

334288 - Funeral prayer in absentia (salaat al-ghaa'ib) for one who died of the coronavirus (Covid-19)

the question

It has become widespread on social media that the one who dies of coronavirus (Covid-19) cannot be washed (ghusl) and buried and the funeral prayer offered for him, as must be done for every Muslim who dies. Is it permissible to offer the funeral prayer in absentia (salaat al-ghaa'ib) for one who died, praying by myself (not in congregation)?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

It is not prescribed to offer the funeral prayer in absentia (salaat al-ghaa'ib) except for a deceased person for whom the funeral prayer was not offered in his own land. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was not the teaching or practice of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to offer the funeral prayer in absentia for everyone who died far away.

Many of the Muslims died when they were far away, but he did not offer the funeral prayer for them. It is soundly narrated from him that he offered the funeral prayer for the Negus (ruler of Ethiopia). The scholars differed concerning that, and there are three views...

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: The correct view is that if one who is absent (ghaa'ib) dies in a land where the funeral prayer is not offered for him, then the funeral prayer in absentia (salaat al-ghaa'ib) should be offered for him, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) offered the funeral prayer for the Negus, because he died among the disbelievers and the funeral prayer was not offered for him. If the funeral prayer is offered for the deceased where he died, then the funeral prayer in absentia should not be offered for him, because the obligation was fulfilled when the Muslims offered the funeral prayer for him. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) offered the funeral prayer

in absentia sometimes and did not do it sometimes, so doing it and not doing it is Sunnah; either option may be appropriate, according to the situation. And Allah knows best. These views are all found in the madhhab of Ahmad; the soundest of them is the one discussed here.

End quote from Zaad al-Ma'aad (1/500-501).

This has been discussed previously in the answer to question no. [35853](#).

If you think it most likely that a specific Muslim individual died of this sickness (Covid-19) and was buried without the funeral prayer being offered for him, then in this case it is prescribed to offer the funeral prayer for him in absentia.

But if you pray with the intention of praying for those who died on that day even though you did not know them, this is not prescribed. The basic principle with regard to acts of worship is that they are not allowed unless there is evidence for them.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The funeral prayer in absentia should not be offered every day, because there is no report to that effect. This is supported by the words of Imam Ahmad: If a righteous man dies, the funeral prayer may be offered for him, and he quoted as evidence for that the story of the Negus.

What some people do, offering the funeral prayer in absentia every night for all the Muslims who died on that day, is undoubtedly an innovation (bid'ah).

End quote from al-Fataawa al-Kubra (5/360).

Secondly:

The basic principle is that it is prescribed to offer the funeral prayer when the body of the deceased is present; an exception is only made in the case of salaah al-ghaa'ib because it is too difficult to go to the place where the deceased is as it is too far away. If the funeral is

taking place in the same city where the worshipper is, then the Sunnah is to go to the place where the deceased is in order to offer the funeral prayer for him.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Our view is that it is permissible to offer the funeral prayer in absentia for someone who is not in the same city...

However, if the deceased is in the same city, then our view (according to our madhhab) – and it was stated definitively by the author and the majority of scholars – is that it is not permissible to offer the funeral prayer for him unless one is there with him, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not offer the funeral prayer for one who was present in the same city except in his presence. Moreover, there is no difficulty in doing that, in contrast to one who is in a different city.

End quote from al-Majmoo' (5/252-253).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The word ghaa'ib (absent) means absent from the city, even if he is not at the distance at which it becomes permissible for a traveller to shorten his prayers. But if he is in the city, then it is not prescribed to offer the funeral prayer in absentia for him; rather what is prescribed is to go out to his grave to offer the funeral prayer for him.

Hence some of the ignorant are making a mistake when they offer the funeral prayer [in absentia] for the deceased on the outskirts of the city, when the deceased is in the same city. This is contrary to the Sunnah. In fact the Sunnah is to go out to the grave and offer the funeral prayer for him there.

End quote from ash-Sharh al-Mumti' (5/345).

The reason why it is permissible to offer the funeral prayer in absentia when the deceased is outside the city is difficulty in attending the funeral, and when it is not possible to do so, as noted above in the words of an-Nawawi.

In Mughni al-Muhtaaaj ila Ma'rifat Ma'aani Alfaaz al-Minhaaj (2/27), it says:

If it is not possible for the one who is in the city to attend the funeral because of some impediment or sickness, it is not far-fetched to say that it [offering the funeral prayer in absentia] is permissible.

Al-'Abbaadi said in his commentary on Tuhfat al-Muhtaaaj (3/150):

What matters is whether it is too difficult to attend [the funeral prayer] or not. So if it is too difficult to attend, even if one is in the same city, because the city is too big and the like, then it is valid [to offer the funeral prayer in absentia] and if that is not the case, even if the funeral takes place outside the city limits, then it is not valid [to offer the funeral prayer in absentia].

This reason [difficulty in attending] is applicable in the case of one who dies in this pandemic, even if he is in the same city, as it is not possible to attend his funeral because the authorities have banned people from going outside their homes.

But in this case, according to the more correct view, the funeral prayer in absentia should only be done if no one offers the funeral prayer for him, as noted above. If some of his family or some of the medical team in the hospital have offered the funeral prayer for him, it is not prescribed to offer the funeral prayer in absentia for him in that case.

But the one who was not able to offer the funeral prayer for him can go out and offer the funeral prayer for him at his grave, outside the hours of curfew, or when the pandemic is over.

See the answer to question no. [90030](#).

We ask Allah, may He be exalted, to grant speedy relief from this pandemic for the Muslims.

Thirdly:

It is valid for an individual to offer the funeral prayer on his own, and it is not stipulated that this prayer be offered in congregation, according to the correct scholarly view. This has

been noted previously in the answer to question no. 152888.

Fourthly:

What is prescribed is for the funeral prayer to be offered for the deceased after he has been washed (ghusl). But if it is not possible to wash his body due to fear of harm, the obligation of offering the funeral prayer for him is not waived, even if he is buried without being washed first.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So fear Allah as much as you are able”

[at-Taghaabun 64:16].

‘Izz ad-Deen ibn ‘Abd as-Salaam (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If someone is obliged to do some act of worship and he is able to do part of it and unable to do another part, then he must do what he is able to do, and what he is unable to do is waived in his case. ...

End quote from Qawaa‘id al-Ahkaam (2/7).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Whoever studies what it says in the Qur’an and Sunnah will clearly see that obligation [to do some religious duties] is connected to being able to learn and act. If someone is unable to do either of them, then what he is unable to do is waived in his case, for Allah does not burden any soul with more than it can bear...

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (21/634).

And Allah knows best.