

Food Mas'ala at the Funeral Place

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The explanation as provided by the Ulema-e-Haqq and by the Fuqaha specifically regarding the food that is prepared at the funeral place is of different categories or types. Some categories of the food that is prepared at funerals are regarded as Hassan, some as Makrooh, some as Ja'iz and some as Haraam.

Ja'iz (permissible): If the food has been prepared by the neighbours or relatives (from their side) with all expenses incurred by them, and there is no special invitation, then that food is considered as ja'iz to eat.

Makrooh (disliked): If the food has been prepared for the Esaale Sawaab of the deceased by the relatives who are not classed as inheritors, then that food should be fed to the needy and to the poor. It will be Makrooh for the wealthy to eat this food.

Hassan (good): If the food that is prepared is distributed amongst the poor, needy and orphan's, then there is great reward (Sawaab) in this and cooking, feeding and partaking in all this is regarded as a good practice.

Haraam (unlawful): If the food was prepared from the deceased's wealth, and some of the inheritors had not been present or some of the inheritors had not reached the age of maturity that would have made them legal inheritors, then the food becomes Haraam to eat. This is because the wealth that is used to prepare the food actually belongs to all the inheritors and use that wealth without their permission is eating the wealth of the orphan's which is Haraam. Therefore, the food is regarded as Haraam to consume. If the food was prepared through by the pressure of the society or community fearing that people will laugh or consider the family to be very low, and if it was prepared by borrowing money when there was not enough money available, the food is also considered Makruh to consume.

In our community, the general custom that is followed in preparing the food at a funeral residence is usually carried out by the relatives of the deceased, who utilise their own wealth, and not by utilising the wealth of the deceased. If this is done without much extravagance and without an atmosphere of celebration that involves unnecessary side expenses, for example, hiring of special chairs, lights and cutlery, and purely with the intention of feeding the visitors who might have travelled from afar and who are hungry due to lack of food that might be easily available, then, in this situation, the food is considered as mubah (allowed).

The wisdom of the Shariah is that the funeral place should be a place of the remembrance of Almighty Allah and to create a Fear of Almighty Allah. The environment should create an atmosphere of the remembrance of death and the Aakhirah, to show sympathy towards the deceased's family, to assist them, to comfort them and offer condolences at their personal loss. The Shariah does not put unnecessary burden on them by making it necessary for them to prepare food and entertain visitors and mourners. The visitors should rather encourage the next of kin to the deceased to eat and drink and not neglect their bodies and health.

It should always be remembered that the residence of the deceased or funeral place should not look like a place of celebration and merriment with visitors and mourners eating, drinking, smoking, laughing and talking unnecessarily as these acts are not befitting for the occasion and strongly disliked by the Shariah.

It was the custom in the early ages that some special group of mourners (Nawhagar) used to visit the residence to the deceased on the day of the funeral, sit and cry and make others cry, and recite poetry in praise of the deceased. All these actions are totally prohibited and to invite such people and offer them food is Haraam.

The Islamic Shariah allows Ziafat (feast upon invitation) for specific occasions such as weddings, but not for funerals. It is a Bidah (innovation) to have a feast on an occasion of sadness.

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Muslims should avoid unnecessary and unhealthy customs or practices that become points of criticism for them, but should rather try to strive towards those actions which the Shariah enjoins and approves of. It is advised by the Shariah that one should have the intention of Esaale Sawaab when preparing the food that is to be consumed at the residence of the deceased and should feed the poor and the needy with this intention. The feeding should not be motivated by reasons of pressure from the society and community and for reasons of feeling compelled and regarding it as an absolute necessity to feed the visitors and mourners. (*References: Fatawa Razviah, Miraatul Manajeh, Jal-yus-Saut Linah-yid Da'wati Amamal Maut*)

May Almighty Allah imbibe in us the Taufeeq and Hidayah to follow the Deen of Islam. Ameen.

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