

Gifts for the Deceased



Visiting the Deceased

Losing dear ones is a difficult experience. The separation causes pain and grief in the family as they struggle with accepting the loss of the love done. However, death in Islam does not result in the end of a human being. Rather 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-salam* (valley of peace and bliss).

The bereaved 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 spirits of the dear ones and do good in their memory. In this way they maintain connection with the departed loved ones. The deceased, on the other hand, also want to be remembered after death. They hope that their name and memories continue after their 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 Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

Surely the gift for the dead is Du‘ās and Istighfār.

Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq has said:

Prayers, fasting, Hajj, charity, good deeds and supplications reach the dead in his grave and reward is written for [both] the doer and the dead.¹

He has also said:

Whosoever among the Muslims does a good act for a dead person, Allah rewards him many times and Allah (also) benefits the dead with it.”²

In this brief article we quote a few Hadith on the merits of visiting and remembering the dead and explain 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.

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¹ He said: تدخل على الميت في قبره الصلاة والصوم والحج والصدقة والبر والدعاء، ويكتب أجره للذي فعله وللميت

² He said: من عمل من المسلمين عن ميت عمل خير اضعف الله اجره، ونفع الله به الميت

Merits of Visiting the Gravesite of Believers

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ تَرَحَّمَ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْمَقَابِرِ بَجَى مِنَ النَّارِ وَدَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ وَهُوَ
يَضْحَكُ

One who shows mercy on the inhabitants of graves, will be saved from the Fire and will enter Paradise whilst he is laughing.

Imam Amīrul Mu'minīn Ali عليه السلام said:

زُرُوا مَوْتَاكُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَفْرَحُونَ بِزِيَارَتِكُمْ وَلِيَطْلُبَ أَحَدُكُمْ حَاجَتَهُ
عِنْدَ قَبْرِ أَبِيهِ وَقَبْرِ أُمِّهِ بَعْدَمَا يَدْعُوا لَهُمَا

Visit your deceased, for they feel happy with your visitation. Ask for your needs at the grave of your father and your mother after having prayed for them.

Imam al-Sādiq عليه السلام 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:

أَنْتُمْ يَا نِسْوَنَ بِكُمْ فَإِذَا غَبِثُمْ عَنْهُمْ اسْتَوْحِشُوا

The (dead) perceive your company and when you leave them they experience loneliness.

Someone asked Imam al-Sādiq عليه السلام, is it possible to pray for the dead? He said:

إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ لَيَفْرَحُ بِالتَّرْحَمِ عَلَيْهِ وَالِاسْتِعْفَارِ لَهُ كَمَا يَفْرَحُ الْحَيُّ
بِالْهَدِيَّةِ تُهْدَى إِلَيْهِ.

The dead rejoice with mercy shown to him, and prayers of forgiveness for him, just as a living person rejoices upon receiving gifts.

Visiting the Deceased

Islam is a complete way of life. It guides Muslims in all aspects of life and recommends noble etiquette (*adab*) in interacting with others, including the dead. Here are a few recommendations which believers are urged to follow.

Regarding the recitations mentioned here, you can recite one, a few, or all of them, depending on time available and spiritual mindset. We suggest that you say one or two of these recitations at least upon visiting, and try to cover all of them over time so as to derive numerous benefits promised for the believers.

- 1) It is recommended (*mustahab*) to visit the graves of Muslim men and women.
- 2) It is recommended to plead for Divine mercy and forgiveness for the dead.
- 3) It is recommended to ask for your needs at the graves of your parents
- 4) It is recommended to visit the cemetery on Monday and Thursday afternoon at 'Asr time and on Saturday

mornings. (Bībī Fātima عليها السلام visited the martyrs of ‘Uhud, especially Hadrat Hamza, on Saturday mornings).

5) When reciting Sūrahs from the Qur’an and pleading for Divine mercy and forgiveness for the deceased, place your hand on the grave and face Qiblah.

6) Upon entering the cemetery greet the deceased by praying for Divine mercy and remember the fact that we will all face death sooner or later. Say:

السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدِّيَارِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ،
رَحِمَ اللَّهُ الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ،
وَإِنَّا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَاحِقُونَ

Peace be with you, O the inhabitants of the grave amongst the believers and Muslims. May Allah have mercy on those before you and those who follow you! If Allah wishes, we shall (soon) join you.

7) Recite Sūratul 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 laylatil qadri* ... seven times, Allah will forgive him and the inhabitants of the grave.

8) Recite Sūratul Ikhlās (No. 112) eleven times. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, ‘one who passes by a cemetery [of Muslims] and recites *Qul huwallāhu abad* . . . eleven

times and gifts its reward to the deceased, he is granted a reward equal to the number of the dead.

9) Recite Sūrat Yāsīn (No. 36). Holy Prophet ﷺ has been attributed 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.”³

10) It is also recommended to recite: (a) 3 x Sūratul Fātiha, (b) 3 x Sūratul Falaq, (c) 3 x Sūratun Nās, (d) 3 x Āyatul Kursī, (e) any passage from the Holy Qur’an.

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

12) Recite a short two rakā‘at prayer on the grave. 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‘atan khafīfatān*) of prayer is dearer to the inhabitant of this grave than your world in its entirety.”

Greeting the Deceased

This greeting is attributed to Imam Ali عليه السلام, saying of which will earn the reward of 50 years.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. السَّلَامُ عَلَى أَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

³ He said: من دخل المقابر فقرأ سورة يس، خفف الله عنهم يومئذ، وكان له بعدد من فيها حسنات

مِنْ أَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، يَا أَهْلُ 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
 اغْفِرْ لِمَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، واحشُرْنَا فِي زُمْرَةِ مَنْ قَالَ:
 لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، عَلِيُّ وَوَلِيُّ اللَّهِ
 اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

In Allah's name, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful
 Peace be with you O people of *lā ilāha illal-lāh*,
 From the people of *lā ilāha illal-lāh*, O people of *lā ilāha
 illal-lāh*, for the sake of *lā ilāha illal-lāh*.
 How did you find the testimony of *lā ilāha illal-lāh*?
 From *lā ilāha illal-lāh*, O *lā ilāha illal-lāh*
 For the sake of *lā ilāha illal-lāh*
 [O Allah] forgive those who say *lā ilāha illal-lāh*
 Raise us in the company of those who say *lā ilāha illal-lāh*,
Muhammadur-Rasūlullāh, '*Alīyyun waliyullāh*
 O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad.

Note: *lā ilāha illal-lāh* means: None deserves to be
 worshipped, except Allah.

References:

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