

Ghusul and Shroud of the Deceased

Washing the deceased is a communal obligation (**fard kifaayah**). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of this practice in various ahadith.

Hadith:

عن أبي بن كعب، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:

«لما تُوفِّي آدمُ غَسَلَتْهُ الملائكةُ بالماءِ وتُزَّأُ، وأُحْدُوا له، وقالوا: هذه سنَّةُ آدمَ في ولده».

Ubayy ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "When Adam died, the angels washed his body with water an odd number of times, dug him a grave, and said: 'This is the tradition for Adam's children.'"
[Authentic hadith] - [Al-Haakim, At-Tabaraani]

Therefore, a number of Muslims must hasten to wash the body of a deceased Muslim and prepare it for burial.

Fard Kifayah is a legal obligation that must be fulfilled by the community as a whole. If enough Muslims perform this duty, the remaining members of the community are relieved of responsibility before Allah (SWT).

Ahadith on the Importance of Washing the Deceased:

Hadith:

عن أبي رافع رضي الله عنه مرفوعاً:

«من غَسَلَ ميتاً فكتم عليه، غُفِرَ الله له أربعين مرة».

Abu Rāfi' (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "He who washes a dead person and conceals what he sees [any defects or signs of a bad end], Allah will grant him forgiveness forty times."

[Authentic hadith] - [Al-Bayhaqi, Al-Haakim, At-Tabaraani]

Abu Rafi' (may Allah be pleased with him) also reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "He who washes a Muslim and conceals what he observes (bad smell, appearance, etc.), Allah grants him forgiveness for forty major sins. He who digs a grave for him and buries him will be rewarded as if providing him a dwelling until the Day of Resurrection. And he who shrouds him, Allah will clothe him on the Day of Resurrection with silk garments from Paradise."

[Recorded by Al-Hakim, Al-Bayhaqi, and others. Verified to be authentic by Al-Albani (Ahkam ul-Janaiz 69)]

Conditions for the Person Performing Ghusl (Washing) of the Deceased

1. The person who washes the deceased must be an adult Muslim of the same gender as the deceased. If the deceased is male, only a male should perform the washing. However, it is permissible for spouses to wash each other.
2. The person performing the Ghusl should be knowledgeable about the Islamic procedures for washing the deceased and be able to carry them out properly.
3. It is permissible for menstruating women to perform the washing of the deceased, as there is no evidence in the Qur'an or Sunnah that prohibits it.

4. It is recommended that the person who performs the Ghusl should also take a Ghusl (ritual bath) afterwards.

Place of Washing the Deceased

1. The body should be washed in a clean, secluded, and private place where water and soap are available. Gloves must always be worn when handling and washing the deceased.
2. The body of the deceased should be washed with water mixed with lotus leaves if available. Camphor should be used for the final wash.
3. The **awrah** (the area between the navel and the knees) of the deceased must remain covered at all times during the washing.
4. The water used for washing should be mixed with lotus leaves or any form of soap, as available.

Things Required for Washing the Deceased

Before starting the washing process, all necessary items for washing and shrouding the deceased should be prepared. These include:

1. Gloves, towels, and aprons.
2. Lotus leaves, soap, camphor, or perfume.
3. A bucket, warm water, and a pouring jug.
4. The shroud and coffin for after the wash.
5. Sponges and cotton wool for cleaning the nose and ears.
6. Scissors for removing any bandages, tags, or clothing.

The Method of Washing the Deceased

1. **Covering the Body:** The body should be covered with a sheet of cloth at all times during the washing.
2. **Preparation:** Remove any clothing, items, or hospital tags from the body.
3. **Positioning:** Raise the head and gently press the stomach to discharge any liquid or impurities from the body. Clean both the front and back passages (istinja). The washer should place a cloth over their hand and also cover the area between the navel and the knees.
4. **Disposal:** After cleaning the private parts, discard the used cloth and gloves. Put on new gloves.
5. **Purification:** Perform ablution (wudu), starting with the right hand, then the left. Always begin from the right side.
6. **Cleaning:** Use a small roll of wet cotton wool to clean the nostrils and front teeth gently, then wipe the mouth and nostrils.
7. **Washing the Body:**
 - Wash the face and beard (if the deceased is male).
 - Wash the arms up to the elbows.
 - Wipe the head and ears.
 - Wash the feet.
 - Wash the body with water mixed with soap or lotus leaves, starting from the head, then the right side, and finally the left side. Perform the washing in odd numbers (3, 5, or 7). Pour water all over the body.

8. **Hair Care:** A woman's hair should be loosened, washed, combed, and braided into three braids, placed behind her back.
9. **Back Washing:** Tilt the body to the left and wash the back with water and soap. Then, tilt the body to the right side and wash the back in a similar manner.
10. **Final Steps:** Pour camphor, perfume, or scented water from head to toe. Dry the body with a clean towel. The awrah (private parts) must be kept covered at all times.

Note: If the deceased is female and has experienced childbirth bleeding, or menstrual period, padding should be used to prevent blood from coming out of the body.

Authenticity of Practice

All of this is based upon authentic hadith. It is reported that when the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) died (Zainub ra), he instructed that she be washed three times or more if necessary, using water and lotus leaves. After the last wash, apply some camphor to the body, loosen her hair, wash it, comb it, and braid it into three braids laid behind her back.

Note: There is no Islamic teaching regarding reading the Quran during the washing or making special thikr during the ghusl.

Shrouding the Deceased

Shrouding should begin immediately after washing the body of the deceased. It is recommended to use white sheets made from inexpensive material. It is agreed upon all madhhabs that a man should be shrouded in three pieces of cloth, while a woman should be shrouded in five pieces.

For Men:

The three pieces consist of large sheets that are wrapped around the body. This practice is based on the narration of Aisha:

- **Three large sheets:** These are wrapped around the deceased.
- **Four tying ropes:** Used to secure the sheets.

Hadith:

وعن عائشة رضي الله عنها قالت: كفن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في ثلاثة أثواب بيض سحولية من كرسف، ليس فيها قميص ولا عمامة.

A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported: The body of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was shrouded in three white Yemeni cotton garments, among which was neither a gown nor a turban.

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

For Women:

The five pieces include:

- **Two large sheets:** These are wrapped around her body.
- **An izaar** (lower garment).
- **A khimaar** (head cover).
- **A qamees** (long, loose sleeveless shirt): This has a hole for the head and covers the body from shoulders to feet.

Note: Four tying ropes are used to secure the sheets.

Important: The minimum cloth for shrouding the deceased (male or female) is a single piece that covers the entire body.

Steps of Shrouding

1. **Prepare the Shroud:** Spread out four tying ropes.
2. **Lay Out Sheets:** Spread out two large garment sheets.
3. **Prepare the Sleeveless Shirt:** Have a long, loose, sleeveless shirt ready, with a hole in the middle for the head.
4. **Head Veil:** Have a head veil prepared for use.
5. **Spread out Izaar**
6. **Position the Deceased:** Lift the body (covered with a sheet) and lay it on its back on the shroud.
7. **Apply Scent:** Some perfume may be applied to the areas of the body that touched the ground during prostration: the forehead, nose, hands, knees, and feet.
8. **Secure the Izaar:** Tie the izaar (bottom garment) around the body.
9. **Dress the Deceased:** Put on the sleeveless shirt (open at the back) that is long enough to cover the body from shoulders to feet.
10. **Place the Head Veil:** Position the head veil on the deceased.
11. **Fold the Top Sheet:** Fold the edge of the top sheet over the deceased's right side, then fold the other edge over the left side. Repeat this folding with the second sheet.
12. **Fasten the Sheets:** Secure the sheets with tying ropes—one above the head, one under the feet, and two around the body.

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