

to one another, *The believers are but brothers* (Q 49:10), that is, in their mutual love. (*Rawḍ*, al-mu'akhāt bayn al-muhājirīn wal-anṣār)

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See also: ABROGATION; ABŪ BAKR; ‘ĀD; ANṢĀR; BACKBITING; BELIEF; BELIEVERS; BLOOD MONEY; BREASTFEEDING; CALF; CHILDREN OF ISRĀ’ĪL; CHRONICLES OF THE QUR’ĀN; CLIENTS AND PATRONS; CONJECTURE; CONVEYING THE MESSAGE; DREAMS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION; FIR‘AWN; HĀRŪN, UPON HIM PEACE; HIJRA; HYPOCRISY AND HYPOCRITES; HŪD, UPON HIM PEACE; IBRĀHĪM, UPON HIM PEACE; INHERITANCE AND PATRIMONY; JĀHILIYYA; KINDRED; LŪṬ, UPON HIM PEACE; MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE; MIRACLES; MUHĀJIRŪN; MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; NŪḤ, UPON HIM PEACE; RETRIBUTION; ṢĀLIḤ, UPON HIM PEACE; SATAN; SHU‘AYB, UPON HIM PEACE; THAMŪD; ṬŪR; TWO SONS OF ‘ĀDAM; ‘UMRA; UNBELIEF; UNBELIEVERS; WAITING PERIOD; YA‘QŪB, UPON HIM PEACE; YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL AND NASEER AHMAD

BURIAL

DAFN

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and Usage; (ii) Initiation; (iii) Burial Rites; (iv) Burial of Martyrs; (v) Live Burial; (vi) Bibliography.

Definitions and Usage

The Qur’ān uses the following terms to refer to burial:

- i. Form III verb *wārā-yuwarī* (“to keep secret, to hide”), from the root *w-r-y*, which appears thirty-two times in various derived forms. The relevant Form III verb is used twice (Q 7:20, 26) in reference to covering nakedness and twice in Q 5:31 in reference to the first burial in human history;
- ii. *al-maw’ūda* (“the female infant buried alive,” Q 81:8), the feminine passive participle from the root *w-ḍ-d*—from which only this word occurs in the Qur’ān—carrying the meaning “to make one thing heavy with another;” thus such an infant is called *al-maw’ūda* because the soil bears down upon her (Ibn Fāris;

al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāgha* 2:316);

- iii. In Q 16:59, the verb *yaduss* (from the root *d-s-s*, meaning “to cover one thing with another”) is used for the act of burying alive (*waʿd*). It is preceded (Q 16:58) by the description of the state of the man who receives the news of the birth of a female child: his face darkens, he dissimulates his anger, and hides himself from the people because of what he conceives to be an ill-news; should he keep her in humiliation or bury her (*yadussuhu*) in the ground? *Truly evil is what they decide!*
- iv. Form IV verb *aqbara* [-*hu*] (“*He provides a grave for him*”), from the root *q-b-r*, used once (Q 80:21). The related verbal noun *qabr* (pl. *maqābir*) appears six times (Q 8:84; 22:7; 35:22; 60:13; 82:4; 100:9) in singular and once (Q 102:2) in plural form.

Initiation

The initiation of the burial rite is described in Q 5:31, as one son of Ādam—identified in the commentaries as Qābil (Cain)—is taught what to do with the corpse of his brother whom he had slain: *Then Allah sent a raven scratching up the ground, to show him how to hide his brother's bare corpse. He said: Woe unto me! Am I not able to be as this raven and so hide (fa-uwāriya) my brother's bare corpse? And he became regretful.* Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) explains, on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās (3BH-68/619-688) and “a number of other Companions,” that the verse refers to two ravens sent by Allah, one of which killed the other and covered it with soil in a crevice (see ĀDAM; ANIMALS; TWO SONS OF ĀDAM). This slain son of Ādam, identified in the commentaries as Hābil (Abel), was the first human to die, such that until his death burial rites were unknown (cf. Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr; Samarqandī; Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *sub* Q 5:31).

The raven's act inaugurated an abiding communal obligation on all people (*farḍan ʿalā jamīʿ al-nās ʿalā al-kifāya*). The responsibility to ensure proper burial of the dead falls first upon near relatives or those living with the deceased, then upon his or her neighbors, and then upon the general community of believers (*q.v.*). Such burial both conceals the deceased and protects the living from the odor of decomposition (Ibn al-ʿArabī, 2:86; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 5:31). The verse, along with Q 77:25-26 (*Have We not made the earth a receptacle, both for the living and the dead*) and Q 80:21 (*Then He causes him to die, then inters him (fa-aqbarahu)*, is “the foundation of the rite of burial of the dead”

(*al-aṣl fī sunnati dafn al-mawtā*) (Jaṣṣāṣ, *sub* Q 5:31).

The grammarian Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Ziyād al-Farrāʾ (144-207/761-822) explains the usage of the Form IV verb *aqbara* in Q 80:21: “[Allah] did not use [the Form I verb] *fa-qabarahu*, because *al-qābir* is the one who buries with his own hands, whereas *al-muqbir* is Allah, Who made humans the possessors of graves...instead of their being left to be scavenged by predators or entombed as practiced by the Zoroastrians” (in Azharī; Zabīdī, *sub* *q-b-r*) (see AL-MAJŪS). The meaning of the verb *aqbara* is “to aid in burial or to make for another a place of burial (*marwḍīʿ qabr*), as per the interpretation of Q 80:21 by Abū ʿUbayda, [who said] ‘by sending the raven, Allah, glorified and exalted, revealed to the son of Ādam who had killed his brother how to bury the corpse’” (Ibn Durayd, *sub* *b-q-r* 1:324). “It is as though the grave is one of the things by which the children of Ādam have been honored” (*wa-kaʿanna al-qabra mimmā ukrīma bihi Banū Ādam*) (Jawharī, *Ṣiḥāḥ*, *sub* *q-b-r*).

The burial returns the human body to earth (*q.v.*) from which it was originally created (Q 3:59; 18:37; 22:5; 30:20; 35:11; 40:67)—a theme mentioned in other verses as well: *You have no other deity but Him. He brought you forth from the earth (Q 11:61); Thereof We created you, and thereunto We return you, and thence We shall bring you forth a second time (Q 20:55); And Allah has brought you forth from the earth; then He will return you into it, and will bring you forth [on the Day of Resurrection] (Q 71:17-18) (see CLAY; EARTH)—until the Day of Resurrection (q.v.), when the dead shall rush forth (yansilūn, Q 36:51) from their graves (ajdāth, qubūr) as if racing toward a signpost (Q 70:43; cf. Q 36:51; 54:7; 100:9).*

Commenting on the aforementioned Q 20:55, the Sufi exegete Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (376-465/ca.986-ca.1073) offers insights into the subtle relation between body and spirit and what happens to them upon death:

Bodies are molds and spirits repositories. The provenance of the molds is soil; the characteristic of the repositories is [spiritual] intimacy (*wal-wadāʿīʿ ṣiḥāṭuhā al-qurba*). Whereas the molds are adorned with His favors, the repositories are revived by the unveiling of His Majesty and the grace of His Beauty. This day, the molds enjoy retreat (*iʿtikāf*) in their repose on the carpet of His worship (*ʿalā bisāṭ ʿibādātih*), and the repositories have gnosis (*maʿrifā*) of [Allah] (*Tafsīr*).