

Islamic Traditional burial and funeral rituals

According to Islamic practice, money and food are given to the needy on behalf of the deceased.

- By Wafa Issa, Staff Reporter, Published: 00:53 May 30, 2009

Dubai: Burial and funeral rituals in the UAE are based on Islam. In Islamic traditions the deceased person must be buried as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.

The practice is based on a Hadith, the Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) saying: "To honour the dead is to bury them".

When a Muslim passes away, he has to be washed according to Sharia (Islamic law), where the entire body is washed with water and cleaned with 'kafour' (Camphor) and 'Sidr'. The body is then dried and perfumed with 'Oud' and Rose scents before he/she is enshrouded in white clean sheets (called Kafan.)

After the washing ceremony the men carry the body to the mosque where a 'prayer on the dead' is performed before the body is carried on the shoulders to the cemetery and buried in a hole leaning to the right side and covered with a layer of strips or rock tiles and soil.

The crowd starts saying prayers, 'Du'aa', for the deceased and offering their condolence to his/her parents and family. Even non-Muslims can take part in the burial ceremony but they cannot perform the prayers.

Female relatives are also allowed to go to the cemetery but they are not allowed to mix with the men.

The condolence period lasts for three days where family and friends offer condolence in two separate sections, one for females and one for males. During the condolence ceremonies the Quran is read for the soul of the deceased.

Expatriates attending an Emirati funeral are expected to dress according to local understanding of appropriate clothing.

In Islamic traditions there is nothing which says that women need to wear black, but women wearing dark clothes, preferably black or grey, have become a common practice. It is also considered inappropriate to wear make up or gaudy nail polish or decorative jewellery when attending a funeral.

Usually, the family and relatives of the deceased give money or food to the needy in the name of the deceased so he gets more reward after his death.

The clothes and belongings of the deceased are also given to needy people and its preferable that nothing is kept at home - because giving away will benefit the needy who can make use of it which is also a reward for the deceased.

What you say in Arabic when offering condolences to a Muslim:

- "Addham Allah Ajrakum Wa Ahsan Aza'akum Wa Ghafar Li Faqeedikum".

- "May Allah increase your reward, give you the best consolation, and forgive your deceased beloved."

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