

سبعون سؤالاً في أحكام الجنائر

*

70 Questions about the Rulings on Funerals

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

The Rulings on Funerals

Q 1: What should a person do when he sits in the presence of someone who is dying? Is the recitation of Sūrat Yāsīn [Qur'an Ch. 36] beside a dying person authentically reported in the Sunnah or not?

A 1: In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his Companions.

Visiting the sick is one of the rights of Muslims upon one another. If someone visits a sick person, he should remind him of repenting, the duty to prepare a will, and filling his time with remembrance of Allah Almighty. A sick person is in need of such things.

If he becomes certain that the person is dying, he should try to make him say "there is no god but Allah", as instructed by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)¹. To this end, he

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Dictating "there is no god but Allah" to the dying people; no. (916) and (917). Reported by Abu Sa'īd and Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with both of them).

is to mention Allah with an audible voice so that the dying person can hear it, remember, and mention Allah.

The scholars said: He should not ask him to say it, for he might refuse due to the distress he is experiencing, and thus his ending would be bad; rather, he should remind him through action, namely by mentioning Allah near him. They added: If he reminds him, and he remembers and says "there is no god but Allah", then he should keep quiet and not talk to him again, so that his last words would be "there is no god but Allah".

If the dying person speaks more, he should remind him again, for his last words to be "there is no god but Allah".

As for the recitation of Sūrat Yāsīn in the presence of a dying person, it is deemed Sunnah by many scholars,

لَقَوْلِهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «اقْرَءُوا عَلَى مَوْتَاكُمْ {يس} [سورة يس: 1]»،
based on the Prophet's Hadīth: "Recite Yāsīn over those who are dying among you."¹ However, some scholars questioned the authenticity of this Hadīth and considered it weak. So, those who deem the Hadīth authentic hold that such recitation of Sūrat

¹ Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Recitation of the Qur'an near a dying person; no. (3121). Narrated by Ibn Mājah; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on what should be said in the presence of a sick person who is dying; no. (1448). Narrated by Ahmad (5/26). Reported by Ma'qil ibn Yasār (may Allah be pleased with him).

Yāsīn is Sunnah; whereas those who deem it weak do not view such recitation as Sunnah.

Q 2: Breaking the news of the death of someone to his relatives and friends so that they would gather and offer the funeral prayer; does this fall under the prohibited obituary or it is permissible?

A 2: This falls under the permissible death announcement; that is why the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) announced the death of the Negus on the day he died.¹ And regarding the woman who used to sweep the mosque and she died and was buried by the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) without informing the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), he said:

«هلا كنتم آذنتموني»

“Why did you not tell me.”² There is nothing wrong with announcing the death of someone in order to increase the number of people who offer the funeral prayer, for similar incidents are reported in the Sunnah. However, the obituary made after burial is prohibited.

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Merits (of the Prophet and his Companions); Chapter: Death of the Negus; no. (3880). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Making Takbīr in the funeral prayer; no. (951). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Prayer; Chapter: Sweeping the mosque; no. (458). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Prayer over the grave; no. (956). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

Q 3: What is the manner of washing a dead person? What advice can you give to seekers of knowledge regarding this matter and their tendency to wash the dead?

A 3: The manner of washing a dead person: He should be put in a secluded place where no one can see him and no one attends except the person washing his body or those helping with this. He is to be undressed after putting a piece of cloth over his private parts so that no one sees it; neither the washer nor anyone else. Then, his private parts are to be cleansed then ablution is to be made for him like the ablution made for prayer. But the scholars said that water should not be let into his mouth or nose; rather, a piece of cloth is to be moistened with water and used to rub his teeth and the inside of his nose. After that, his head and the rest of his body is to be washed, beginning with the right side.

Sidr (lote tree) leaves should be put into the water because it cleanses. The Sidr foam should be used to wash the head and beard of the deceased.

Also, some camphor should be added in the last wash, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) ordered those washing his deceased daughter to do so.

قال: «اجعلن في الغسلة الأخيرة كافورًا أو شيئًا من كافورٍ»،

He said: “Put in the last wash camphor, or a little camphor.”¹ Then, the body is to be dried and put on his shroud.

Washing the dead is a collective duty, as it is well known. If some people discharge it adequately, it ceases to be due on the rest. I believe that those undertaking this task know well how to do it in a Shar‘i manner. Seekers of knowledge do not have to engage in this, for they may be preoccupied with more important things. The authorities appoint people who undertake this job in an adequate way. What is incumbent upon them, however, is to learn how to wash and shroud the dead so as to be familiar with this matter; and Allah knows best.

Q 4: What is the manner of the funeral prayer?

A 4: The manner of the funeral prayer: The dead person should be placed in front of the praying people. The Imām should stand at the head of a dead man and at the middle of the body of a dead woman. Then, he should make the first Takbīr after which he recites Sūrat al-Fātihah, then the second Takbīr after which he invokes Allah’s peace and blessings upon the Prophet, and then the third Takbīr after which he supplicates for the deceased person.

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Camphor is put in the last time; no. (1258). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Washing the dead; no. (939). Reported by Um ‘Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her).

The relevant supplication is well known in the Islamic books: He should first make a general supplication: “O Allah, forgive our living and our dead, and our young and our old ...” etc. Then, he should make the specific supplication reported from the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him). If he does not know it, he may make any supplication he recalls. What matters is to specifically supplicate for the deceased, for he is in need of this.

Then, he should make the fourth Takbīr, stand for a little while, and make Taslīm.

Some scholars mentioned that after the fourth Takbīr, he should say: “Our Lord, give us in this world what is good and in the Hereafter what is good and protect us from the punishment of Hellfire.”

If he makes a fifth Takbīr, there is nothing wrong with that; rather, it is part of the Sunnah¹, so, it should be done from time to time to prevent it from disappearing. I do not know about anything reported on what is to be said after the fifth Takbīr. But if he intends to make a fifth Takbīr, let him divide the supplication between the fourth and fifth ones, and Allah knows best.

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Prayer over the grave; no. (957). Reported by Zayd ibn Arqam (may Allah be pleased with him).

Q 5: What is the ruling on delaying the preparation of the dead person's washing, shrouding, funeral prayer, or burial until his relatives arrive? What is the rule governing this issue?

A 5: Delaying the preparation of the dead person's funeral and burial runs counter to the Prophet's Sunnah and command. He said:

«أسرعوا بالجنائز، فإن تك صالحةً فخيرٌ تقدّمونها إليه، وإن تك سوى ذلك فشرٌ تضعونه عن رقابكم».

“Hasten with the funeral, for if it is righteous, you will be taking it forward to what is good; and if it is otherwise, you will be laying evil off your necks.”¹

They should not wait, except for a little while, like an hour or two. But waiting for long would be an injustice done to the deceased, for the righteous person, when his relatives begin to walk with his coffin, says: Take me ahead, take me ahead. So, he asks to be buried quickly, for he is promised abundant good and reward, and Allah knows best.

Q 6: Is the absentee funeral prayer legitimate in all cases?

A 6: According to the preponderant opinion of scholars, the absentee funeral prayer is only legitimate when no funeral prayer was offered for

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Hastening with the funeral; no. (1315). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Hastening with the funeral; no. (944). Reported by Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him).

the deceased, like when a Muslim dies in a non-Muslim country and no one performs the funeral prayer for him there, in which case it would be incumbent to offer the funeral prayer for him in absentia. However, in the case of a dead person for whom a funeral prayer was held, an absentee funeral prayer for him is not legitimate, for nothing of the sort is reported in the Sunnah except in the story of the Negus¹ whom no one offered the funeral prayer for in his country. That is why the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) offered the funeral prayer for him in absentia, in Madīnah. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is not reported to have offered the absentee funeral prayer for other senior and leading Muslims who died during his lifetime.

Some scholars said: If a person who has benefited the religion with his wealth or knowledge dies, the absentee funeral prayer may be offered for him; otherwise, it should not be offered for him.

Other scholars held that the absentee funeral prayer may be offered for anyone, and this is the weakest opinion.

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Merits (of the Prophet and his Companions); Chapter: Death of the Negus; no. (3880). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Making Takbīr in the funeral prayer; no. (951). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him). Also narrated by Muslim in the above mentioned book and chapter with the numbers (952) and (953), as reported by Jābir and 'Imrān ibn Husayn (may Allah be pleased with both of them).

Q 7: Who is more entitled to lead the funeral prayer for a dead person: the Imām or the deceased's guardian?

A 7: If his funeral prayer is held in the mosque, then the mosque's Imām is more entitled to this.

لَقَوْلِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «لَا يُؤْمِنُ الرَّجُلُ الرَّجُلَ فِي سُلْطَانِهِ»،

The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "No man should lead another in prayer where the latter has authority."¹ If the funeral prayer is offered in a place other than the mosque, then his heir is the most entitled to this; and if he has no heir, then the closest person to him.

Q 8: If there is a number of dead people, should we put the most knowledgeable of them to be the first in order before the Imām, or are they equal?

A 8: Men should be put first, followed by women, and boys should be put ahead of women. So, if we have an adult man, a boy who had not reached puberty, an adult woman, and a girl who had not reached puberty, the Imām should arrange them in this order: the man, then the boy, then the woman, and then the girl.

If the dead persons are of the same gender - for example, men only - we should put the more knowledgeable among them first, for the Prophet

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques; Chapter: Who is more entitled to lead the prayer; no. (673). Reported by Abu Mas'ūd al-Ansāri (may Allah be pleased with him).

(may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), when a group of martyrs in the battle of Uhud were to be buried in one grave, he would ask: "Who amongst them had more of the Qur'an?" Then he would put that person ahead in the niche.¹ This indicates that the knowledgeable person should be put first in order before the Imām.

Q 9: Where should the Imām stand during the funeral prayer for men, women, and children?

A 9: The Imām should stand at the head of a man and at the middle of the body of a woman, be they children or adults. So, he stands at the head of a little boy and at the middle of the body of a little girl.

Q 10: What is the ruling on announcing the gender of the deceased prior to the funeral prayer for him or her, if there is a large crowd?

A 10: There is nothing wrong with that, so that people can supplicate for the deceased in masculine form if it is a male or feminine form if it is a female. If the gender is not announced, there is also nothing wrong with that, and those who do not know the gender of the deceased should make their intention to offer the prayer for the dead person present

¹ Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Should the martyr be washed; no. (3136). Narrated by al-Tirmidhi; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on the fallen in the battle of Uhud; no. (1016). Narrated by Ahmad (3/128). Reported by Anas ibn Mālīk (may Allah be pleased with him).

before them, and their prayer is valid; and Allah knows best.

Q 11: Especially on Fridays, a lot of dead persons are brought to the mosque and there is not enough room for them. Should they be arranged in a row or should the funeral prayer be offered for them several times?

A 11: The funeral prayer should be offered for all of them as they are placed in front of the Imām, one after the other. The Imām should step backwards and so should those praying behind him, even if people have to stand in very close rows, since they do not need to bow or prostrate themselves.

Q 12: Was anything reported on having a large number of people join the funeral prayer? And what is the wisdom behind this?

A 12: Yes, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is authentically reported to have said: "If a Muslim dies and forty men, who do not associate anything with Allah in worship, offer the funeral prayer over him, Allah will accept their intercession for him."¹

Q 13: What is the ruling on reciting a verse after Sūrat al-Fātihah in the funeral prayer?

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: If forty people offer the funeral prayer for a person, their intercession for him shall be accepted; no. (948). Reported by Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

A 13: There is nothing wrong if a person recites some verses of the Qur'an after Sūrat al-Fātihah in the funeral prayer; but he should not make his recitation long. If he recites Al-Fātihah only, this is enough, for the funeral prayer should be light; that is why the opening supplication should not be recited therein; rather, a person should only seek refuge in Allah and recite Al-Fātihah.

Q 14: What is the supplication for a dead child?

A 14: The scholars mentioned that the following is the supplication for a dead child, to be said after the general supplication: "O Allah, make him a reward in store for his parents and an accepted intercessor; O Allah, make their scales heavy and their rewards great on account of him, join him with the righteous believing predecessors, put him in the care of Abraham, and save him from the punishment of Hellfire." He can recite this supplication or any other supplication he recalls. There is much leeway in this matter, and there is no authentic Sunnah in this respect that can serve as a basis. Allah knows best.

Q 15: What is the ruling on reciting Sūrat al-Fātihah in the funeral prayer?

A 15: Recitation of Sūrat al-Fātihah is a pillar of prayer,

لقول النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: «لا صلاة لمن لم يقرأ بفاتحة الكتاب»،

for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There is no prayer for someone who did not recite Al-Fātihah."¹ There is no difference in this respect between the funeral prayer and other prayers, for it is, after all, a prayer and so it falls under the Prophet's statement:

«لا صلاة لمن لم يقرأ بفاتحة الكتاب».

"There is no prayer for someone who did not recite Al-Fātihah."

Q 16: If someone misses the Takbīrs or one of them, should he make up for them? And how can he join the prayer with the Imām?

A 16: He joins the prayer with the Imām in whichever part of the prayer he catches up with.

لَقَوْلِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «مَا أَدْرَكْتُمْ فَصَلُّوا، وَمَا فَاتَكُمْ فَأَتِمُّوا».

The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Pray what you catch up with, and make up for what you have missed."² When the Imām makes Taslīm, he should make up for what he has missed, if the funeral remains and does not

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of the Adhān; Chapter: The obligation of recitation by the Imām and those led in prayer; no. (756). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Prayer; Chapter: The obligation of reciting Al-Fātihah; no. (394). Reported by 'Ubādah ibn al-Sāmit (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of the Adhān; Chapter: One should not run to prayer; no. (636); and Chapter: A man's statement: We have missed the prayer; no. (635). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Mosques; Chapter: The desirability to go to prayer in a tranquil and dignified manner; no. (602) and (603). Reported by Abu Hurayrah and Abu Qatādah (may Allah be pleased with both of them).

leave. If, however, he fears it may leave, the scholars say that he has the choice either to complete the prayer or to make Taslīm with the Imām, and Allah knows best.

Q 17: What are the times in which we are forbidden from offering funeral prayers? Why would people not offer the funeral prayer before the Fajr prayer or ‘Asr prayer if they are gathered, especially in the Two Sacred Mosques, to avoid the prohibited times?

A 17: There are three times in which the funeral prayer and burial are forbidden:

When the sun rises until it is as high as the length of a spear.

When the sun is high at noon; i.e. about ten minutes before it passes the zenith.

When the sun is the length of a spear from setting.

These are three times, and they are mentioned in a Hadīth by ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported: “There are three times at which the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) forbade us to pray or bury our dead...” And he mentioned those three times.¹

As for the times after the Fajr and ‘Asr prayers, we are not forbidden from offering the funeral

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Prayer by Travelers; Chapter: The times at which the Prophet forbade praying; no. (831).

prayer in them. Hence, there is no need to offer the funeral prayer before the Fajr or 'Asr prayer, and Allah knows best.

Q 18: What is the ruling on standing for a funeral before it is placed for the prayer and before it is put on the ground prior to the burial? And what is the ruling on standing up during burial? Kindly note that if people stand up for the funeral prayer when it enters the mosque, they stop saying the Dhikr after prayer.

A 18: It is Sunnah for a person to stand for a funeral passing by him, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) instructed us to do so.¹ As for offering the funeral prayer right after the Imām makes Taslīm, we say that if there are a lot of people still completing the prayer, wait for them, lest they miss the reward of the funeral prayer and so that more people would join this prayer; but if there is none, or only a few people, completing the prayer after the Imām, it is better to offer the funeral prayer right away, lest people leave.

Q 19: Sometimes the relatives of a dead person or those carrying the coffin step forward before the funeral prayer and stand to the right of the Imām;

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Standing for the funeral; no. (1307). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Standing for the funeral; no. (958). Reported by 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah (may Allah be pleased with him).

is there any basis for this in the Shariah? What is the authentic Sunnah regarding this matter?

A 19: When the relatives of a dead person or those carrying the coffin step forward before the funeral prayer, they ought not to pray beside the Imām, not to his right nor to his left, but in the rows with the other people. If they have no place to pray, they may pray behind the Imām, between him and the first row, for standing beside the Imām, if two or more people join the prayer, is not legitimate. Rather, if the praying group consists of two or more people, the Imām should stand ahead of them. If it happens that there is no place for them between the Imām and the first row, they can stand to the right and to the left of the Imām, not to his right only. An exception is when the coffin is carried by one person, like when the deceased person is a young child. In such case, he can stand to the right of the Imām, if he fails to find a place for himself in the row, and Allah knows best.

Q 20: Is funeral prayer offered for a stillborn in all cases?

A 20: There is no funeral prayer for a stillborn unless life has been breathed into it, which happens after it becomes four months old in its mother's womb.

كما يدلّ عليه حديث ابن مسعود رضي الله عنه، قال: حدثنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم -وهو الصادق المصدوق- فقال: «إن أحدمكم يجمع خلقه في بطن أمّه أربعين يوماً نطفةً، ثم يكون علقةً مثل ذلك، ثم يكون مضغةً مثل ذلك، ثم يرسل

إليه الملك، فينفخ فيه الرّوح، ويؤمر بأربع كلمات: بكتب رزقه، وأجله، وعمله، وشقيّ أم سعيد؟»¹

This is indicated in a Hadīth by Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported: The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) - the truthful and the receiver of the truth - said to us: "Every one of you is collected in the womb of his mother for forty days in the form of a drop of semen; then it becomes a clot of blood in a similar period; then it becomes a lump of flesh in a similar period; then Allah sends an angel who breathes life into it; and he is commanded to record four things about it: Its provision, its term of life, its deeds; and whether it will be happy or miserable."¹ Accordingly, if the stillborn is at least four months old, then it should be washed, shrouded, prayed upon, and buried in Muslim cemeteries. But if it is less than four months old, it should not be washed, shrouded, or prayed upon, and it can be buried anywhere in the earth.

Q 21: Is it part of the Sunnah that the head of the deceased be to the right of the Imām during the funeral prayer?

A 21: I do not know about this being part of Sunnah. Hence, the Imām of the funeral prayer

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Prophets; Chapter: The creation of Adam (peace be upon him); no. (3332). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Destiny; Chapter: How humans are created; no. (2643). Reported by Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him).

should sometimes place the head of the deceased to his left so that people would know that it is not obligatory to place it to his right. Some people think that the head of the deceased must be to the right of the Imām, but there is no basis for this.

Q 22: If a person is delayed from the funeral prayer, due to traffic or the performance of a regular Sunnah prayer or to complete an obligatory prayer or the like, and he could not proceed with the funeral, but he catches up with it before burial, is he deemed a follower of the funeral procession who deserves the relevant reward?

A 22: If he is delayed from the funeral prayer because of performing a regular Sunnah prayer, he will not get the reward for the funeral prayer, for he may delay the regular Sunnah prayer until he returns from the funeral.

If, however, he is delayed by a valid excuse and then he comes and is keen to join the funeral but something prevented him or the people moved ahead until they have offered the funeral prayer and reached the cemetery, apparently he will receive the reward, for he had the intention and did what he could, and when a person intends to do something and does his best to this end, the full reward is written down for him.

قال الله تعالى: ﴿وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكُهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ﴾ [النساء: 100]،

Allah Almighty says: {And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him - his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah} [Al-Nisā': 100] But if he can offer the funeral prayer at the cemetery, let him do so.

Q 23: If a person or a group of people miss the funeral prayer in the mosque, is it permissible for them to perform it in the cemetery before burial or at the grave after burial?

A 23: Yes, this is permissible. But if they can pray it before burial, let them do so. And if they arrive after the deceased has been buried, they can perform the prayer at the grave. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is authentically reported to have performed the funeral prayer at the grave.¹

Q 24: If a man enters the mosque and has missed the obligatory prayer with the Imām, and the deceased has been placed for the funeral prayer, should he join the funeral prayer or offer the obligatory prayer?

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Prayer; Chapter: Sweeping the mosque; no. (458), and Book of Funerals; Chapter: The funeral notice; no. (1247). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Prayer at the grave; no. (956) and (954). Reported by Abu Hurayrah and Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with both of them). Also narrated by Muslim in the above-mentioned book and chapter; no. (955) as reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).

A 24: He joins the funeral prayer with the Imām, because he can offer the obligatory prayer later; but the people will perform the funeral prayer and leave for burial.

Q 25: What is the ruling on offering the funeral prayer for a person who is known or suspected to have been a non-performer of prayer, or his state in this regard is unknown? Is his guardian allowed to put his coffin for the funeral prayer?

A 25: As for a person known to have died while he does not pray, it is not permissible to offer the funeral prayer for him, for he is a disbeliever and apostate. A hole should be dug outside the cemetery, where his body is to be thrown, without a funeral prayer. Such a person should not be honored, and he will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment with Pharaoh, Hamān, Qarūn, and Ubayy ibn Khalaf.

If, however, people are unaware or doubtful about his state in this respect, they ought to offer the funeral prayer for him, for he is a Muslim in principle until it is proved otherwise. If a person has doubts about a dead person, he can use the conditional form in his supplication for him, saying: "O Allah, if he is a believer forgive him and show him mercy." Using the conditional form in supplication occurred in the Qur'an with regard to those who slander their spouses without bringing

four witnesses. A man engaged in an oath of condemnation against his wife says in the fifth oath:

{أَنْ لَعَنْتَ اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ} [النور: 7]

{...that the curse of Allah be upon him if he should be among the liars} [Al-Nūr: 7] And she says in the fifth oath:

{أَنْ غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ} [النور: 9]

{...that the wrath of Allah be upon her if he was of the truthful} [Al-Nūr: 9]

Q 26: Is it permissible to use the conditional form in supplication for a dead person during the funeral prayer, like saying: O Allah, if he testifies that there is no god but Allah... etc.? Is there a basis for this in the Shariah?

A 26: If a person has strong doubts regarding the deceased, he may say: "O Allah, if he is a believer, forgive him and show him mercy." But if he does not have strong doubt concerning him, he should not use the conditional form, for the basic rule is that Muslims are considered to be following Islam.

Using the conditional form in supplication has a basis, including the verse about the oath of condemnation, which says:

{وَالْخَمِيسَةُ أَنْ لَعَنْتَ اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ} [النور: 7]

{And the fifth (oath) is that the curse of Allah be upon him if he should be among the liars} [Al-Nūr: 7] And the woman says: {...that the wrath of Allah be upon her if he was of the truthful} [Al-Nūr: 9]

Another example is the conditional form used by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqās (may Allah be pleased with him) when he supplicated: "O Allah, if this man got up to show off and seek fame, make his life long, prolong his poverty, and subject him to temptations."¹

It also falls under the Prophet's statement to Dubā'ah bint al-Zubayr: "The condition you stipulate will be accepted by your Lord."²

Q 27: Which is better: to carry the coffin on the shoulders or on a car? Also which is better: to be in front of the coffin or behind it, whether one is walking or riding?

A 27: It is better to carry the coffin on the shoulders, for this is a direct involvement and it gives stronger admonition. Moreover, the funeral in this manner passes by people in the streets and markets and they recognize it and supplicate for the deceased. This is also farther from pomp and boastfulness. An exception is when there is a need or necessity for carrying it in a car, in which case there is no harm in doing so. For example, the funeral may take place at a time of rain or severe heat or cold, or there are a few people following it.

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Adhān; Chapter: The obligation of recitation by the Imām and those led in prayer; no. (755).

² Narrated by Al-Nasā'ī; Book of the Rituals of Hajj; Chapter: What does he say when he sets a condition?; no. (2767). Reported by Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

As for being in front of the coffin or behind it, the scholars mentioned that there is a difference between being to the right of the coffin or to the left and in front of it or behind it. Those who are walking should be in front of it and those who are riding should be behind it. Some scholars are of the opinion that a person should consider which is easier for him and do it, whether being on the right or on the left or in front of it or behind it.

Q 28: What does Tarbī' (squaring) in carrying the coffin mean? Is there a basis for it?

A 28: Tarbī' is that a person carries the four ends of the coffin in succession, starting from the front right corner - of the deceased - then the back corner then the front left corner then the back corner. There are reports from our predecessors about this matter, and the scholars recommended it. However, it is more appropriate for a person to do what is easier, if there is crowdedness, and avoid burdening himself and others.

Q 29: When can a person who follows a funeral to the grave sit?

A 29: He can sit when the deceased is lowered in the grave or when the coffin is placed on the ground pending the completion of digging the grave.

Q 30: Is it permissible to delay the burial of a dead person on the grounds that a group of people are coming to offer funeral prayer for him, even if the delay is for less than ten minutes, in case the

funeral prayer has already been offered in the mosque?

A 30: Hastening with the funeral is better and consistent with the Sunnah. People should not wait for anyone. Those who arrive late can offer the funeral prayer after the burial, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is authentically reported to have performed the funeral prayer after the burial.¹

Q 31: From which direction should a dead person be lowered to his grave?

A 31: From the direction that is easy. However, some scholars said that it is Sunnah to lower him from the direction of his legs. Other scholars held that the Sunnah is to do so from the forefront. There is much leeway in this matter.

Q 32: What is the ruling on covering a woman's grave as she is lowered into it? And what is the duration of such covering?

A 32: Some scholars stated that a woman's grave is to be covered when she is placed therein, lest the features of her body become visible. This is not obligatory, however. Such covering lasts until the bricks are placed over her.

Q 33: Many people raise their voices during the burial of a dead person. Is there anything wrong with that?

¹ Reference already cited, p. (13).

A 33: There is nothing wrong with that, if there is a need for it, like when a person calls out: Pass me the bricks; pass me the water. There is no harm in doing so if needed.

Q 34: What do you say about those who give a sermon as the deceased is put in his niche? Is there anything wrong if this is done on a regular basis?

A 34: In my view, this is not part of the Sunnah, for neither the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) nor the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) are reported to have done this. All what happened in this regard is that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) once followed the funeral procession of an Ansāri man. He sat down and the people sat around him, waiting for the deceased person to be put in the niche. Meanwhile, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) spoke to them about the condition of people upon death and after burial.¹ Also, one day he was at a grave burying somebody, and he said:

«ما منكم من أحدٍ إلا وقد كتب مقعده من الجنة، ومقعده من النار.»

“There is none among you except that his seat in Paradise or Hellfire has been decreed.”²

¹ Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book of Sunnah; Chapter: Questioning in the grave; no. (4753). Narrated by Ahmad (4/287). Reported by Al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Tafsīr; Chapter: {We will ease him toward ease}; no. (4949). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Destiny; Chapter: How

But he did not stand up to deliver a sermon as some people do. He only talked to them while sitting and did not make it a regular practice. So, if a person sits at the grave and the people around him, waiting for burial, and he talks to them about such things, there is nothing wrong with that; rather, this is part of the Sunnah. But it is not Sunnah that he stands to deliver a sermon.

Q 35: What is the ruling on stepping into the cemetery with the right foot first and stepping out of it with the left foot first?

A 35: This is not reported in the Prophet's Sunnah. So, a person may step in or out of the cemetery with whichever foot that happens to be the first, be it the right or left one. This should be the case unless a proof from the Sunnah appears.

Q 36: What is the prescribed supplication to be said upon putting dust on the deceased? Is there a Hadīth about reciting: {From it We created you, and into it We will return you} [Taha: 55]?

A 36: Some scholars stated that the Sunnah is to cast three handfuls of dust on the deceased. As for reciting the verse {From it We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time} [Tāhā: 55], there is no Prophetic Hadīth reported in this regard.

humans are created; no. (2647). Reported by 'Ali ibn Abi Tālib (may Allah be pleased with him).

The Sunnah after burial is to do as instructed by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). Whenever he finished burying the deceased, he would stand at the grave and say:

«استغفروا لأخيكم، واسألوا له التثبيت؛ فإنه الآن يسأل»

“Ask forgiveness for your brother and implore Allah to make him firm, for he is being questioned now.”¹ So we say: O Allah, forgive him; O Allah, forgive him; O Allah, forgive him; O Allah, make him firm; O Allah, make him firm; O Allah, make him firm.

Q 37: What is the manner of offering condolences?

A 37: The best form of condolences is the condolences offered by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) to one of his daughters, when she sent a messenger to ask him to attend as a son or daughter of hers was dying. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said to that messenger:

«مرها، فلتصبر، ولتحتسب؛ فإن لله ما أخذ، وله ما أبقى، وكل شيء عنده بأجل مسمى».

“Tell her to be patient and seek the divine reward. Indeed, what Allah takes belongs to Him, and what

¹ Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Asking forgiveness for the deceased at the grave; no. (3221). Reported by ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (may Allah be pleased with him).

He spares belongs to Him, and everything with Him has a specified term.”¹

As for the commonly said supplication “May Allah increase your reward and console you well and forgive the deceased”, it was favored by some scholars, but what is reported in the Sunnah is worthier and better.

Q 38: Is handshaking when offering condolences an act of Sunnah?

A 38: Handshaking is not Sunnah while offering condolences, neither is kissing (on the cheek). Rather, people should shake hands when they meet one another. So, if you meet a bereaved person and greet him with Salām and shake hands with him, you do this as Sunnah for meeting him, not for offering condolences.

However, people have taken it as a habit. If they believe it as Sunnah, they should be told that it is not. But if they do so by way of habit and do not believe it is Sunnah, there is nothing wrong with that. I feel uneasy about it however, and it is certainly more appropriate to stop doing it.

It is noteworthy here that condolences are meant to encourage the bereaved person to be

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The Prophet’s statement: “The deceased is punished because of the weeping of his relatives over him”; no. (1284). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Weeping over the dead; no. (923). Reported by Usāmah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him).

patient and expect the reward from Allah Almighty. They are not like congratulations which are offered to someone who has a pleasant occasion. If a person loses someone through death, he should be comforted in a way that helps him be patient and seek reward from his Lord.

Q 39: When should condolences be offered?

A 39: Condolences are to be offered from the time of death or disaster until this affliction or disaster comes to be forgotten and the afflicted person is relieved. This is because condolences are not like congratulations or greetings, as mentioned above, but are, rather, meant for supporting the afflicted person and helping him endure his affliction and seek the divine reward.

Q 40: Is it permissible to offer condolences before burial?

A 40: Yes, it is permissible before and after burial. As clarified above, it can be offered from the time of death until the affliction is forgotten.

Q 41: What is the ruling on going to the house of the deceased person's family to offer condolences?

A 41: This has no basis in the Sunnah. But if the deceased is related to you and you fear that not going to them would be considered severing of kinship ties, then there is no harm in going. But with regard to the family of the deceased, it is not legitimate for them to gather at home and receive people who come to offer condolences. Some of the

righteous predecessors regarded this as a form of wailing. Rather, they should close the house, and whoever meets them in the market or the mosque can extend condolences to them.

There are two points here:

First: Going to the deceased person's family; this is not legislated in the Shariah. It may be done, however, if they were one's relatives and severance of kinship ties is feared.

Second: Sitting to receive people coming to offer condolences; this practice is unfounded. Some righteous predecessors even regarded it along with preparing food, as a form of wailing.

Q 42: Is it Sunnah to have the head of the deceased at the forefront of the coffin while carrying it?

A 42: Apparently, the deceased is to be carried from the side of his head; in other words, to make his head at the forefront. As for making his legs at the forefront, this is arguably not the more appropriate option. I do not know any Sunnah from the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) in this regard.

Q 43: Concerning the three handfuls of dust, is there any basis in the Shariah that this should be done at the side of the dead person's head?

A 43: No, this has no basis in the Shariah; rather, there is much leeway in this regard.

Q 44: What is the ruling on dictating "there is no god but Allah" to the dead person after burial?

A 44: According to the preponderant opinion, "there is no god but Allah" should not be dictated to the deceased after burial; rather, the people should ask Allah Almighty to forgive him and make him firm, for the Hadīth on the dictation of this phrase is reported by Abu Umāmah¹, and it is a weak Hadīth.

Q 45: Some Muslims tend to ask people to testify regarding a dead person before he is buried, saying: "What is your testimony regarding him?" So they testify that he was pious and upright? Does this practice have any basis in the Shariah?

A 45: No, this has no basis in the Shariah, and no one should say that because it is a religious innovation. Plus, some people might speak ill of the dead person, which would be scandalous for him.

ولكن الذي جاءت به السنة أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان مع أصحابه، فمَرَّت جنازة، فأتوا عليه خيراً، فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: «وجبت»، ثم مَرَّت جنازة أخرى، فأتوا عليه شراً، فقال عليه الصلاة والسلام: «وجبت»، فسألوه: ما معنى قوله: «وجبت»؟ فقال: «إن الذي أتيتم عليه خيراً وجبت له الجنة، والثاني الذي أتيتم عليه شراً وجبت له النار»، هذا الحديث أو معناه.

What is reported in the Sunnah in this respect is that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was with his Companions as a funeral procession passed by, and they spoke well of the

¹ Narrated by Al-Tabarāni in Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr (8/298), no. (7979).

dead person; thereupon the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "It has become certain." Then, another funeral procession passed by, and they spoke ill of the dead person; so, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "It has become certain." They asked him about the meaning of his statement "It has become certain", and he replied: "Paradise has become certain for the one you spoke well of, and Hellfire has become certain for the one you spoke ill of."¹

Q 46: Is it Sunnah to place moist tree branches or the like on the grave, like the case of the two dead persons being punished in the grave², or was this exclusive for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)? And if it is exclusive, what is the evidence for this?

A 46: Putting something moist like branches or otherwise on the grave is not an act of Sunnah; rather, it is a religious innovation and a sign of thinking ill of the deceased, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did not

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Funerals; Chapter: People's praise of the deceased person; no. (1367). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Concerning the deceased persons about whom people speak well or ill; no. (949). Reported by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Ablution; Chapter: It is a major sin not to shield oneself from being soiled with urine; no. (216). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Purification; Chapter: Proof of the impurity of urine; no. (292). Reported by Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

put such things on all graves, but only on these two graves, as he knew that their two occupants were being punished.

Hence, putting a palm branch on the grave is a serious wrongdoing against the deceased and a form of thinking ill of him. It is not permissible for a Muslim to think ill of his fellow Muslim. When a person puts a palm branch on a grave, this means he thinks the one in the grave is being punished, since the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) only put them on those two graves when he knew they were being punished.

The answer in brief: Putting a palm branch or the like on the grave is a religious innovation and a sign of thinking ill of the deceased, as the one who puts it thinks that the deceased is being punished so he wishes to give him some relief. Moreover, we have no knowledge whether Allah Almighty will accept our intercession regarding the deceased if we do this like the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did it.

Q 47: When the Imām makes Taslīm at the end of an obligatory prayer, the family of the deceased hasten to bring his coffin for the funeral prayer on the grounds of hastening with the burial. Kindly shed light on what they are required to do in this respect; and what is your advice to the Imām regarding this?

A 47: In my view, when the Imām makes Taslīm at the end of an obligatory prayer, if there are many people completing their prayer, it is more appropriate to wait for a while before putting the coffin in place, so that more people could join the funeral prayer and not miss the reward. But if there is no reason to wait, it is more appropriate and better to hasten for it.

Q 48: Is it permissible for the guardian of a deceased to ask the followers of his funeral to absolve him?

A 48: This is a religious innovation, not Sunnah, to ask people to absolve the deceased. If there was no dealing between him and people, none of them holds any bad feelings towards him; and regarding those who dealt with him, he may have discharged his duties to them and so they have nothing against him; and if he has not discharged his duties to some of them, they may not wish to absolve him.

وقد ثبت عن النبي عليه الصلاة والسلام أنه قال: «من أخذ أموال الناس يريد أداءها أدى الله عنه، ومن أخذها يريد إتلافها أتلفه الله».

The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is authentically reported to have said: "Whoever takes people's money with the intention of repaying it, Allah will repay it on his behalf, and

whoever takes it in order to destroy it, Allah will destroy him.”¹

Q 49: What are the types of visiting graves?

A 49: Graves should be visited for the purpose of taking lessons and hoping for the reward, in compliance with the Prophet’s command:

«زوروا القبور؛ فإنها تذكّر الآخرة»

“Visit the graves, for they are a reminder of the Hereafter.”² But as for those who visit the graves so as to seek blessing from the visit or to invoke those lying in those graves, this does not happen in our country, praise be to Allah for that, though it does exist in some Muslim countries. Such visits could be religious innovations only or a form of polytheism.

Visiting the graves is of two types:

A visit intended for a specific person. The visitor stands at his grave and supplicates Allah Almighty for him. This is similar to what the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) did when he asked permission from Allah to seek forgiveness for his mother but Allah Almighty did not permit him, and so he asked permission from Him to visit

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Borrowing; Chapter: Whoever takes people’s money with the intention of repaying it; no. (2387). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on the dispensation for visiting the graves; no. (1054). Narrated by Al-Nasā’i; Book of Sacrifices; Chapter: The permission to do so; no. (4434). Narrated by Ahmad (5/355). Reported by Buraydah (may Allah be pleased with him).

her which He granted; so he, along with a group of his Companions, visited his mother's grave.¹

A visit to the graveyard in general. The visitor stands in front of the graves and sends his greetings, as the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to do whenever he visited the Baqī' cemetery. He would say:

«السلام عليكم دار قومٍ مؤمنين، وإنا إن شاء الله بكم لاحقون، يرحم الله المستقدمين منا ومنكم والمستأخرين، نسأل الله لنا ولكم العافية، اللهم لا تحرمنا أجرهم، ولا تفتنا بعدهم، واغفر لنا ولهم».

“Peace be upon you, O the believing dwellers of the place. We will join you, Allah Willing. May Allah have mercy upon those of us and you who have died and those who will die later. We ask Allah to grant safety to you and us. O Allah, do not deprive us of their reward, do not put us to trials after them, and forgive us and them.”²

Q 50: Is it part of the Shariah to face the Qiblah when greeting a dead person?

A 50: A dead person is to be greeted from the direction of his face, and people can supplicate for

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The Prophet seeking permission from his Lord to visit his mother's grave; no. (976). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is said upon entering the graveyard; no. (974) and (975). Reported by 'Ā'ishah and Buraydah (may Allah be pleased with both of them) without the part: “O Allah, do not deprive us of their reward, and do not put us to trials after them”, which was narrated by Ibn Mājah; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What was reported on what is to be said upon entering the graveyard; no. (1546); and narrated by Ahmad (6/71) as reported by 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

him while standing, without turning to the direction of the Qiblah.

Q 51: Is it Sunnah to greet the dead persons while entering the graveyard only, or this is also legitimate as one passes by it on the street?

A 51: The scholars (may Allah have mercy upon them) stated that it is Sunnah for a person to make the said supplication, whether he visits the graves or passes by them.

Q 52: What are the things banned for a woman during the mourning period? Kindly mention the relevant evidence.

A 52: Things banned for a woman during the mourning period are as follows:

First: She should not go out of her house except if there is a need, like when she is ill and needs to go to a hospital, and in such case she should go in daytime - or if there is a necessity, like when the house is prone to collapse and she fears it may fall upon her, or a fire starts in the house or the like. The scholars said: She may go out during the day for a need but in the night she goes out only for a necessity.

Second: She should not wear perfume, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade the mourning woman from wearing perfume except at the end of her menstruation. She may then use a little Zhufr (a light perfume) to

apply to herself after the menses to remove the trace of menstruation.¹

Third: She should not wear attractive clothes that can be deemed an adornment, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade this.² She should only wear ordinary clothes like those she wears at home, without using makeup.

Fourth: She should not apply kohl (eyeliner), for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade this.³ If she needs to (for medicinal purposes, for instance), she may use kohl whose color does not show in the night and wipe it away in daytime.

Fifth: She should not wear jewelry/accessories. If attractive clothes are forbidden, then jewelry/accessories are forbidden with greater reason.

She may speak to men and over the phone, and she can allow in the house those who may otherwise enter it. She may also go out on the rooftop of the house during the day or night. She is

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī; Book of Menstruation; Chapter: Women applying perfume upon washing after menses; no. (313). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Divorce; Chapter: Obligation of mourning during the waiting period after (husband's) death; no. (938). Reported by Um 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her).

² Reference already mentioned; reported by Um 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her).

³ Reference already mentioned; reported by Um 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her).

not required to take a bath only every Friday as believed by some people, nor to unbraid her hair only once every week.

Also, she is not required, or even recommended, to take something with her when she goes out to give out as charity to the first person she meets after the end of her waiting period. This is a religious innovation.

Q 53: Is a woman required to observe the mourning period in the house where she received the news of her husband's death, or in her husband's house? Is she allowed to move to her family's house or elsewhere?

A 53: She is required to stay in the house where she lives. Assuming that the news of her husband's death reaches her while she is on a visit to relatives of hers, she is required in such case to return to the house she was living in.

We have previously mentioned in the five things banned for a woman in this situation that: She should not leave her house.

Q 54: Your Eminence, kindly explain in detail the issue of women visiting the graves.

A 54: It is prohibited for women to visit the graves; rather, this is a major sin, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)

cursed the women who visit the graves.¹ However, if a woman passes by graves, without going out with the intention to visit them, there is nothing wrong if she stops and supplicates for the dead. This is indicated by the apparent meaning of a Hadīth reported by ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) and narrated by Muslim.²

Q 55: It has lately become common that condolences are offered via newspapers and magazines, and the relatives of the deceased give their thanks in reply. What is the ruling on this? Does it fall under the prohibited obituary? Kindly note that the condolences and the reply may cover an entire page, for which the newspaper charges ten thousand riyals. Is this considered extravagance and wastefulness?

A 55: Yes, in my view such things may fall under the prohibited obituary; and even if they do not,

¹ Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Women visiting the graves; no. (3236). Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi; Book of Prayer; Chapter: What is reported on the dislike of making a place of prayer over the grave; no. (320). Narrated by Al-Nasā’i; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The stern prohibition regarding placing lanterns over graves; no. (2045). Narrated by Ibn Mājah; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on forbidding women from visiting graves; no. (1575). Narrated by Ahmad (1/229). Reported by Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father). Also narrated by Al-Tirmidhi; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on the dislike of women visiting graves; no. (1056). Narrated by Ibn Mājah in the above-mentioned place; no. (1576). Narrated by Ahmad (2/337). Reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What should be said upon entering a graveyard; no. (974).

they still constitute - as mentioned in the question - extravagance and waste of money.

Plus, condolences are not like congratulations, which a person should be keen on offering in all cases. As for condolences, it is not a duty to offer them whether the bereaved person is sad or not. Offering condolences means that if you see a bereaved person who is apparently impacted by the misfortune he has faced, you encourage him to endure his misfortune. This is the objective of condolences. They are not to be offered as a compliment or in a manner similar to congratulations. If people knew the true purpose of condolences, they would not go to such an extent as mentioned in the question, publishing their condolences in newspapers or gathering for it and receiving people and serving food for this occasion, and so on.

Q 56: You mentioned when you talked about the time of offering condolences that they can be offered for things other than death. Is it Sunnah to offer condolences for other happenings? And how can this be done?

A 56: Condolences are offered to help an afflicted person endure patiently. This can apply to things other than death, like when someone loses a huge amount of money or the like, in which case you would go to him and offer your condolences,

encouraging him to have patience trying to alleviate the impact on him.

Q 57: What is the ruling on taking the two Eids and Fridays as occasions for visiting the graves?

A 57: This is baseless. Visiting the graves on the day of Eid specifically and believing that this is prescribed in the Shariah is a religious innovation, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was not reported to have done so, and I do not know of any scholar who supported this practice.

As for Friday, some scholars mentioned that the visit should be on Friday, though they did not cite any Hadīth from the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) in this regard.

Q 58: What is the difference between women's visit to the Prophet's grave and their visit to the grave of any other person? Is the relevant prohibition general or is the Prophet's grave excluded from it?

A 58: There is no evidence indicating that the Prophet's grave should be treated differently in this regard and excluded from the prohibition for women to visit the graves. Hence, we see that women visiting the Prophet's grave is like them visiting any other grave. It is enough for women to greet the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) in their prayers or at any other time.

When they send peace and blessings upon the Prophet, this reaches him, wherever the sender is.

Q 59: What is the ruling on writing over the graves or marking them with colors?

A 59: As for marking the graves with colors, this is a form of plastering, and the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade plastering the graves.¹ It is also a pretext whereby people boast about such painting, and thus the graves would become a source of boastfulness. Hence, this should be avoided.

As for writing on the grave, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade it.² But one scholar deemed it acceptable if the writing is intended only as a marker (to know where the grave is) and does not involve praise for the deceased person. He maintained that the prohibited writing is that which involves glorifying the dead person, citing as evidence the fact that the prohibition of writing was coupled with the prohibition to plaster the graves or build on them.

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Forbidding plastering graves; no. (970). Reported by Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him).

² Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on the dislike of plastering graves; no. (1052). Narrated by Al-Nasā'i; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Building on the grave; no. (2029). Narrated by Ibn Mājah; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on the prohibition to build on graves; no. (1563). Reported by Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him).

Q 60: When a person known for his piety and knowledge dies, many people frequent his grave in a legitimate manner; however, some seekers of knowledge prohibit this on the grounds of blocking the means to evil and for fear of falling into polytheism. What does Your Eminence say in this regard?

A 60: I favor the view held by some seekers of knowledge; that frequenting the graves of pious and knowledgeable figures may ultimately lead to immoderation that involves polytheism, and hence people should supplicate for those dead persons without visiting their graves. When Allah Almighty accepts a supplication, it benefits the deceased, whether the supplicant stands near his grave or makes the supplication at home or in the mosque. All of these benefit the deceased person, Allah willing.

There is no need to visit his grave, for the feared outcome of which some seekers of knowledge have warned is indeed likely, especially with the passage of a long period of time.

Q 61: Sometimes a person who is evil in some ways dies and afterwards people tend to expose his evil, despite the authentic Hadīth that says: “Do not curse the dead, for they have already gone forth to

what they have sent.”¹ Do those people commit a religious violation thereby?

A 61: Yes, this is impermissible if its purpose is to curse the deceased and gloat over his demise. If the purpose, however, is to warn people of his ways and manners, there is nothing wrong with that, for it serves a good interest.

Q 62: What is the ruling on spreading a velvet cloth in a dead person’s grave, based on a Hadīth by Ibn ‘Abbās in which he said that he put a red velvet mantle in the Prophet’s grave?²

A 62: The scholars said there is nothing wrong with putting a velvet cloth in the grave; but I think this is debatable, for none of the Companions is reported to have done so. Perhaps this was a prerogative of the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him). If this door was open for all, people would compete with one another and each would like to put a better velvet cloth underneath his deceased relative, and this would continue until the graves would become objects of boastfulness. Means should be blocked if they lead to violations of Shari‘ah.

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is prohibited of cursing the dead; no. (1393). Reported by ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

² Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Putting a velvet mantle in the grave; no. (967). Reported by Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father).

Q 63: Is there any evidence that the Companions disapproved of Shoqrān for putting the velvet mantle? And what is the authenticity of the narration that the Companions removed this velvet mantle (from the Prophet's grave)?

A 63: I do not know anything about this.

Q 64: Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "When the soul of a believer leaves his body, it is received by two angels who take it upwards." Hammād said: "and he mentioned its pleasant smell and mentioned musk." The Prophet continued: "The dwellers of the heaven will say: 'A good soul has come from the earth. May the blessings of Allah be upon you and upon the body in which you resided.' It is then carried to its Lord, then Allah will say: 'Take it to its destined end.' Likewise, it will be said to the soul of the disbeliever: 'Take it to its destined end.'"¹ What is meant by "the destined end"?

A 64: This refers to the coming of the Hour (the Day of Judgment).

Q 65: Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I sought permission of my Lord to ask forgiveness for her -

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Tribulations; Chapter: Showing the deceased his place in Paradise or Hellfire; no. (2872).

i.e. his mother - but He did not give me permission..."¹ Does this Hadīth indicate that his mother will be in Hellfire?

A 65: Yes, this Hadīth indicates that his mother was a polytheist,

لَقَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: ﴿مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ﴾ [التوبة: 113]، وَقَدْ قَالَ تَعَالَى: ﴿إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ﴾ [المائدة: 72].

as Allah Almighty says: {It is not for the Prophet and those who believe to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are people of Hellfire.} [Al-Tawbah: 113]

He also says: {Verily, whoever sets up partners (in worship) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise to him, and the Fire will be his abode, and for the wrongdoers there are no helpers.} [Al-Mā'idah: 72]

Q 66: What is the ruling on passing between graves while wearing shoes? What is the authenticity of the evidence for forbidding this, which is the Prophet's Hadīth in which he said: "O man wearing the shoes, take off your shoes."²

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The Prophet seeking permission from his Lord to visit his mother's grave; no. (976).

² Narrated by Abu Dāwūd; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Walking between graves while wearing shoes; no. (3230). Narrated by Al-Nasā'i; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The dislike of walking between graves; no. (2050). Narrated by Ibn Mājah; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on

A 66: The scholars said that walking between graves while wearing shoes is disliked, citing the said Hadīth as evidence. They said, however, that if there is a need, like when the ground is so hot or has thorns thereon or the like, there is no harm if one walks in his shoes.

Q 67: Muhammad ibn Qays reported that ‘Ā’ishah said: “O Messenger of Allah, how should I address them?” He said: “Peace be upon you, O believing and Muslim dwellers of the abodes; may Allah have mercy upon those of us who have gone and those who will go later; we will join you, Allah willing.”¹ Is there not a clear indication in this Hadīth, along with the Hadīth by Um ‘Atiyyah: “We were forbidden from following the funeral processions, but we were not pressed in this regard”², as well as other Hadīths, that it is permissible for women to visit the graves, if they do not commit any prohibited actions there? If this is not the case, what do you make then of the Hadīth reported by Muhammad ibn Qays?

A 67: We have previously given an answer that includes evidence for the ruling on this issue, and we have referred to this Hadīth by ‘Ā’ishah and

taking off shoes at the graves; no. (1568). Narrated by Ahmad (5/83). Reported by Bashīr ibn al-Khasāsiyah (may Allah be pleased with him).

¹ Reference already cited above, p. (25).

² Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Women following the funeral processions; no. (1278). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Forbidding women from following funeral processions; no. (938).

said: The Sunnah indicates that if a woman goes out with the intention to visit the graves, this is one of the major sins. But if she happens to pass by graves and she stops there and gives greetings, there is nothing wrong with that. The Hadīth of ‘Ā’ishah is taken to give this indication, and thus the Sunnah is consistent and has no contradiction.

As for the Hadīth by Um ‘Atiyyah “We were forbidden from following the funeral processions, but we were not pressed in this regard,” many scholars said that what matters is this information that she reported: “We were forbidden from following the funeral processions”. Her statement “but we were not pressed in this regard” represents her understanding. And this could be the Prophet’s intent, as following the funeral procession is not like visiting the graves, for the former is unlikely to involve violations of Shari’ah given the presence of men who would prevent them from happening, if any - in contrast to visiting the graves.

Q 68: Is there anything that denotes non-obligation in the Prophet’s statement: “Dictate “there is no god but Allah” to your dying ones”¹?

A 68: The apparent thing denoting non-obligation is the actual practice of the Companions,

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Dictating “there is no god but Allah” to dying people; no. (916). Reported by Abu Sa’id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him).

who apparently did not dictate "there is no god but Allah" to every dying person; and Allah knows best.

Q 69: There is an indication in two Hadīths narrated by Muslim and reported by Abu Hurayrah and Um Salamah that the spirit and the soul are one thing. In the first Hadīth, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Do you not see that when a person dies, his eyes are fixedly open?" They said: 'Yes.' He said: "This is when his eyesight follows his soul."¹ The second Hadīth, reported by Um Salamah, reads: "When the spirit is taken away, the eyesight follows it."² Are the spirit and the soul the same?

A 69: Yes, the spirit is the soul that is taken away; Allah Almighty says:

{اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا} [الزمر: 42].

{Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep.} [Al-Zumar: 42]

Q 70: What is meant by "a garment of scabies" in the Prophet's statement "If the wailing woman does not repent before she dies, she will be made to stand on the Day of Resurrection wearing a garment of pitch and a garment of scabies"? The

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Gazing of the dead person; no. (921).

² Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: Closing the dead person's eyes; no. (920).

Hadīth was narrated by Muslim and reported by Abu Mālik al-Ash‘ari.¹

A 70: “A garment of scabies” means that her skin will be covered with scabies - may Allah protect us from this - so that she would feel great pain in the punishment of Hellfire.

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Other issues related to the rulings on funerals²

1- Transferring a dead person from one country or town to another and repeating the funeral prayer for him; if the purpose of this is to offer the funeral prayer for him more than once, then this is a religious innovation that runs counter to the guidance of the righteous predecessors and it violates the command of the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) to hasten with preparing the deceased for burial. This also opens the door to boastfulness among people in this regard until they start planning funerals the same way they plan wedding celebrations.

Instead, the funeral prayer can be offered for him in absentia in another country, if we deem it legitimate in such a case. According to the correct opinion, however, the absentee funeral prayer may only be offered for a dead person for whom no

¹ Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The stern warning of wailing; no. (934).

² These were added by the Academic Committee in the Sheikh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn Charity Foundation.

funeral prayer has been performed where he died, or when the ruler gives such an order. Evidence for the first case is that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) offered the absentee funeral prayer for the Negus.¹ And with regard to the second case (the ruler's order), there should be no disobedience to him over a discretionary matter.

If the intended purpose, however, is the choice to bury the deceased in another country, either because burial there is better, his family lives in it, or some other reason, there is nothing wrong with that. But if this is banned by the ruler, lest people would compete in large numbers over the virtuous place, and because the place has limited space, or people are unable to do the burial properly, then the deceased should not be transferred. This also applies if the transfer costs a lot of money, which reduces the heirs' shares in the inheritance.

The transfer in some cases could be obligatory, like when a person dies in non-Muslim land where there are no cemeteries for Muslims, and he cannot be buried elsewhere in that country; then he should be transferred to Muslim land.

As for moving the deceased from one mosque to another in the same country, so that the funeral prayer can be offered for him in several mosques, this is also a rejected religious innovation, which

¹ Reference cited above, p. (5).

involves the violations mentioned above. People should go to a dead person to offer the funeral prayer; he should not be taken here and there.

2- The relatives of the deceased standing in row with the Imām during the funeral prayer: If the place is too narrow for them to stand behind him, even between him and the first row, then there is no harm if they stand next to him, for there is a need for this. In such case, they stand to his right and left.

But if there is enough space, they should not stand in row with the Imām, for this contradicts the Sunnah with regard to congregational prayer. We have seen some relatives of deceased persons step forward intentionally to stand next to the Imām, thinking that this is the Sunnah. This is wrong, and the Imāms should notify people to this and clarify to them that this is not part of the Sunnah.

3- Cars should not get into the cemetery without need, for they sometimes overcrowd the place and make the scene of the funeral similar to a wedding ceremony, which makes people fail to remember the Hereafter.

4- I do not know any precedent among the righteous predecessors for what people do nowadays as they shake hands and embrace while offering condolences, as well as standing in a row to receive condolences from those coming to offer them. However, some people said: they stand in a row to make it easy for the people offering

condolences, lest it would be difficult for them to find the relatives of the deceased, especially if the relatives and the people offering their condolences are large in number. This objective may be a valid one, though I do not like the practice.

5- Some followers of funerals tend to speak with one another regarding worldly matters, and this contradicts the state they should be in, thinking deeply about their situation in this life and in the afterlife, and that they are taking a dead person to his grave and tomorrow they too will be carried to theirs; but they do not know when.

Moreover, this behavior hurts the relatives and friends of the deceased. So, some scholars disliked that the follower of a funeral procession talks about worldly matters and jokes and laughs with his companion. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) would sit with his Companions before digging the niche is complete and talk with them about matters that suit the situation.

ففي «صحيح البخاري» عن علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه، قال: كنا في جنازة في بقيع الغرقد، فأثانا النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فقعده، وقعدنا حوله، ومعه مخرقة، فنكس -أي: رأسه- فجعل ينكت بمخصرته، وذكر الحديث.

‘Ali ibn Abi Tālib (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: “We were accompanying a funeral procession in Baqī’ al-Gharqad, so the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him)

came to us and sat down. We sat around him. He had a small stick in his hand. He was bending down his head and scraping the ground with the stick..." to the end of the Hadīth.¹

Al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: "We went out with the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) following the funeral procession of a man from the Ansār. As we reached his grave, the niche was not yet dug. So, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) sat down and we sat still around him as if birds were perched on our heads. He had in his hand a stick with which he was scratching the ground. He said twice or thrice: 'Seek refuge with Allah from the torment in the grave.' Then, he spoke to us about the state of the believer and that of the disbeliever at the time of death and afterwards.² This is a great and long Hadīth.

This Hadīth and the one reported by 'Ali indicate that followers of funeral processions should only speak about death and what happens after it.

That said, one of the scholars deduced from these two Hadīths that he should preach people in this situation and stand to deliver a speech to them; however, there are no grounds for his deduction. Indeed, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and

¹ Reference cited above, p. (17).

² Reference cited above, p. (17).

blessings be upon him) did not stand to deliver a speech to his Companions; but he only sat down and spoke to those around him, for in such a situation a person may either remain silent or speak on matters that do not suit the occasion or speak on matters that suit the occasion, which is what the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did.

6- The family of the deceased staying at home to receive those coming to offering condolences was not known in the days of the righteous predecessors. That is why some scholars considered this practice to be a religious innovation. In *Al-Iqnā'* and its Commentary, the author said: "It is disliked to sit for receiving condolences; meaning that the bereaved person sits in a place so that people would come and offer condolences to him."¹

Upon mentioning the ruling on making food for the family of the deceased, he said: "This should be intended for the family of the deceased, not for those gathered in their place, for this would be a form of helping people commit a disliked practice, namely gathering in the place of the deceased's family." *Al-Marwazi* reported from *Ahmad*: "This is one of the acts of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance, and I have strong disapproval of it."

¹ *Kashshāf al-Qinā'* (4/282).

Then, he cited a Hadīth by Jarīr ibn ‘Abdullāh (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported: “We used to regard gathering with the family of the deceased and the making of food after burial as coming under the same heading as wailing [which is forbidden].”¹

In Sharh al-Muhadhdhab, Al-Nawawi said: “As for sitting for condolences, Al-Shāfi‘i, the author, and the rest of the companions [meaning the scholars of the Shāfi‘i school] held that it is disliked. Abu Hāmid, in his book Al-Ta‘līq, and others reported it from Al-Shāfi‘i. They said: He meant by sitting for condolences that the family of the deceased gather in a house and people who wish to offer condolences go to them. Rather, they should go about fulfilling their needs, and whoever comes across them should offer them his condolences.”²

Furthermore, when the family of a deceased open their door so that people would come and offer condolences, it is as if they were declaring to people: O people, we have been afflicted, so offer us your condolences. The same holds true when they publish the venue of receiving condolences in newspapers. Is it part of the Sunnah that a person announces the affliction so as to receive

¹ Narrated by Ibn Mājah; Book of Funerals; Chapter: What is reported on forbidding gathering in the place of the dead person’s family; no. (1612).
Narrated by Ahmad (2/204). Also, refer to Kashshāf al-Qinā’ (4/239).

² Al-Majmū’ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab (5/278).

condolences for it?! Shouldn't a person receive the decree and predestination of Allah Almighty patiently and keep it between his Lord and himself, seeking solace from Him.

Things even evolved in some regions to the extent that people erect a canopy, line up chairs, and prepare lights for this purpose, with lots of people coming in and out. One can hardly differentiate between this and a wedding banquet. They may even hire a reciter of the Qur'an, who recites, as they allege, for the benefit of the dead person's soul. Such hiring is invalid, and a reciter who recites for the sake of money shall have no reward. So, this practice involves waste of money and lures such reciters into this sin.

Someone may say: Is it not authentically reported that when the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) received the news of the murder of Ja'far and his two companions, he sat in the mosque with apparent grief?

In reply to this, we say: Yes, this is true; but the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did not sit to receive condolences. That is why we did not get any report that anyone sat at his place to offer condolences. So, this incident

¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri; Book of Funerals; Chapter: The one who sits upon the occurrence of a calamity with apparent grief; no. (1299). Narrated by Muslim; Book of Funerals; Chapter: A stern warning against wailing; no. (935). Reported by 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

provides no evidence for the practice of opening the doors of houses and sitting to receive condolences.

As for announcing a person's death in newspapers, if it serves some interest, like when the deceased person used to deal with lots of people and had transactions with them, and when his death is announced, people who may have rights due on him can come forward to settle them - then there is nothing wrong with that.

Written by Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn
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Index

70 Questions about the Rulings on Funerals	2
The Rulings on Funerals	2

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