

Du‘ā’s for the grieving

What the Prophet ﷺ taught us to say when someone dies: for ourselves, for the one who has gone, and to the family they leave behind. Each is given with its Arabic, a transliteration and its source.

1

When you hear the news

Say the words Allah praised in the Qur’ān: *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn*, “we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.” Umm Salamah heard the Prophet ﷺ say that whoever is struck by a loss and says this, with the du‘ā’ after it, Allah will reward them and give them something better in its place. When her husband Abū Salamah died she said it, wondering who could be better than him, and later married the Prophet ﷺ.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ اللَّهُمَّ أَجِرْنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return. O Allah, reward me in my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 918

Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn. Allāhumma-ʿjurnī fī muṣībati wa akhlif lī khayran minhā

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.

Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:155-157 • Arabic: Tanzil; translation: Saheeh International

2

For the one who has died

When Abū Salamah died, the Prophet ﷺ closed his eyes and prayed for him by name. Say it with the name of the one you have lost in place of “Abū Salamah”.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي سَلَمَةً وَارْفَعْ دَرَجَتَهُ فِي الْمَهْدِيِّينَ وَاخْلُفْهُ فِي عَقْبِهِ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهُ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَافْسَحْ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَنُورْ لَهُ فِيهِ

O Allah, forgive Abū Salamah, raise his rank among the rightly guided, and be his successor for those he leaves behind. Forgive us and him, O Lord of the worlds. Make his grave spacious for him and give him light in it.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

Allāhumma-ghfir li-[name] wa-rfa' darajatahu fil-mahdiyyīn, wa-khlufhu fī 'aqibihi fil-ghābirīn, wa-ghfir lanā wa lahu yā rabbal-'ālamīn, wa-fsaḥ lahu fī qabrihi wa nawwir lahu fih

He also taught Umm Salamah what to say for herself and her husband together:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلَهُ وَأَعْقِبْنِي مِنْهُ عَقْبِي حَسَنَةً

O Allah, forgive me and him, and give me after him a good replacement.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 919

Allāhumma-ghfir lī wa lahu wa a'qibnī minhu 'uqbā ḥasanah

For a woman, -hu (him) becomes -hā (her): *wa lahā, minhā, qabrihā*. The du'ā's of the janazah prayer itself are in the janazah prayer guide.

3

At the grave, after the burial

When the Prophet ﷺ finished burying someone, he would stand at the grave and tell those there to pray that the one who had died be kept firm, because they were being questioned at that moment. Stay a little, and ask Allah for their forgiveness and firmness in your own words.

اسْتَغْفِرُوا لِأَخِيكُمْ وَسَلُّوا لَهُ التَّثْبِيتَ فَإِنَّهُ الآنَ يُسْأَلُ

Ask forgiveness for your brother and ask that he be made firm, for he is now being questioned.

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3221 (ṣaḥīḥ, al-Albānī) • Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ: ḥasan

Istaghfirū li-akhikum wa salū lahu al-tathbīt, fa-innahu al-āna yus'al

4

What to say to the family

When the Prophet's daughter sent for him as her son was dying, he sent her his salām and these words. They are the best thing to say to a grieving family, in Arabic or in English.

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ وَلَهُ مَا أَعْطَى وَكُلُّ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى، فَلْتَصْبِرْ وَلْتَحْتَسِبْ

To Allah belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term. So let her be patient and hope for reward.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1284

Inna lillāhi mā akhadha wa lahu mā aʿtā, wa kullun ʿindahu bi-ajalin musammā, fal-taṣbir wal-taḥtasib

Speak well around the dying and the dead. The angels say *āmīn* to what is said there, so let it be duʿāʾ and good words.

إِذَا حَضَرْتُمُ الْمَرِيضَ أَوِ الْمَيِّتَ فَقُولُوا خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ يُؤْمِنُونَ عَلَى مَا تَقُولُونَ

When you are with the sick or the dead, say what is good, for the angels say āmīn to whatever you say.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 919

Short and sincere is enough: “May Allah forgive him and have mercy on him.” “May Allah give you patience and reward you.” “I am here; what can I do this week?”

5

What not to say

Do not say for certain where they are. When a woman told the dead ʿUthmān ibn Maẓʿūn, “I testify that Allah has honoured you,” the Prophet ﷺ asked how she knew, and said that he himself hoped good for him. Say “we hope” and pray, rather than declare. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1243

Do not wail or curse. Weeping is a mercy; striking the face, tearing clothes and crying out against Allah’s decree are not. At Abū Salamah’s death, when his family cried out, the Prophet ﷺ told them to pray only for good for themselves. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1294 • Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَطَمَ الْخُدُودَ، وَشَقَّ الْجُيُوبَ، وَدَعَا بِدَعْوَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

He is not one of us who strikes his cheeks, tears his clothes and cries out with the cries of the Days of Ignorance.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1294

Do not hurry them out of grief. Avoid “it was for the best,” “at least...,” or comparing their loss to another. Listening is often the kindest thing.

6

Condolence: the first days and food

Condolence (*ta'ziyah*) is consoling the family, urging patience and praying for the one who died. It is usually offered in the first three days, which is how long mourning lasts for everyone but a widow; someone who was away or only heard later can still offer it. Keep visits short unless the family wants company.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 • Sunan Ibn Mājah 1601 (ḥasan)

Feed the family; do not expect them to feed you. When news came of Ja'far's death, the Prophet ﷺ told his household to cook for Ja'far's family, because what had happened had taken all their attention.

اصْنَعُوا لآلِ جَعْفَرٍ طَعَامًا فَإِنَّهُ قَدْ أَتَاهُمْ أَمْرٌ شَغَلَهُمْ

Prepare food for the family of Ja'far, for something has come to them that occupies them.

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan)

For practical help with visiting, see visiting a grieving family.

NO ARABIC?

Pray in your own words, in any language. These are the words the Prophet ﷺ used; any sincere du'ā' is heard.

VISITING

What to bring and how long to stay.
Visiting the family

PATIENCE

Real patience is at the first blow of the loss. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1302

LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

Ready-to-send messages for the death, the janazah time and du'ā'.
Notify family and friends