difficulty, Allah will help him through his difficulties on the Day of Judgment. (Muslim)

Usually brother means Muslim and then extends metaphorically to non Muslims.

Are transplants from animals permissible?

As for transferring an organ from an animal to a person its rule depends on the rule of the animal itself whether it is pure or impure.

If the animal is pure such as legally slaughtered camels, goats and sheep – there is no doubt about the lawfulness of using any of its parts in medication (transplantation or others) as it is lawful to seek remedy in any lawful thing. The Prophet said:

“Seek remedy as Allah has not sent down any sickness without sending a cure for it” (Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi)

Scholars are agreed that this is lawful. Al Nawawi said:

*“If a person gets one of his bones broken, he could replace it with a pure bone.”
(Al Majmu’ 3-138).*

In the *Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya*, it is stated:

“There is no harm in being treated with a bone from a goat, a cow, a camel, or a horse, or any other animal save the pig”.

However, if the animal is impure, for example it died without being slaughtered, the initial rule is that it is forbidden. However, if there is no alternative and there is a need for it, it is permissible.

In the Shafi’i school, it is said:

“It is unlawful for him to insert an impure bone, as long as he could get a pure one; otherwise he is excused.”

If there is a halal alternative available, it is forbidden to transplant an organ from an impure animal into a human being.

The opt-out system in England

Due to the shortage of organ donations, England changed to an opt out system in 2020.

All adults are deemed to have agreed to be an organ donor when they die unless they have recorded a decision not to donate or are in one of the excluded groups.

When you register as an organ donor on the NHS Organ Donor Register, you can now state on the registration whether or not you would like the NHS to speak to your family, and anyone else appropriate, about how organ donation can go ahead in line with your faith or belief system.

About the organ donation system in England

<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/helping-you-to-decide/about-organ-donation/faq/what-is-the-opt-out-system/>

Register to opt in or out

<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/helping-you-to-decide/about-your-choices/>

Should you visit graves?

Ibn Mas’ud reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

I prohibited you from visiting graves, but visit them now. Verily, they will weaken your attachment to the world and remind you of the Hereafter. (Ibn Majah)

Visiting graveyards reminds us of our final destination. They bring us back to the ultimate reality. One has to be grateful and realise this when one visit hospitals and graves.

Can you donate your body for medical research?

I understand why you would donate organs to save other lives and ease their difficulties. For medical reasons, I have no comment.

Suicide

Suicide is prohibited in the Quran

And do not kill the self that Allah has prohibited, except with the truth (i.e., by right, in the course of justice). (6:151)

Allah Almighty sanctified our soul, so we are forbidden to kill it. The only time He sanctioned killing, it was in the pursuit of justice. In another ayah, Allah Almighty said:

And do not kill yourselves for Allah is most merciful towards you, And whoever does that out of hostility and wrongdoing, We will cast him into a fire and that is easy for Allah Almighty. (4:29-30)

It is very clear from these verses that Allah Almighty is saying that you are forbidden to kill yourself or anyone else.

Suicide is prohibited in the Sunnah

The sunnah confirms this prohibition in many narrations.

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Whoever purposely throws himself from a mountain and kills himself, will be in the (Hell) Fire falling down into it and abiding therein perpetually forever; and whoever drinks poison and kills himself with it, he will be carrying his poison in his hand and drinking it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide eternally forever; and whoever kills himself with an iron weapon, will be carrying that weapon in his hand and stabbing his abdomen with it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide eternally forever. (Bukhari)

There is a similar narration with some different wordings in Sahih Muslim as well.

Suicide by any means is haram

Abu Hurayrah, who came to Islam in the 7th year of Hijri, which was the year the Battle of Khaybar took place, perhaps even a couple of months after he just accepted Islam, said:

We witnessed the Battle of Khaybar (in Muslim it says Battle of Hunayn). Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said about one of those who was with him and who claimed to be a Muslim. "This (man) is from the dwellers of the Hell-Fire." When the battle started, that fellow fought so violently and bravely that he received plenty of wounds. Some of the people were about to doubt (the Prophet's statement), but the man, feeling the pain of his wounds, put his hand into his quiver and took out of it, some arrows with which he slaughtered himself (i.e. committed suicide). Then some men amongst the Muslims came hurriedly and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Allah has made your statement true so-and-so has committed suicide. "The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "O so-and-so! Get up and make an announcement that none but a believer will enter Paradise and that Allah may support the religion with an unchaste (evil) wicked man. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Due to the sanctity of life, as well as the main principles of shariah, it is haram to kill yourself or anyone else. In another narration, on the authority of Jundub ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

There was amongst those before you a man who had a wound. He was in (such) anguish that he took a knife and made with it a cut in his hand, and the blood did not cease to flow till he died. Allah Almighty said: 'My slave hurried to bring death upon himself so I have forbidden him (to enter) paradise.' (Bukhari)

Here Allah Almighty says, 'My servant hurried to bring death on himself' and so he has been forbidden entry to Jannah.

Suicide is a major sin

Scholars have commented that killing yourself is one of the worst crimes, because after committing shirk, the second worst crime is killing: akbar al kabaa'ir al shirku billaah (the greatest sin is shirk), followed by al qatl (killing).

Do major sins lead to eternal punishment?

If someone commits a big sin, does this make him reside in Jahannam forever? For instance, if someone commits a big sin, like being bad to his parents, which is one of the major sins, or is a thief, or kills someone, or himself, can he be forgiven?

Allah Almighty says in the Quran very clearly that He forgives all sins, if you repent, and return to Him, and ask Him for forgiveness:

Allah will never forgive shirk (to take partners with him) and He forgives other than that for whom He wills (4:48)

The only crime, which Allah Almighty never forgives is dying in a state of shirk (believing that Allah Almighty has partners), worshipping idols or other than Allah. This is never forgiven. Apart from this, Allah Almighty will forgive anything for whom He wills.

Disbelievers reside in hell forever

The one who resides in hellfire forever is the disbeliever; the one who believes that Allah Almighty has partners or worships idols, or other deities. This leads to the big question, if someone is not a person of shirk, or a mushrik, (disbeliever) but a believer, and he commits a mistake, even the biggest mistake – to kill himself or someone else, will he reside in Jahannam forever?

We have some discussion on this point among the scholars. The majority opinion is that it does not make him reside in Jahannam forever, as Allah Almighty stated in the Quran He can forgive anything other than shirk to whoever He wills. However, there would be punishment for it.

If, however, someone says that to kill himself is not haram, this is an act of kufr (disbelief), as it is changing Allah's command from haram to halal. The punishment for kufr is eternal damnation. This is because no one has the right to change Allah's commands, except Allah Almighty. Even prophets and messengers were not allowed to do this without Allah's permission.

If someone claims that killing oneself is halal, then he has changed Allah Almighty's commands and made haram into halal, so he will reside in hell forever. The one who believes it is haram, but out of his pain and agony, takes his life, commits a big sin, but it is not the sin of kufr and accordingly he's not a kafir.

I know many people will be surprised with this. This is not an encouragement definitely for somebody to go and kill himself, definitely not, but we have to clarify that this is not an act of kufr, this is an act of big sin and it is absolutely forbidden and haram.

Euthanasia

Going deeper into the hadith, is euthanasia or mercy killing as it is also known, permitted? No. It's haram. From a Shariah point of view, it's haram and from a legal point of view, in this country it is also illegal. It is legal in some countries, however it is still haram, and illegal in the U.K.

Boundaries set by Allah Almighty

Killing is completely haram. The basic point is that Allah Almighty sets the boundaries. This is to deter people from considering the taking of life as something light. It is not. And it would lead to chaos in society. Therefore, one of the boundaries, which must be strictly protected, is killing - *wa laa taqtuloo anfusakum, inna-llaaha kaana bikum raheemaa*:

And do not kill yourselves, Allah is most merciful towards you, And whoever does that out of hostility and wrongdoing, We will cast him into a fire and that is easy for Allah Almighty (4:29-30)

Abusive behaviour

There is a high rate of suicide all over the globe. People in their acute suffering are opting to end their lives. Recently, we have seen people ending their lives due to abuse by the media and social media. This is tragic. Regardless of the reason, and the form in which the suicide is committed, it is still haram.

Is suicide choice or destiny?

Scholars have commented here how a person can cut short their lifespan by killing himself. They said that there are two life spans – a restricted one and an absolute lifespan. There are two scenarios. If a man did not kill himself, he would have lived 30 years. However, if he killed himself, he lived less. Allah knew, of course, what would happen. The man made his choice, and so he chose his destiny. The angels wrote this down in their books. Had he not chosen to kill himself, he would have lived for his complete span of 30 years.

Allah Almighty definitely knew that he would choose to kill himself. No one forced him. Destiny cannot force anyone to do anything. Destiny is the outcome of our choices. Allah Almighty has recorded this.

Suicidal thoughts

Suicidal thoughts come from desperation and extreme depression. Mental health issues are often the underlying cause of suicide. Anyone, regardless of age, ethnicity and gender can be affected by mental health issues. We should not stigmatise this, but reach out to others who are suffering from this to get the appropriate treatment, and if we are suffering then we need to seek help. Suicide is the single largest killer of men under 45 in the UK. With the right help, these deaths can be prevented.

Looking out for others who might be suicidal

If we know any depressed person around us, and if they are not seeking any help, it's our moral and social responsibility to inform their immediate family members or someone who can help. Do not leave the person alone for a long time. Keep an eye on them.

We can also identify such persons through their non-verbal cues. For instance, if they are down, withdrawn and making their will, giving away their personal possession, buying weapons, or drugs or any other harmful substances ask their immediate family members to consult a psychiatrist or mental health practitioner. There are solutions to every problem beneath the surface, we just have to do our best.

Coping with suicidal thoughts

What should someone who is feeling suicidal do? I know sometimes people say it's enough to recite Quran and say 'Aoodhu billaahi mina shaytaanir rajeem', this is helpful but it does not work in all scenarios.

- Tell someone
- Firstly it's very important to tell someone if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, and to tell someone whom you trust. You need to seek help and support. You can call your GP, or a mental health helpline, but it is important to tell someone. Who you can contact:

[Muslim Youth Helpline](#)
[NHS](#)

- Don't think about the future, just focus on getting through your day.
- Avoid harmful substances, *especially* drugs and alcohol.
- Don't be alone.
- Don't disconnect from the world. Don't switch off your mobile. Don't lock yourself in your house and speak to no one.
- Stay with a friend, be surrounded by people. The more you feel alone the more you will be consumed by these thoughts, and the more Shaytan will play on you. We can all suffer very tragic and depressing experiences at different times. If you keep dwelling on your sadness Shaytan preys on you.

- Do something you enjoy. Whether it is going for a walk in the park, going to the gym or being with a pet, do something that makes you feel good, and lifts your spirits and your mood.
- Seek Allah.
- Listen to the Quran, pray regularly, and do as much dhikr of Allah Almighty as possible.
- No matter how difficult it seems, this life is a gift. If you find it unbearable, seek His help. The One who gave you the gift of existence. And get help from those who are experienced and trustworthy to overcome your situation and reach safety, with Allah's will.

We are weak

Allah Almighty says *khalaqnaakum min da'f*

We created you from weakness. (30:54)

However, you cannot shorten your life and blame destiny for your choice. The bottom line is that it is forbidden. It is haram to kill yourself or to kill someone. Allah Almighty wants us to survive and live for Him, that is why He stated *wa laa taqtuloo anfusakum*:

And do not kill yourselves. (4:29)

This is why the verses and the hadith are unanimous that suicide is haram. It costs your akhirah and is punished by hellfire.

We ask Allah Almighty to enable us to be amongst those whom He protects from the whispers of Shaytan, and from tribulations that bring us to depression and to suicide, and we ask Allah Almighty to protect our families and our loved ones and keep us safe and keep us connected to Him. Ameen.

Questions and answers

Can the soul feel that we miss them?

There are some narrations which say this. Imam Ibn Al Qayyim, in his book Kitab al Ruh, talks about this and supports this concept. There is strong support also from his shaykh, Ibn Taymiyyah.

Can we feel the presence of the soul in our homes?

There is no evidence that souls cannot attend physically. However, within dreams, I would say without hesitation, that they come to us.

Some people pretend they can talk to souls and brings souls into their presence, and make a business out of it. This is all fake.

Do the deceased know what is going on in our lives?

In the hadith in Sunan Al-Nasa'i, the souls know what is happening in our world from newly arrived souls. They ask them eagerly for news of what is happening to the people they left behind.

Do souls meet each other?

Good souls are not captive. Bad souls are captive. Good souls roam around. Depending on their status, they have different levels of roaming. Some are limited to certain areas, others can go anywhere they want.

Is there a reception party waiting for them on the other side?

The moment the soul of believer arrives on the other end, the other souls rejoice more than when we rejoice when our absent loved one comes.

Do the souls receive our du'as as gifts in their grave?

They do. It is in their record. They are aware of them. Sometimes the deceased come in people's dreams and ask to be fed, this means they are looking for you to give charity on their behalf, so they can benefit from it.

The du'a to replace your family with a better family, what does it mean?

Inshallah, it means their family will follow them and be a better version of themselves. Or they will be in better company, like the righteous and scholars. You should not be upset about this.

If your loved one is elevated, you will miss them.

You will be with those whom you love, as per the hadith.

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

A man asked the Prophet (peace be on him) about the Hour (i.e. Day of Judgment) saying, "When will the Hour be?" The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "What have you prepared for it?" The man said, "Nothing, except that I love Allah and His Apostle." The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "You will be with those whom you love." We had never been so glad as we were on hearing that saying of the Prophet

(i.e., "You will be with those whom you love.") Therefore, I love the Prophet, Abu Bakr and `Umar, and I hope that I will be with them because of my love for them, though my deeds are not similar to theirs. (Bukhari)

If somebody passes away as a result of black magic what is their status?

If it is really caused by black magic, then they would be close to shaheed. But this would be very, very rare. Those who can really do this, can be counted on your hand.

Can the deceased pray in their grave?

There are some disputed narrations which say that when the two angels come to question the deceased, he will say, 'Leave me I want to pray, and they reply, you will, but not now.' Some say it is very weak and others say it is hasan, that they pray. The prophets have been granted this level. There is a hadith that the prophets are alive in the graves, praying. The majority of scholars do not believe that this has been granted to others.

If you see a bad dream about someone who passed away:

Give sadaqah jariyah for them and pray for them.

Should we be hopeful for our deceased?

Always have a good opinion of Allah. There is a weak narration, which is not far from Allah's mercy. Two people were to go to hellfire. After their records were read, the angels were asked to take them to hell. And Allah asked, 'Have we oppressed you? Is the judgement fair?' One of the men looked back and Allah said, 'Why are you looking back?' And he said 'This was not my expectation of you.' Allah said, 'What did you expect?' and the man said 'I expected you to forgive me.' Then Allah said 'Go you are forgiven'.

Do the deceased forget about the life of the world?

No. They still remember life and long to receive someone to tell them what is happening. They are still attached.

Does Surah Mulk prevent punishment in the grave?

Yes.

Can you buy a plot in the same graveyard to be near your deceased loved one?

Yes

Does the angel of death visit your house 5 times a day?

This is a very weak narration. Some scholars say it is fabricated. There is a weak/good narration that the angel of death visits us once a day. It is narrated in Musnad as Shihab.

Is there punishment in barzakh?

Yes. There is consensus among scholars that the punishment of the grave is true. There is clear and authentic hadith that two people were punished in the grave, one for malicious gossip backbiting and the other for not purifying himself from urine.

What is the concept of time in the grave?

It depends on your level, for some it will be very long, for others it will be short.

Can the family give sadaqah jariyah for the deceased?

Yes it can be given while the family member is alive, and after they have passed away.

Should you attend non-Muslim funerals?

Part of being a good Muslim is not to get involved in any ritual which is out of Islam. Pay your respects and give condolences. Do not be part of the religious rituals.

Jazakumullahu khayran for spending time learning with us. We need your support to enable us to reach more people and spread authentic knowledge. Every contribution big or small is valuable to our future.

<https://www.utrujj.org/giving/>

'If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect.' (Muslim)

CULTURE VS ISLAM

From the moment we are born, till we die our lives including our funeral rites reflect our culture. We follow a path that is heavily dictated by our cultural norms and upbringing. Our individual choices and expectations are subconsciously influenced by them.

How can we distinguish between which of our practices are cultural and which are based in Islam?

Which cultural practices are acceptable, and which are not?

Islam is not against culture, but Islam is against oppression. Find out how to determine when you can accept culture and when you need to reject it.

SHAYKH HAYTHAM TAMIM

He appears in the Emerald 100 List of inspiring Muslims and is winner of the 2015 BISCA Award (British Imams & Scholars Contributions & Achievements Awards) for Outstanding Contribution to Education and Teaching.

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