



Shrouding the dead

The first question of Fatwa no. 4141

Q1: Our scholars (may Allah be merciful to them) have informed us that a dead man should be shrouded in three pieces of cloth and a woman should be shrouded in five pieces. A controversy has developed among us over how a body should be shrouded and how a Khimar or Qina' (veil covering to the waist) should be wrapped. We hope that Your Eminence will explain to us: how to shroud men and women; what the specifications are for the Qina' and Khimar and how they should be wrapped; what we should do if the dead person is big and the cloth is not. Should a dead person's face be uncovered in the grave? Should the shroud be tied, and if so, should it be untied in the grave or not? Should a piece of earth from the grave be put near the dead person's head after mixing it with water or not?

A: Firstly: A man should be shrouded in three pieces of cloth. They should be spread out, one on top of the other, and the dead body laid on them. The first piece of cloth should be wrapped around the body by bringing the ends together, and the same is then done with the second and third pieces of cloth. If the pieces of cloth are not wide enough to cover all the body, another piece of cloth can be attached that is sufficient to cover it.

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The shroud should then be tied and the knots untied when put in the grave.

A woman should be first shrouded with an Izar (garment worn below the waist) over her 'Awrah (private parts of the body that must be covered in public) and the surrounding area, then a Qamis (long shirt) over her body, and then a Qina' over her head and the surrounding area. After that, the whole body should be wrapped in two pieces of cloth, in the same way mentioned for man. What we have described in regard to shrouding a man or a woman is the preferred manner, however, if the dead person, man or woman, is shrouded in just one piece of cloth, covering the body, this will be sufficient.

Secondly: A dead person's face, whether it is a man or woman, should not be uncovered in the grave, because there is no religious evidence for doing so.

Thirdly: As far as we know, there is no evidence for the permissibility of placing a piece of wetted earth from the grave by the head of a dead person, in fact doing this is Bid'ah (innovation in religion).

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions!

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