In the Name of Allaah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

"Every soul shall have a taste of death; and only on the Day of Resurrection shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a deceiving thing)."

[Surat Al-Imraan, verse 185]

The Basic Rules of Islamic Funerals

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The following are some of the issues that face the family members and relatives of deceased individuals. It is preferable that Muslims be familiar with these issues at all times since death can approach anyone at any given time or place. I ask Allaah (S.W.T.) to bestow upon us sincerity in our speech and actions, to forgive our mistakes, and to place us with His pious servants; and for Him to listen and grant us what we ask for. We must always say—All praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the worlds.
What are important things that family members and friends should do when someone is dying?

It is recommended by the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to do the following:

• The dying person should be asked to pronounce, "Laa ilaaha illal Laah" (There is no God but Allaah) before death. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Ask your dying fellows to pronounce, "Laa ilaaha illal Laah." (There is no God but Allaah)." [Reported by Imaams Muslim, Abu Daawood, At-Tirmdhi, An-Nisa'il and Ibn Maajah] The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "The one whose last words are "Laa Ilaaha Illal Lah." (There is no God but Allaah) will enter Paradise." [Reported by Imaam Abu Daawood]

What should family members and friends do immediately after the death of their loved one?

• They should consult with a doctor or experienced people to make sure that the person has truly died and is not in a coma.

• They should also supplicate and say "Inna Lillahi Wa inna ilaihi Raje'oon." (To Allaah we belong, and to Him we will all return). Allaah (S.W.T.) says what can be translated as, "...Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: 'To Allaah we belong, and to Him is our return.' They are those on whom (descend) blessings from their Lord, and mercy. And they are the ones who receive guidance." [surat Al-Baqarah, verses (156,157)]

Um-Salamah heard the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) say: "Whomsoever is inflicted by a misfortune and then says: 'Innaa Lillaahi wa innaa ilaihi Raaje'oon, and then says, O' Allaah, reward me because of my misfortune, and bestow on me a better substitute,' then Allaah will reward him because of his misfortune and will bestow on him a better substitute." Um-Salamah said: 'When my husband, Abu-Salamah died, I said what the messenger of Allaah ordered me to, so Allaah bestowed on me a better substitute, the messenger of Allaah (S.A.W.)." [Reported by Imaams Muslim and Ahmad]

• Those near the deceased should also close the dead person’s eyelids and say: “Allaahummaghfir li [then name of the person] warfa' darajatahu fil-mahdiyyeena, wakhluifu fee 'aqibihi fil-ghaahireena, waghfir-lanaa wa lahu yaa Rabbal-'aalameena, wafseh lahu fee qabrihi wa nawwir lahu feeh.”

O Allaah, forgive [name of the person] and elevate his rank among those who are guided. Send him along the path of those who came before, and forgive us and him, O Lord of the worlds. Expand for him his grave and shed light upon him in it. [Reported by Imaam Muslim]
The messenger of Allaah went to see Abu-Salamah after he died; he found his eyes open, so the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) closed them and said: "*When the soul is retrieved, the sight follows it.*" [Reported by Imaam Muslim]

- They should also cover the dead. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) upon his death was wrapped with a piece of striped cloth." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim] According to all scholars, it is permissible to kiss the dead and to cry for him, because the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) kissed Othmaan Bin Madh'oon after he died and cried for him until the tears wet his two cheeks." [Reported by Imaams At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah] Also, Abu-Bakr (R.A.) kissed the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) between his eyes after his death and said: "O' Prophet, O' Dear Friend"

**They should also hasten in preparation for the Islamic burial. They must contact the Cemetery and Burial Committee members of the Islamic Center of Raleigh (919)333-2600, (919)649-7126, or (919)321-6432 for deaths in the community).**

- The family or friends of the deceased should pay off the debts of the dead person from the wealth that he has left or by donations to pay off his debt if there is no wealth left. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "*The believer's soul is attached to his debt until it is paid,*" [Reported by Imaams Ahmad, Ibn Maajah, and At-Tirmidhi] meaning that the dead person's soul will not be at peace until his debt is paid.

- They should also notify the relatives and friends of the deceased about the death: the prophet (S.A.W.) announced the death of Al-Najaashi (the ruler of Ethiopia) on the same day of his death to people. He also gathered people in the mosque, lined them up, and made four *Takbeerat,* (meaning: they prayed the *Janaazah* prayer which consists of saying "*Allaahu Akbar*" four times). [Reported by Imaams, Bukhaari, Muslim and others] The prophet (S.A.W.) once learned of the deaths of three of his companions by revelation; he then announced the deaths of Zaid, J'afar, and Ibn-Rawaaha (R.A.) before even receiving news of their death from people. [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Ahmad]

- It is permissible to cry up to three days after a death, but not permissible to yell or wail: The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "*Allaah does not punish a person as a result of tears, or of the sorrow of the heart, but Allaah punishes or bestows His mercy as a result of this.*" And then, the prophet pointed to his tongue, to indicate that we should be careful of what we utter. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) also cried because of the death of his son, Ibraheem, and said: "*The eye tears and the heart grieves and we say nothing except what pleases our Lord, and we grieve as a result of your departure, Ibraheem.*" [Reported by Imaams, Bukhaari and Muslim] "When the prophet went to visit the family of Ja’far (R.A.) after his death he gave them three days to cry over
Jafar's death, then he told them, ‘after today do not cry anymore for my brethren.’" [Reported by Imaams An' Nasai' and Abu Daawood]

- It is forbidden to wail: Wailing means to yell or cry out loudly. Um-'Aatiiyah (R.A.) said: "We took an oath before the messenger of Allaah not to wail." [Reported by Imaams, Bukhaari and Muslim]

Also, the dead suffers from and dislikes his family's wailing. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Whosoever is wailed upon will suffer as a result of this wailing." (This is because the dead person can hear the crying, even after burial). [Reported by Imaams, Bukhaari and Muslim]

- It is permissible for the woman to mourn the death of her relatives for three days: (Mourning includes giving up perfume, jewelry, Kuhl, etc.); it is forbidden for her to mourn for more than three days except if it was her husband in which case she has to mourn, at home, throughout the "Eddah" waiting period, which is four months and ten days. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "The woman must not mourn for more than three days except for her husband where she must mourn for four months and ten days." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari, Muslim and the six Imaams except At-Tirmidhi]

- It is recommended that food be prepared for the deceased's family. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said when J'afar (R.A.) died: "Prepare food for the family of J'afar, for they have been inflicted by a matter that occupied them." [Reported by Imaams Abu Daawood, Ibn-Maajah, and At-Tirmidhi]

The scholars have agreed that it is disliked for the family of the dead to prepare food and gather people to eat it since this will keep them busy at a time of calamity, and since people before Islaam (Jahilyah) also used to do so.

**How should the preparations begin for the Islamic burial?**

Preparing the dead for burial is a "Fard Kifaayah" or a communal duty, meaning that if some Muslims properly carry out this duty, then other Muslims are exempt from the responsibility. Preparing the dead for burial consists of the following: Bathing the dead, wrapping the body with a shroud, praying for the dead, and burying the body.

Here at the Islamic Association of Raleigh, the Cemetery and Burial Committee will make all the necessary arrangements in consultation with the family members of the deceased. Hence, it is important that the family members contact the Cemetery and Burial committee as soon as possible. Call the IAR at (919)333-2600, (919)649-7126, or (919)321-6432 in the case of a death in the family or friend. The telephone numbers of people to contact are also posted on the bulletin board in the main lobby at the Masjid and the IAR website (http://www.raleighmasjid.org/).

**How is the bathing of the dead (Ghusl) carried out?**
• Whoever has the most knowledge and experience in performing the bathing of the dead should do it, especially if he is a relative of the deceased. However, there are volunteers at the IAR who are trained to carry this out and will help you as needed. The following information regarding ghusl is for your knowledge and benefit.

• Deceased males should be washed by men, while deceased females should be washed by women. Family members who are mahrəms to each other are also permitted to bathe the other after death; i.e., (father/mother, brother/sister, and son/daughter, etc.). It is permissible for either spouse to wash the other after death. This is because Ali (R.A) washed his wife, Fatima (R.A.) after her death and also the prophet (S.A.W.) mentioned that his wife, Aishah (R.A.) said "If you die before me, I will wash you and wrap you in a shroud." [Reported by Imaam Ibn Maajah]

**How do you wash the deceased’s body?**

• It is obligatory to wash the whole body once with water with the intention of bathing the dead.

• It is recommended that the body be laid on an elevated platform off of the floor, the body stripped of its clothes, and the area between the naval and the knee covered. Those bathing the body should press the abdomen of the deceased to release any impurities. Impurities should be removed and washed off of the body. The person should wrap a cloth around his/her hand to wash the private parts of the dead, since touching the private parts is forbidden. Then, perform ablution (wudu) for the dead, meaning the dead is washed as if we were to perform ablution; however, it is not necessary to pour water into the mouth and nose of the deceased. Then the body is washed three times with water and soap starting with the right side. If the deceased were a woman and her hair is braided, then her braids should be loosened and washed, and then braided back in three separate braids that go down her back. If there are any hair clips, bows, or bands they should be removed before washing the hair. After bathing is done, the body should be dried with a clean cloth and perfumed. It is important that only the people who are needed for carrying out this process attend.

**When can Tayammum [dry wash] be performed on the deceased?**

• We should also know that Tayammum [dry wash] for the dead person can substitute washing the body in any case when water is not available or the place for washing the dead person is not available, or if there are no tools available for washing the dead. Also, it is permissible if there is a concern that the body will disintegrate if touched by water such as in cases of burn victims. We could also use Tayammum [dry wash] for deceased females if there are no
women available to wash her body, and the same goes for men, if there are no men available to wash their bodies.

**How is Tayammum [dry wash] performed for the dead person?**

- The person performing the *Tayammum* [dry wash] should tap one hand on any materials from the earth, such as stones, marble, bricks, sand, concrete or soil. Then he should wipe his hand over the whole face of the deceased person. He then should tap material's from the earth again with one hand and wipe each hand of the deceased person up to his/her wrist.

**How is the Kafan (the shroud) prepared and placed?**

Again, trained members of the community will help you with this.

- It is obligatory that the body be covered by at least a single shroud.
- Recommendations about the shroud:
  a. A clean shroud should be used.
  b. A white shroud should be used, because the prophet (S.A.W.) said, *"Wear white clothing it is the best of your clothes, and wrap the dead with it."* [Reported by Imaams Abu Daawood, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Maajah]
  c. The shroud should be perfumed, preferably with a natural fragrance, i.e., musk, rosewater, flower water, etc. The prophet (S.A.W) ordered a group of women to wash his deceased daughter three times and for the third time, add *Kafoor*" (a good smelling substance)." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari, Muslim, and others]
  d. The shroud should consist of three pieces for the male, and of five pieces for the female, at most. This limit was placed because "The prophet (S.A.W.) himself was shrouded by the companions in three white sheets." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari, Muslim, and others]

**How is “Salaaatul Janaazah” performed?**

All the requirements that are observed in regular prayers should be observed here (i.e. ablution, facing the Qibla, etc.) The *Janaazah* (funeral prayer) has six essentials:

1. Intention to pray the *Janaazah* prayer lies in the heart.
2. Standing up for the entire prayer for those who are capable of doing so.
3. After the first *Takbeerah* recite *surat* (Al-Faatiha) silently.
4. After the second *Takbeerah*, saying a prayer for prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).
5. After the third *Takbeerah* supplicating to Allaah (S.W.T.) for the deceased.
6. After the fourth *Takbeerah*, make "*Tasleem*" saying: "*Assalaamu Alaikum Warahmatullaah*" and turning your head to the right. It is optional to add another *Tasleem* to the left side.

**Can you give us more details on “Salaatul Janaazah”?**
After performing ablution, people must stand facing the Qiblah with the intention of praying Janazaazah (the funeral prayer). He then raises his hands and utters "Allahu Akbar" (which is known as Takbeerat Al-Ihraam). He doesn't have to raise his hands in other Takbeerat, because "when the prophet (S.A.W.) performed the Janazaazah prayer he raised his hands in the first Takbeerah and not in the others." [An authentic Hadeeth] He then puts his right hand on top of his left hand and recites surat Al-Fatiha only, [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari, Abu Daawood, Ibn Maajah, and At-Tirmidhi]. He then, utters "Allahhu Akbar" and whispers a prayer for prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and the best prayer to say is: [As-Salaatul Ibrastructure aemiyah] "Allahumma salli 'alaa Muhammedin Wa 'alaa ali Muhammedin Kamaa sallaita 'alaa Ibrastructure waa 'alaa aali Ibrastructure wa baarik 'alaa Muhammedin waa 'alaa aali Muhammedin Kamaa baarakta 'alaa Ibrastructure wa 'alaa aali Ibrastructure Film a'alamina Innaka hamidun Majid". This means, “O Allah, let Your mercy come upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You let it come upon Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Truly You are Praiseworthy and Glorious”.

Then, he utters "Allahhu Akbar" and supplicates for the deceased uttering the following: Allahum-maghfar lahu warhamhu, wa 'aaffihi, wa'fuu 'anhu, wa akrim nuzulahu, wa wassi'mudkahlahah, waghsilhu bilmaa'i waththalji walbaradi, wa naqtihi minal-khataqaayaa kamaa naqaytath-thawbal'-abyyaddha minad-denasee, wa 'abdulhu daaran khayran min daarihi, wa ahlun khayran min 'ahlithi, wa zawjan khayran min zawjithi, wa adkhilul-jannata, wa. 'aithhu min 'athaabil-qabri[wa 'athaabin-naar]. “O Allah, forgive him and have mercy on him and give him strength and pardon him. Be generous to him and cause his entrance to be wide and wash him with water and snow and hail. Cleanse him of his transgressions as white cloth is cleansed of stains. Give him an abode better than his home and a family better than his family and a spouse better than his spouse. Take him into Paradise and protect him from the punishment of the grave [and from the punishment of Hell-fire].” [Reported by Imaam Muslim]

After that, he utters "Allahhu Akbar" and supplicates to Allah for whatever he likes, and after that, he says "Assalaamu Alaikum Warahmatullaah." while turning his head to the right side. It is okay to add another Tasleemah to the left side. All this is done while standing up—there is neither a Rukuh nor a Sujoood in this prayer.

The body of the deceased should be placed in the front of the congregation and the Imaam. The Imaam (the one who is leading the Janaazah (funeral) prayer stands beside the head of the male-deceased and towards the middle part of the female-deceased. It’s reported that the companion Anas (R.A.) led a Janaazah (funeral prayer) for a male-deceased in which he stood behind the body towards the head. Then, a body of a female-deceased was brought for Janaazah (funeral prayer) in which he stood by the middle part of her body. When he was asked about that, he said, "This is where the messenger of
Allah (S.A.W.) stood with the body of a man and to the body of a woman." [Reported by Imaams Ahmad, Abu Daawood, Ibn Maajah, and At-Tirmidhi]

• It is recommended that people line up in three lines when praying Janaazah (funeral) prayer. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "A Muslim who dies and the people who pray the Janaazah (funeral) prayer for him and line up and form three lines are forgiven." [Reported by Imaams Ahmad, Abu Daawood, Ibn Maajah, and At-Tirmidhi]

• It is recommended that a large number of people pray the Janaazah (funeral) prayer. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "If a Muslim dies and the people who pray the Janaazah (funeral) prayer for him total one hundred, and all of them intercede with Allaah and ask Him for forgiveness for the deceased, then their intercession will be accepted." [Reported by Imaams Muslim, Ahmed, and At-Tirmidhi] The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "No single Muslim who dies and forty Muslims pray the Janaazah (funeral) prayer for him, and all of them do not associate any deities with Allaah, then Allaah will accept their intercession for the deceased." [Reported by Imaams Muslim, Ahmed, and Abu Daawood]

Can Salaatul Janaazah (funeral prayer) be performed inside the masjid?

• It is permissible to pray the Janazah (funeral) prayer inside the mosque or outside. A'isha (R.A.)(the prophet's wife) said: "The messenger of Allaah prayed the Janaazah (funeral) prayer for Suhail Bin Baidah in the mosque, and the companions prayed the Janaazah (funeral) prayer for Abu Bakr and Omar (R.A.) in the mosque without anybody denying this action, for the Janaazah (funeral) prayer is like any other regular prayer." [Reported by Imaam Muslim]

Can women pray Salaatul Janaazah (funeral prayer)?

• It is recommended for women to pray at the Janaazah (funeral) prayer just like men, because they are obligated by all Islamic rulings and there is no evidence that exempts women from praying Salaatul Janaazah (funeral prayer).

It is not allowed to perform the funeral prayer and bury the dead during the prohibited times of prayer except due to necessity:

Uqbah ibn ‘Aamir (R.A.) said, “There are three times (of the day) which the Messenger of Allaah (S.A.W.) prohibited us from praying or from burying our dead: When the sunrise first occurs until it rises (above the horizon), during high noon until the sun goes beyond the zenith, when the sun is leaning toward sunset until it sets.” [Reported by Imaams Muslim, Ibn Majjah, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nassaa’i and Abu Daawood]
Can women follow the funeral procession?

According to a majority of scholars it is slightly disliked for women to accompany the funeral procession to the cemetery. Umm ‘Atiyah (R.A.) said “The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) slightly disliked for women to follow the funeral procession.” [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari, Muslim, Abu Daawood and Ibn Maajah]. On the other hand, Maaliki and others considered it permissible for women to follow the funeral procession, because Abu Hurayrah (R.A.) said “One time the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was in a funeral and Omar (R.A.) saw a woman at the funeral and shouted out to her, but the prophet (S.A.W.) told him “Leave her alone O’ Omar.” [An authentic Hadeeth reported by Imaams Ibn Maajah and An-Nasaa’i]

Women attending a funeral must be dressed according to the Sharia’h rules and avoid mixing with men.

What are the rules concerning the carrying of the coffin?

- People should hasten their stride while carrying the coffin. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Hasten with the Janaazah (funeral), for if it is a good one, bliss is awaiting it, and if it is otherwise, you will be putting down wickedness off your necks." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

- People should walk in front of, in the back of, at the right of, or at the left of the coffin. Unless there is an excuse, it is not recommended to transport the coffin in a ride (car, horse, wagon, etc) according to the majority of scholars. The prophet (S.A.W.) was offered an animal to ride during a Janaazah (funeral) but he refused to do so. When he (S.A.W.) left the Janaazah (funeral), he was again offered the ride and he accepted it. When he was asked about that, he said: "The angels were walking, and I would not ride while they were walking, but when they left, I rode." [Reported by Imaams Abu Daawood, Al-Baihaqui, and Al-Haakim. Imaam Al-Haakim said that this narration is authentic according to the authenticity condition of Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

What are some of the things one SHOULD NOT DO during the Janaazah (funeral)?

- You should not recite any Dhikr statements out loudly, such as 'Laa ilaaha ila laah' or anything else.

- You must not follow the Janaazah (funeral) with flames of fire, since this used to be practiced during the Jaahilyah period.

- You should not sit down until the coffin is laid on the ground at the place of burial.

How is the Islamic burial actually carried out?
The scholars, by consensus, have said that burying the dead is a "Fardh Kifaaya" and that it is better to perform it as soon as possible.

- The minimum requirements for a grave are as follows: a hole in the ground deep enough that it would completely conceal the dead body, preventing its odor from reaching people, and to protect it from wild beasts.

It is recommended to dig wider and deeper. There are two different shapes of graves—Lahd and Shiqq, with Lahd being the better of the two. Lahd means that a concave hollow is dug into the wall of the grave that faces the Qiblah. This hollow should be wide and deep enough to house the body. Shiqq, on the other hand, means to dig the usual grave consisting of a rectangular hole in the ground where the body is placed with a ceiling of treated wood or a concrete slab that protects it from the dirt. Also, it has been the practice during the life of the messenger (S.A.W.) and throughout the time of his blessed companions and their followers to bury the Muslim in Muslims cemeteries.

Furthermore, the body is laid in the grave on its right side facing the "Qiblah". The person laying the body should say: "In the name of Allaah, and by the way of the messenger of Allaah - or by the tradition of the messenger of Allaah," while laying the body. He then must untie all the ties of the shroud as the prophet (S.A.W.) used to do when laying a dead body in the grave, and recite aloud: "In the name of Allaah, and by the way of the messenger of Allaah or by the tradition of the messenger of Allaah." [Reported by Imaams Ahmad, Abu Daawood, At-Tirmidhi, and others] It is good for those attending the funeral to throw - three times each -a handful of dirt. They should throw the dirt to the side of the grave where the head has been placed. The prophet (S.A.W.) once prayed the Janaazah (funeral) prayer, then went to the dead's grave and threw dirt on it from the side of the body's head, three times. [Reported by Imaam Ibn Maajah]

It is also highly recommended to ask Allaah (SWT) forgiveness for the departed soul upon finishing the burial and to take advantage of the gathering to advise and preach to people about the Hereafter. The prophet (S.A.W.) used to say when he was done with the burial: "Ask Allaah forgiveness for your brother and ask Him to confirm his heart because he is being questioned now." [Reported by Imaams Abu Daawood and Al-Haakim] Also, Al-barâ’ Bin ’Aazib (R.A.) narrated: "We went out with Allaah's Messenger (S.A.W.) with the funeral of a man of the Ansaar (The native residents of Madinah) and we came to the grave and the slot in the side of the grave (Al-Lahd) had not been dug out yet, so Allaah's messenger (S.A.W.) sat and we sat around him as if we had a bird upon our heads (meaning they were very alert) and in his hand he had a stick with which he was striking the ground. Then he raised his head and said, "Seek Allaah's refuge from the punishment of the grave," two or three times. Then he said, "When the believing servant is leaving this world and going on to the Hereafter, angels with bright faces -as if their faces were
the sun - descend upon him..." [An authentic Hadeeth reported by Imaams Ahmed, Abu Daawood and Al Haakim]

It is recommended to raise the grave about 8 inches above ground so that it will be recognized. Higher than 8 inches is not allowed. It is allowed, however, to mark the grave with a rock, piece of wood etc to distinguish it. The prophet (S.A.W.) marked the grave of Othmaan Ibn Madh'oon (R.A.) with a rock and said: "with it I recognize the grave of my brother and bury next to him those who die from my family." [A good Hadeeth reported by Imaam Abu Daawood]

What is not permissible for graves?

It is not permissible to cement the grave or to construct on top of it, unless there is a necessity to protect the grave or the body from natural events, wild animals, looting etc. It is also not permissible to write on the grave, or to turn the area around it into a mosque. Also, not allowed, is kissing it, going around it as if performing a ritualistic act, or burning incense to leave a nice fragrance. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) forbade cementing the graves with mortar, writing on the graves, and building structures on top of them. [Reported by Imaams Muslim and others] Also, the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "May Allaah destroy the Jews; they made places for prayers out of their prophets' graves." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

In addition, it is a must to respect the grave by not sitting on it or walking on top of it. Two ahadeeth are cited here. When the prophet (S.A.W.) saw Omar Ibn Hizaam leaning against a grave, he said:" Do not harm the occupant of this grave." [Reported by Imaam Ahmad] In another hadeeth the prophet (S.A.W.) said: "It is better for one of you to sit on a piece of burning coal that would burn his clothes then penetrate to his flesh, than to sit on a grave." [Reported by Imaam Muslim and others]

What should the relatives and members of the community do to comfort the family of the dead person?

It is recommended to comfort the family of the dead person with consoling words that would soothe the grieving relatives and reduce their sadness. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Surely, every believer who comforts his brother at a time of grief will be dressed with the garments of dignity on the Day of Judgment." [A good Hadeeth reported by Imaams Ibn Maajah and Al-Baihaqui]

It is better to stick to the words that the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) used in such occasions. When the prophet's daughter called upon him to come because a son of hers had died, he sent his greeting (Salaam) followed by: "It is His What He has taken, and it is His what He has given, and everything in His possession has a prescribed lifetime, so let her be patient and content (with Allaah's will and reward.)" [Reported by Imaam Bukhaari]

What kind of things can be done to benefit the deceased?
The scholars agree that the dead person is benefited by the good things that he initiated in his lifetime. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "When a son of Adam dies, his deeds cease to benefit him except for three: a continuous charity, a useful contribution to knowledge, and a good child who would pray for him." [Reported by Imaam Muslim and the other six Imaams]

As far as the good acts by living people that will benefit the dead person, they are as follows:

1. **S supplicating and asking for Allaah's forgiveness for the dead:** Allaah (S.W.T.) says what can be translated as, "And those who came after them saying: 'O our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in good faith.'" [surat Al-Hashr, (verse 10)] Also, this practice of praying for the dead is from the tradition of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

2. **Charity:** the mother of Sa'ad Ibn Obada (R.A.) died while he was away, so he came to the prophet (S.A.W.) and said: "O messenger of Allaah, my mother has died while I was away, would it benefit her if I gave charity on her behalf? He (S.A.W.) said: "Yes." Sa'ad replied: "I would like you to witness that my orchard - Al-Mikhraf - is a charity on her behalf." [Reported by Imaam Al-Bukhari]

3. **Fasting:** A man came to the prophet (S.A.W.) and said: "O messenger of Allaah, my mother died before she made up a month's time of fasting, can I make it up for her?" He (S.A.W.) said: "If your mother were in debt, would you have paid the debt for her?" he said: "Yes," he (S.A.W.) replied "A debt to Allaah is more worthy of being paid." [Reported by Imaams Bukhaari and Muslim]

4. **Hajj:** A woman from Juhaynah (a tribe) came to the prophet (S.A.W.) and said: "My mother has made (Nadhr) - (a promise to Allaah) - to go to Hajj, but she died before she fulfilled her "Nadhr." Can I perform Hajj on her behalf? He (S.A.W.) replied: "Perform Hajj on her behalf. If your mother were in debt, would you not have paid it for her? Do it (all of you) because Allaah is more worthy of being paid back." [Reported by Imaam Al-Bukhari]

5. **Paying off the Deceased's Debts:** The money to pay off the debt can come from the deceased's wealth, or any donations from family or friends. "Abu Qataadah (R.A.) donated money to pay the debt of a deceased person, which was two Dinars, with the approval of the prophet (S.A.W.)." [Reported by Imaam Al-Haakm and Al-Baihaqui]

6. **Reciting Qur'aan:** There is a difference of opinion among the scholars regarding this practice since no explicit text has been gathered that says reading the Qur'aan would benefit the dead with a reward. Hanafi and Hanbali schools of Fiqh say that the reward of reading Qur'aan will reach the dead, because these scholars made an analogy about the other righteous deeds that have been mentioned by the prophet (S.A.W.) like fasting or hajj on behalf of the dead. On the other hand, Maaliki and Shaafi'i schools of Fiqh say that the reward will not reach the dead, because Allaah (S.W.T) says, what can be translated as, "And that man can have nothing but what
he does (good or bad)." [Surat Al-Najm, (verse 39)] And also the prophet (S.A.W) said: "When a person is dead, his deeds cease (are stopped) except for three: a continuous charity, a knowledge which mankind gets benefit and a righteous child who makes supplications for him." [Reported by Imaam Muslim] Also, there is no text from the prophet that proves that reciting Qur'aan will transfer into a reward for the dead.

What are the rules concerning the visitation of graves?

Visiting the graves is desirable for both men and women. This will remind us of the reality of death. The prophet (S.A.W) said to the companions, "I had (previously) forbidden you to visit the graves, now (it is permissible for you, so) go and visit them, there is a lesson to learn from them, and do not say anything that will upset Allaah." [Reported by Imaams Al-Haakim, Al-Baihaqui, and Al-Bazzaar] Women just like men may visit the graves, because of the orders of the prophet (S.A.W), which included them too. Also women will share with men the same wisdom that can be learned from visiting the graves. And also when Aishah (R.A.) asked the prophet (S.A.W) what she could say when she visits the graves, the prophet taught her what she should say, and did not prevent her from visiting the cemetery. He said to her, "Say, Aishah, “Peace be upon the believing men and women dwelling here. May Allaah grant mercy to those who have preceded us and those who are to follow them, certainly, Allaah willing, we will join you”. [Reported by Imaams Muslim and An-Nasaa'i] The opinion for men as well as women to visit graves has been adopted by Imaam Maalik, some Hanafi scholars and even one report from Imaam Ahmad. It is, however, important that women must be dressed according to the Shariah rules and for their own safety be accompanied by their Mahram.

Whoever pays a visit to a grave should face the deceased, greet them with asalamu 'alaykum and supplicate for them (preferably facing the qiblah) as the prophet used to do while he visited graves.

Prohibited Acts While Visiting Graves

- No wiping hands over the graves.
- No kissing or circumambulating around them.
- No sacrificing animals for the dead.
- No sitting on the graves or walking on top of them.
- No praying toward the graves.
- No breaking the bones of the dead.
- No placing pictures or flowers on top of the graves.

“O Allaah, forgive us and have mercy upon us and give us strength and pardon us. Be generous to us and cause our entrance to be wide and wash us with water and snow and hail. Cleanse us of our transgressions as white cloth is cleansed of stains. Give us an abode better than our home and a family better than our family and a spouse better than our spouse. Take us into Paradise and protect us from the punishment of the grave [and from the punishment of the Hell-fire].” “Aameen”