

13471 - Can a Wife See Her Husband after Death?

the question

In case of death of a person, it is practiced by some groups of Muslims who follow Hanafi madhhab in India that the society forbids the wife of the person to see her own husband's dead body. They claim that when a person dies, his wife becomes a widow and she should not be allowed to go in front of any (non-mahram) man who is dead or alive. It is assumed by them that her husband's dead body becomes haram to see. Is there any authentic hadith that confirms this? Please explain.

Summary of answer

It is permissible for a woman to see her husband's body after death and there is no reason why she should not. Indeed, a wife has the right to wash her dead husband.

Detailed answer

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Can the wife see husband after death?

It is permissible for a woman to see her husband's body, and there is no reason why she should not. Indeed, [a wife has the right to wash her dead husband](#) .

Imam Malik narrated in al-Muwatta from 'Abd-Allah ibn Abi Bakr that Asma bint 'Umays washed Abu Bakr al-Siddiq when he died, then she went out and asked the Muhajirin who

were present, “I am fasting and the day is very cold; do I have to do ghusl?” and they said, “No.” (al-Janaiz, 466).

The author of al-Muntaqa ‘ala Sharh al-Muwatta said concerning this hadith:

“This indicates that [it is permissible for a woman to wash her husband after he has died](#) , because this happened in the presence of a number of the Companions, especially since Abu Bakr had left instructions in his will to that effect. No difference of opinion is known of among the Companions concerning this matter, which indicates that there was consensus.”

‘Aishah said, “If I could go back and change anything, nobody would have washed the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) [except his wives](#) .”

(Narrated by Ibn Majah, al-Janaiz, 1453; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Ibn Majah, no. 1196). If a woman is permitted to wash her husband’s body, then it is definitely permitted for her to see her husband’s body.

This ruling applies only if the woman is still within the ‘iddah period. If her ‘iddah period has ended, for example if she was pregnant but gave birth straight after her husband died, then it is not permissible for her to wash him or to see him.

I (Shaykh al-Munajjid) asked Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) before he died about a man who dies and his wife gives birth a few hours later – can she wash her husband?

He replied: “No, because when she gives birth the connection between her and her husband is severed, so it is not permissible for her to wash him, because he is now no longer her husband.” (Miah Faidah min al-‘Allamah al-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (tape)

Can women wail over the deceased?

What is forbidden is for women to [wail over the deceased](#) . It was narrated in a hadith that Umm ‘Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) took our pledge of allegiance to him on the grounds that we would not

wail (over the dead). None of us fulfilled their promise except five women: Umm Sulaym, Umm al-'Ala, the daughter of Abu Sabrah the wife of Mu'adh and two other women, or the daughter of Abu Sabrah, the wife of Mu'adh and one other woman." (Narrated by al-Bukhari (al-Janaiz, 1223)

Abu Malik al-Ash'ari narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "There are four things in my ummah from the jahiliyyah which they will not give up: pride in one's ancestry, slandering the lineage of others, seeking rain from the stars and wailing over the dead. If the woman who wails does not repent before she dies, she will be raised on the Day of Resurrection wearing a garment of tar and a shirt of scabs." (Narrated by Muslim, al-Janaiz, 1550)

Can the wife see her mahrams?

[It is permissible for a woman to see her mahrams](#) , and she does not have [to observe hijab in front of them](#) .

There is no connection between the death of a woman's husband and her seeing her mahrams. Hence it is recommended for her mahrams to offer condolences to her, by them seeing her, shaking hands with her, sitting with her and talking to her. No dispute is known among the scholars concerning this.

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "Al-Shafi'i and his companions said: it is recommended for all the relatives of the deceased to [offer condolences to his wife](#) , old and young, men and women, unless the wife is young, in which case only her mahrams should offer condolences." (Al-Majmoo', 5/277)

What the questioner describes is nothing more than the myths and ignorance of the common people.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about a woman covering her face in front of her mahrams. He said:

“That is not permissible, because it is not part of Islam; rather that is the myths and ignorance of the common people.” (See al-Fatawa al-Jami’ah li’l-Mar-ah al-Muslimah, part 2, p. 709)

And Allah knows best.