

FATWA

Sunnahs at the time of Burial.

Q. I have recently heard some brothers saying that the recitation of the verses of Surah Baqarah by the head and feet of the deceased are not of the sunnah as well as throwing a handful of dirt in the grave before the actual burial and that having odd number of rows for the Janazah salaah is also not of the Sunnah. Can you please clear up these issues?

A. The recitation of the verses of Surah Baqarah by the head and feet of the deceased is evident from the Athar (tradition) of Abdullah Ibn Umar (R.A) that he said: 'I heard the Prophet (S.A) saying, "When anyone passes away, do not keep him (waiting) and hasten him to his grave and recite at his head the beginning verses of Surah Baqarah; and at the feet, the ending verses of Surah Baqarah." (Imam Baihaqi has narrated it in Shubal Imaan and has stated that it is Manqoof upon Ibn Umar). This is an authentic and sound statement from a great companion of the Prophet (S.A) who is well known for his great knowledge of the Sunnah and is also accepted as one of the most knowledgeable companions of the Prophet (S.A).

Allama Nawawi has mentioned in Al-Azkaar that Muhammad bin Ahmad Al Marwazi said, 'I heard Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal saying, 'Whenever you enter the graveyard, recite Surah Fatihah, Surah Ikhlās, Surah Falaq and Surah An-Nas and then make the blessings for the dwellers of the graves, for certainly the blessings reach them. It is also narrated that the great Tabi'ee scholar, Sha'bi said, 'Whenever a person from among the Ansaars died, they would go to his grave and recite Quraan.' (Al-Mirqaat – Mulla Ali Qaari).

With respect to throwing handfuls of dirt in the grave, it is recorded in the Sunan of Ibn Majah that Abu Hurairah (R.A) said that the Prophet (S.A) performed Salaat upon a Janaazah then came to the grave of the deceased and threw dirt upon the grave at the side of the head, three times. (Ibn Majah)

Hafiz Ibn Hajar has stated that the sanad is sound. Ibn Majah has recorded all the narrators as reliable, sound and authentic. Ibn Abi Dawood has also narrated it and considered it to be saheeh (sound) (Nailul-Awtaar - Allama Shawkani).

Dar Qutni and Bazaar have also quoted the tradition of Aamir bin Rabi'ah who said, 'I saw the Prophet (S.A), when we buried Uthmaan bin Maz'uuum (R.A), he performed salaah upon him and said four takbeers and then threw three handfuls of dirt in his grave while standing at (the side of) his head.' Imam Baihaqi has also quoted this tradition and stated that there are other traditions which support this, from the hadith of Jafar bin Muhammad from his father and from the riwaayah of Abu Umaamah and also another tradition from Abu Hurairah (R.A).

Based on these traditions, Allama Shawkani has stated that this is a proof and evidence that it is in accordance to the Shariah that a person throws dirt upon the grave at the side of the head. (Nailul – Awtaar).

As for the odd number rows, many scholars have considered it Mustahab (Commendable) to have three rows for the Janaazah salaah. This is based on a 'Marfu' tradition recorded by Abu Dawood and Tirmizi from the hadith of Maalik bin Hubairah that the Prophet (S.A) said: "On whomsoever three rows have performed (Janaazah salaah) then it is essential." (i.e. forgiveness is essential for him). (Tirmizi says it is

good and Haakim says it is sound). In another tradition it is mentioned that 'he shall be forgiven.'
(Umdatul Qaari – Commentary of Sahih Al-Bukhaari Vol. 8 pg. 115-116).

And Allah knows best.

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