

13543 - What to Do If Someone Dies Suddenly

the question

What do the relatives of the deceased have to do if their relative dies suddenly? This scenario happens often in every family, and many people do not have the knowledge of what is prescribed in the Islamic Shari`ah concerning this. Please tell us, with the relevant evidence, the correct way to deal with this situation, so that if any of us are faced with this situation, we will not fall into bid`ah or do anything wrong.

Summary of answer

This is what to do if someone dies: close his eyes, make du`a for him, cover him with a cloth that will cover all of his body, hasten to prepare him for burial and hasten to pay off his debts from his money.

Detailed answer

What to do if someone dies

If the person has died and the soul has departed, then his relatives have to do the following:

- Close his eyes
- Make du`a for him

Umm Salamah said:

"The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to see Abu Salamah when his sight had become fixed (he had passed away). So the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) closed his eyes and said: 'When the soul is seized and it leaves the body, the eyes follow it.' Some of Abu Salamah's family wept and wailed, whereupon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Pray to Allah only for good for yourselves, because the angels (who are present) say "amin" to whatever you utter.' Then he said: 'O Allah! Forgive Abu

Salamah; raise his station among those who are rightly-guided; and take good care of his family that he has left behind. O Lord of the Worlds! Forgive him and us, make his grave spacious, and put light therein for him." (Narrated by Muslim, Ahmad, al-Bayhaqi and others)

- They should cover him with a cloth that will cover all of his body.

This is because of the hadith of `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), according to which the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was shrouded in a striped cloak. (Narrated by the two Shaykhs (al-Bukhari and Muslim) in their Sahihs, by al-Bayhaqi and others).

- This applies in the case of one who does not die in a state of ihram; the person who dies in ihram should not have his head or face covered.

This is because of the hadith of Ibn `Abbas who said: "Whilst a man was standing at 'Arafah, he fell from his mount and broke his neck (or he said, he died). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Wash him with water and lote leaves, and shroud him in two cloths" (according to another report, "... in his two cloths [which he was wearing for ihram]") "... and do not perfume his body, and do not cover his head [or his face], for he will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection reciting the Talbiyah." (Narrated by the two Shaykhs (al-Bukhari and Muslim) in their Sahihs, and by Abu Na'im in al-Mustakhraj, and by al-Bayhaqi. The additional material was not narrated by al-Bukhari)

- They should hasten to prepare him for burial and take him out, if it is obvious that he is dead

This is because of the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) which he attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): '[Hasten to bury the deceased](#), for if he was righteous, then you are taking him to something good, and if he was otherwise, then it is an evil of which you are relieving yourselves." (Narrated by the two Shaykhs (al-Bukhari and Muslim) – this version was narrated by Muslim, and the authors of the four Sunans. It was classed as sahih by al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad and al-Bayhaqi from Abu Hurayrah)

- They should bury him in the city or country where he died, and not move him elsewhere, because that would contradict the haste in burying that is enjoined in Islam.

Hence when a brother of `Aishah died in Wadi al-Habashah, and he was moved from the place where he had died, she said, “The only thing that upset me (or grieved me) was that I wished that he had been buried in the place where he died.” (Narrated by al-Bayhaqi with an authentic isnad)

Al-Nawawi said in al-Adhkar:

“If he (the dying person) leaves instructions that he be moved to another land [for burial], those instructions should not be carried out, because moving the deceased [to another land for burial] is haram according to the correct view of the majority, and was clearly stated by those who examined the matter in depth.”

- Some of them should hasten to pay off his debts from his money, even if that means paying all that is left. If he did not have any wealth, then the state should pay on his behalf, if he had tried his best to pay off his debts. If the state does not do that, and some people volunteer to do that, then that is OK.

Sa'd ibn al-Atwal (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that his brother died, leaving three hundred dirhams, and leaving dependents. He said, “I wanted to spend it on his dependents, but the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ‘Your brother is being detained by his debt, so go and pay it off for him.’ So I went and paid it off, then I came and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I have paid it off, except for two dirhams which a woman claimed (were owed to her), but she had no proof.’ He said, ‘Give them to her, because that is her due (or, because she is speaking the truth).’” (Narrated by Ibn Majah, Ahmad and al-Bayhaqi. One of its chains of narration is sound and the other is like the isnad of Ibn Majah. Al-Busayri classed it as sahih in al-Zawa'id).

Samurah ibn Jundub narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed the funeral prayer (according to one report, he prayed the Fajr prayer), and “when he had finished he said, ‘Is there anybody here from the family of So and So?’ The people remained

silent, because whenever he brought anything up, they would keep quiet at first. He said that three times, and no one answered. Then a man said, 'Here he is.' A man stood up and came, dragging his lower garment, from the back of the assembly. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, 'What kept you from answering me the first two times? I did not mention your name except for a good reason. So-and-So – a man from amongst them – is being kept by his debt from Paradise. If you wish, you may ransom him, or if you wish, you may leave him to the punishment of Allah.' If only you had seen his family and those who knew of his affairs getting up and praying off his debts, until there was no one left who could make any demands from him.'" (Narrated by Abu Dawud, al-Nasai, al-Hakim, al-Bayhaqi, al-Tayalisi in his Musnad and Ahmad. Some of them narrated from al-Shu'bi from Samurah, and some mentioned Sam'an ibn Mushannij in between them. The former is sahih according to the conditions of the two Shaykhs [al-Bukhari and Muslim], as al-Hakim said, and al-Dhahabi agreed with him; the latter is sahih only)

We ask Allah to forgive the believing men and women. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.

For more, please see these answers: [200530](#) , [6974](#) , [11110](#) , [12363](#)

And Allah knows best.