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A son washing his deceased mother's body

Fatwa no. 2879

A man's mother was nearly eighty years old when she passed away, after suffering from an abdominal illness for around two years. He washed her, as an act of kindness on his part, not out of a need to do so. What was obligatory for him to do? May Allah reward you greatly!

A: What was done at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (may Allah be pleased with them) was that when a woman died, she would be washed by women, not by men, except for a wife, as her husband could either wash her or leave it to the women. The same applied to a slave woman in relation to her master, so long as she was lawful for him [i.e. as a wife. trans.]. Also, when a man died, he would be washed by men, not women, except a husband, as his wife could either wash him or leave it to the men. Based on this, your washing of your mother contradicts the Shari'ah (Islamic law), as far as is known about this issue from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Sahabah (Companions, may Allah be pleased with them), even though your mother was old. Therefore, you should seek Allah's forgiveness and make Tawbah (repentance to Allah) and not do this for any of your other Mahrams (unmarriageable female relatives), even if you have a good intention and only wish to do kindness to them.

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

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