

Question 347) - Explain the number of Kafan [shrouds] and method of shrouding for men and women.

A: There are details in this matter as follows:

1. The sunnah Kafan of a man is Izar [lower cloth]; Qamis ["shirt"] and lifafah [covering]. The minimum is Izar and lifafah. Under necessity, whatever can be found. To only use one cloth without an excuse is Makruh.
2. The Izar is from head to feet. The lifafah is the same. The Qamis is from below the neck to the feet without pockets, attachments or sleeves.  
Then the izar is folded 3. The shrouds are perfumed in odd numbers. The lifafah is laid out, then the Izar over it. After drying the corpse so that it does not wet the shrouds, it is placed on the Izar. Hanut perfume is applied to his head and beard. Camphor is applied to his places of Sajdah i.e. forehead, nose, palms, knees and feet. He is first dressed in the Qamis. Spread half the Qamis on the izar and fold the other half leaving the head side free. When the corpse is put on the Izar enter his head into the cut out part of the Qamis. Then spread out the top half over the corpse. over the corpse from his left side then from his right hand side. The same is then done with the lifafah. The right folds must be over the left folds.
4. If it is feared that the shrouds will open, the sides may be tied with something.
5. The sunnah kafan of a woman is a Dir' ["armour?], izar, khimar ["headscarf"], lifafah and khirqah ["cloth"]. The khirqah is used to tie her breasts and Dir' refers to Qamis. The minimum kafan is Izar, lifafah and khimar. Under necessity, whatever can be found. To use two cloths without an excuse is Makruh.
6. The khirqah should reach from the breasts to the thighs.
7. The khimar should be 3 arm spans long.
8. The shrouds are perfumed in odd numbers. The lifafah is laid out, then the Izar over it. The corpse is placed on the Izar. The dir' is put on. Her hair is made into two plaits and are placed over the dir' on her breasts. The khimar is then put over that. The khimar is put over her head and plaits from two sides is placed over her chest above the Dir'. The khirqah is then tied. According to some Fuqaha the khirqah is tied after the other shrouds. We prefer what is in al-Ikhtiyar because it is supported by Ahadith. [See I'laus Sunan (205/8)] above the Qamis. The Izar is then folded then the lifafah. The sides of the shroud can be tied if it is feared that it will open.