

383066 - Ruling on offering the funeral prayer when the casket is in the car

the question

Is it permissible to offer the funeral prayer when the casket is in the car outside the mosque, and the casket is not placed in front of the imam inside the mosque? A Muslim brother in our community died, may Allah have mercy on him, and they brought him so that the funeral prayer could be offered for him, but when we finished 'Asr prayer and stood up to offer the funeral prayer, we were surprised to see that the bier had been placed in the car outside the mosque, and the casket was not placed in front of the imam inside the mosque. Is that permissible?

Detailed answer

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The fact that the casket was in the car means two things:

Firstly, it is as if it were carried on a mount;

Secondly, between it and the congregation there was a barrier, namely the wall of the mosque.

Ruling on offering the funeral prayer for one whose casket is placed on a mount

There was a difference of opinion among the jurists regarding offering the funeral prayer for one whose casket is placed on a mount, and there is a barrier between it and the congregation. The Hanbalis are of the view that this prayer is not valid in either case.

The Shafa'is are of the view that it is valid.

Explaining the Hanbali view, al-Mirdawi said in *al-Insaf*(2/525): It is also stipulated that the deceased should be placed in front of [the imam]; it is not valid to offer the funeral prayer for one whose casket is placed on a mount...

Shaykh Taqiy ad-Din [Ibn Taymiyah] said:

With regard to offering the funeral prayer for one whose casket is placed on a mount, there are two reservations:

The first reservation is that it is stipulated that the casket should rest on a place that is stable. That may exclude offering the funeral prayer when the casket is on a boat or on a mount, when all obligatory parts of the prayer are done, but there is the possibility that the casket may move. There are two scholarly views concerning that.

The second reservation is that it is stipulated that the imam should be level with the bier. If the bier is higher than his head, then the discussion may be similar to that regarding the case when the imam is standing in a place that is higher than the people who are praying behind him. So if the bier is placed on a tall chair or raised platform, then the first reservation [that of stability] is addressed, but the second is not. End quote.

Abu'l-Ma'ali also said: If the funeral prayer is offered when the bier is being carried on people's shoulders or on a mount, or a [deceased] child is being carried by a man, it is not permissible, because the bier is to be regarded as being like the imam in the sense that if the funeral prayer is offered when it [the bier] is behind a wall, it is not valid, according to the correct scholarly view. End quote.

The words of Shaykh al-Islam are from *al-Ikhtiyarat al-Fiqhiyyah*, in *al-Fatawa al-Kubra* (5/360).

Al-Bahuti said in *Kashshaf al-Qina'* (2/117): It is not valid to offer the funeral prayer when the bier is being carried on people's shoulders or on a mount or in people's hands, because the bier is like the imam, hence the prayer cannot be offered without the deceased [being placed directly in front of the congregation].

Ruling on offering the funeral prayer from behind a wall or barrier

It is not valid to offer the funeral prayer from behind a barrier before the burial, such as a wall and the like, and such as a casket covered with a lid, as was discussed previously in *al-Furu'* and elsewhere. End quote.

Thus according to the view of the Hanbalis, it is not valid to offer the funeral prayer when the bier is on top of a vehicle or inside a vehicle.

The Shafa'is are of the view that it is valid.

Al-Jamal said in his *Hashiyah 'ala Sharh al-Manhaj* (2/178): If they begin the funeral prayer when the bier is moving, it is valid, on condition that the bier is in the direction of the qiblah for the worshippers when starting the prayer only, and provided that there are no more than three hundred cubits between them when the prayer ends. It does not matter if there is a barrier between them, and it is not stipulated that the bier should be level with them, according to the correct view, in contrast to what it says in *ash-Sharh*, because that view is based on weak evidence. End quote.

Some of the Shafa'is stipulated that there should be no barrier at the beginning of the prayer, and they said that it does not matter if a barrier appears during the prayer.

Al-Bujayrimi said in his *Hashiyah 'ala Sharh al-Manhaj* (1/477): If he begins the funeral prayer when the bier is moving, it is valid, provided that the bier is in the direction of the qiblah for the worshippers when starting the prayer only and there is no barrier in the beginning, and there are no more than three hundred cubits between them when the prayer is complete. It does not matter if a barrier appears during the prayer, and it is not stipulated that the congregation should be on the same level as the bier, according to the correct view, in contrast with what it says in *ash-Sharh*, because that view is based on weak evidence. End quote.

Hence the more prudent approach is to bring the casket out of the car and place it on the ground in front of the imam, and it does not matter if the prayer is offered outside the mosque.

If the funeral prayer is offered when the casket is inside the vehicle, it is valid according to the view of some of those whom we mentioned, provided that it is in the direction of the qiblah.

And Allah knows best.