

Visiting a Muslim Cemetery

(زِيَارَةُ مَقَابِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ)



Academy for Learning Islam (A.L.I.)

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Why should we visit the dead?

Losing dear ones is a difficult experience. The separation causes pain and grief to the family. However, death in Islam does not mean the end of a human being. It is moving on to the next realm of life in which the soul of the deceased can fully perceive what is happening around it. This is more so for a pious person whose soul is sent to *wādī al-salām* (valley of peace and bliss).

The bereaved members of family long to meet the soul of the departed one, or at least see him/her in their dreams. Since this is not always possible, they try to do something for the soul of the dear ones. In this way they maintain connection with the deceased. The deceased also want to be remembered after death.

To keep the relation between the dead and the living members of family and friends, Islam has recommended many deeds that can be performed by the bereaved. Several Hadiths from Ma'sūmīn ﷺ encourage us to visit cemeteries where believers have been buried, and remember them in our prayers, pilgrimage, and charity. The

Ma'sūmīn ﷺ themselves also visited the graves of martyrs and other Ma'sūmīn.

In this brief article we quote a few Hadith on the merits of visiting the dead and the etiquette of interacting with them. May the Almighty accept this small effort and inspire those around us not to forget us in their prayers and good deeds after our departure.

This publication is an enhanced version of our booklet *Gift for the Deceased* first published in 1433AH/2012 CE.

Wamā tanfiqī illā billāh – my success lies only with Allah *‘aẓẓa wajall*.

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The Ma'sūmīn ﷺ encouraged visiting the dead

Numerous Hadiths encourage believers to visit their deceased. Below are some of these narrations:

Imam Amīrul Mu'minīn Ali ﷺ said: *Visit your dead, for they feel happy with your visitation. One should ask for one's needs at the grave of a father and mother after having prayed for them.*

Imam al-Sādiq ﷺ advised visiting cemeteries of believers and said: *By Allah, they (i.e., the dead) know about it and are happy with your visit.* He also said: *The (dead) perceive the comfort of your company and when you leave them, they experience loneliness.*

Imam Abū al-Hasan Mūsā ibn Ja'far ﷺ has said: *Those who do not have the ability to visit us, let them visit the righteous from our friends (mawālī) so that the reward of having visited us is written for them. And let those who do not have access to us show kindness and benevolence to the righteous among our friends so that the reward of being kind to us is written for them.*

What should we do for our Marhūmīn?

After the death of our relatives, it is essential that we continue sending spiritual gifts to them. Below are some suggestions:

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *One who shows mercy on the inhabitants of graves will be saved from the Fire and will enter Paradise while he is laughing.*

The Holy Prophet ﷺ once passed by a grave of a person who was buried the previous day, and his family was weeping. Observing this he said: *Surely, two short rakā'at (raka'atān khafīfatān) of prayer is dearer to the inhabitant of this grave than your world in its entirety.*

In another Hadith, he ﷺ also said: *Surely the gift for the dead is Du'ās and Istighfār.*

Someone asked Imam al-Sādiq عليه السلام, is it possible to pray for the dead? He said: *The dead rejoice at mercy shown to him and prayers of forgiveness for him, just as a living person rejoices upon receiving gifts.*

Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq عليه السلام has said: *Prayers, fasting, Hajj, charity, good deeds and supplications reach the dead in his grave and the reward is written for [both] the doer and the dead.*

He ﷺ has also said: *Whosoever among the Muslims does a good act for a dead person, Allah rewards him many times and Allah gifts it to the dead.*

Etiquette (ādāb) of visiting a cemetery

Islam guides Muslims in all aspects of life and recommends noble etiquette in interacting with others, including the dead. It is recommended (*mustahab*) to:

- 1) Visit the graves of Muslim men and women.
- 2) Plead for Divine mercy and forgiveness for the dead.
- 3) Visit the cemetery on Monday and Thursday afternoon at ‘Asr times and on Saturday mornings. It has been reported that Bībī Fātima al-Zahrā ﷺ used to visit the martyrs of ‘Uhud, especially Hadrat Hamza, on Saturday mornings. Shaykh ‘Abbās Qummī quotes Sayyid Ibn Tāwūs saying that one can visit a cemetery whenever one wishes.
- 4) Ask for your needs at the graves of your parents.
- 5) When reciting Quranic Sūrahs and pleading for Divine mercy and forgiveness for the dead, place your hand on the grave and face Qiblah.

6) Avoid worldly talks and gossiping at the cemetery, including business transactions. Instead try to achieve permanent gain as instructed in Q 35:29. Allah *azza wajall* says: *Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah and maintain the prayer and spend secretly and openly out of what We have provided them, expect a profit that will never perish.*

Recitations at Muslim cemeteries

Recite some or all of the following, depending on your time and readiness of the heart. It is suggested to at least say one or two of these recitations at every visit, and over time cover all of them.

1) Upon entering the cemetery Greet the Marhūmīn by praying for Divine mercy and remember the fact that we will all face death. Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq عليه السلام when asked about the manner of greeting the dead, told ‘Abdullāh b. Sinān to say:

السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ، أَنْتُمْ لَنَا فَرَطٌ
وَنَحْنُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَاحِقُونَ

Assalāmu ‘alā ahlid-diyāri minal-
mu’minīna wal-muslimīna,
antum lanā faratun wanahnu inshāa-
llāhu bikum lāhiqūn.

*Peace be on the inhabitants of the graves
from among the believers and Muslims. You
have preceded us and we too, God willing, shall
join you.*

2) In another Hadith it is said that while
passing through a cemetery stand and say:

اَللّٰهُمَّ وَهِّم مَّا تَوَلَّوْا
وَاحْشُرْهُمْ مَعَ مَنْ اَحْبَبُوْا

Allāhumma wallihim mā tawallaw,
wahshurhum ma‘a man ahabbū
*O Allah, make them have the bond of wilāyah
with those who they established the bond with
and raise them with those whom they loved!*

3) Recite Sūrat al-Qadr (No. 97) seven times.
Imam Ali al-Ridā عليه السلام said: *Any servant (of
Allah) when visiting the grave of a believer recites innā*

anzalnāhu fī layltil-qadri . . . seven times, Allah will forgive him and the inhabitants of the grave.

A slightly different Hadith from the same Imam says: *When someone approaches the grave of his faithful brother and with his hand placed on the grave recites the Sūrat al-Qadr seven times, he will be safe on the Day of great terror.*

Yet another Hadith has a similar text except that it adds that one should be facing the *qiblah*. Know that the ‘safety’ mentioned in the above Hadith may refer to either the one who recites the sūrah seven times or it may be for the dead person who is visited or it may be for both, for Almighty Allah is Most kind and All-merciful.

4) Recite Sūrat al-Ikhlās (No. 112) eleven times. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: *one who passes by a cemetery [of Muslims] and recites Qul huwallāhu ahad . . . eleven times and gifts its reward to the deceased, he is granted a reward equal to the number of the dead.*

5) Recite Sūrat Yāsīn (No. 36). Holy Prophet ﷺ has been attributed as saying: *One who recites Sūrat Yāsīn in a cemetery Allah will lighten (the punishment) on them (i.e., the dwellers of the*

graves) on that day and reward him (i.e., the reciter) with good deeds equal to number of the dead in the cemetery.

6) It is also recommended to recite three times each of (i) Sūrat al-Fātiha, (ii) Sūrat al-Falaq, (iii) Sūrat al-Nās, and (iv) Āyatul Kursī.

7) According to a Hadith attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and reported by Ibn ‘Abbās, reciting Sūrat al-Mulk on the grave will save the dead from the punishment of the grave.

8) Recite any passage or sūrah from the Holy Quran.

Additional recitations at a Muslim cemetery

1) Imam al-Husayn عليه السلام has said that when someone recites the following on entering a cemetery, Almighty Allah will write for him good deeds equal in number to the creatures that have lived and will live since Adam until the Day of Resurrection.

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْأَرْوَاحِ الْفَانِيَةِ وَالْأَجْسَادِ
 الْبَالِيَةِ وَالْعِظَامِ النَّخِرَةِ الَّتِي خَرَجَتْ مِنْ
 الدُّنْيَا وَهِيَ بِكَ مُؤْمِنَةٌ أَدْخِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ رَوْحاً
 مِنْكَ وَسَلَاماً مِنِّي.

Allāhumma rabba hādhihil-arwāhil-
 fāniyah, wal-ajsādil-bāliyah, wal-‘izāmin-
 nakhirah, allatī kharajat minad-dunyā
 wahiya bika mu’minah, adkhil ‘alayhim
 rawhan minka wasalāman minnī.

*O Allah, Lord of these transient spirits,
 decayed bodies and consumed bones, which
 departed from the world with belief in You!
 [O Allah] grant them comfort and refreshment
 from Yourself and greetings from me.*

2) Amīrul Mu’minīn Imam Ali عليه السلام has said
 that those who recite the following on
 entering a cemetery, Almighty Allah will write
 a reward of fifty years of worship and wipe
 away fifty years of their sins, as well as those
 of their parents.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ
 لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، مِنْ أَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، يَا
 أَهْلَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، بِحَقِّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ،
 كَيْفَ وَجَدْتُمْ قَوْلَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مِنْ لَا إِلَهَ
 إِلَّا اللَّهُ؟ يَا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ بِحَقِّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
 اللَّهُ، إِغْفِرْ لِمَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاحْشُرْنَا
 فِي زُمْرَةِ مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، مُحَمَّدٌ
 رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، عَلَيَّ وَلِيُّ اللَّهِ.

Bismillāhir-rahmānir-rahīm.

Assalāmu ‘alā ahli lā ilāha illallāh, min
 ahli lāilāha illallāh! Yā ahli lā ilāha
 illallāh, bihaqqi lā ilāha illallāh, kayfa
 wajadtum qawla lā ilāha illallāh min lā
 ilāha illallāh? Yā lā ilāha illallāh, bihaqqi
 lā ilāha illallāh, ighfir liman qāla lā ilāha
 illallāh, wahsurnā fī zumrati man qāla lā
 ilāha illallāh, Muhammadun Rasūlullāh,
 ‘Aliyun waliyullāh.

In Allah's name, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

Peace be on you:

O believers of lā ilāha illallāh,

From the believers of lā ilāha illallāh,

O the believers of lā ilāha illallāh

for the sake of lā ilāha illallāh.

How did you find the testimony

of lā ilāha illallāh with Allah,

besides Whom, there is no god?

O Allah, besides Whom there is no god

for the sake of lā ilāha illallāh,

forgive those who say lā ilāha illallāh

Resurrect us in the company

of those who believe in lā ilāha illallāh,

Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah

and Ali is the walī of Allah!

Note: The formula **lā ilāha illallāh** means none deserves to be worshipped, except Allah. It is the fundamental pillar of Islam to which all Muslims must adhere. Muslims recite this phrase several times daily in adhān, iqāmah and salāt. According to Hadith from Imam Ali al-Ridā عليه السلام the formula of *lā ilāha illallāh* is the Divine fort, whoever enters it is saved from His punishment.

3) Sayyid Ibn Tāwūs writes in *Misbāh al-Zā'ir* that when visiting the cemetery of the believers, one should place one's hand on the grave while facing *qiblah* and say:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْ غُرْبَتَهُ، وَصِلْ وَحْدَتَهُ، وَآنِسْ
وَحْشَتَهُ، وَآمِنْ رَوْعَتَهُ، وَأَسْكِنْ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ
رَحْمَتِكَ رَحْمَةً يَسْتَعْنِي بِهَا عَنْ رَحْمَةِ مَنْ
سِوَاكَ، وَالْحَقُّهُ بِمَنْ كَانَ يَتَوَلَّاهُ.

Allāhummar-ham ghurbatah, wasil
wahdatah, wa ānis wahshatah, wa-āmin
raw'atah, wa-askin ilayhi min rahmatika
rahmatan yastaghni bihā 'an Rahmati
man siwāk, wa-alhiqhu biman kāna
yatawallāh.

*O Allah, have mercy on his isolation, remove
his loneliness, be his solace in his seclusion,
grant him peace in his fear, and comfort him
with Your mercy, through which he will not
need anyone else's mercy, and join him with
those who he used to befriend and follow!*

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