

The Effect of Circumstances of Death and Funeral Ceremony on Condolence in English and Arab Societies

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Abstract:

The present study is an investigation into circumstances of death and funeral ceremony and their effect on condolence expressions in English and Arab societies. The problem of the study stems from the fact that both circumstances of death and funeral ceremony differ in both societies, and this has its bearing on condolence expressions in English and Arabic. The study aims at showing whether the circumstances of death affect the grief and condolence expressions, and seeing whether funeral ceremonies differ from one society to another according to traditions and religion. It is found here that in English society, condolence expressions are often non-verbal expressions, whereas in Arab society, condolence expressions are usually verbal expressions, and that the death circumstances in English society do not affect condolence expressions, whereas in Arab society they play a significant role in choosing the condolence expressions, in addition to having an effect on the number of condolers.

Key words: Condolence, Circumstances of death, Funeral ceremonies, Grief.

تأثير ظروف الموت و مراسم الجنائز في التعزية في المجتمعين الانكليزي والعربي

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ملخص البحث:

تبحث الدراسة الحالية ظروف الموت ومراسيم العزاء في المجتمعين الانكليزي والعربي وتأثيرهم في تعبيرات التعزية في اللغتين الانكليزية والعربية . و تكمن مشكلة هذه الدراسة في الاختلاف الموجود في المجتمعين بقدر ما يتعلق الامر بظروف الموت ومراسيم العزاء اذ تستهدف تبيان ما اذا لظروف الوفاة تأثير في الحزن وتعبيرات العزاء وما اذا هنالك اختلاف في مراسيم العزاء من مجتمع لأخر على وفق التقاليد والدين. وتبين من خلال هذه الدراسة ان تعبيرات التعزية في المجتمع الانكليزي غالبا ما تكون مكتوبة في حين تكون شفوية في المجتمع العربي . كما خلصت الدراسة الى ان ظروف الوفاة في المجتمع الانكليزي لا تؤثر في تعبيرات التعزية لذلك نجد ان عبارات التعزية في هذا المجتمع غالبا ما تكون متشابهة مهما تغيرت ظروف الموت بينما تؤدي دورا مهما في المجتمع العربي في اختيار تعبيرات التعزية لان هذا المجتمع يتأثر بشكل كبير بالثقافة الاسلامية التي تركز على اختيار عبارات التعزية بما يتلاءم مع ظرف الوفاة فضلا عن تأثيرها في زيادة عدد المعزين..

1- Introduction

Condolence is an expression of sympathy with another person in grief . According to many cultural differences, condolences have two ways to be presented; in linguistic forms and non-linguistic forms. The linguistic version is like the face-to-face conversations, letters of condolences, e-mails, etc, while the non-linguistic ways are like shaking hands, looking sad or frown, etc. This is determined due to cultural and language tendencies, norms and barriers (Weigand, 2017: 289).

The problem of the study lies in the fact that circumstances of death and funeral ceremony differ in English and Arabic, because the two languages belong to totally different cultures. Therefore, offering condolences is considered problematic if one is not well acquainted with the culture of the language to whose people one wants to offer his / her condolence. The study aims at showing whether the circumstances of death affect the grief and condolence expressions ,and seeing whether funeral ceremonies differ from one society to another according to traditions and religion. To achieve these aims, the study hypothesizes that the circumstances of death affect the grief and the choice of condolence expressions which vary from one society to another. The sample of the study is based on interviews through (social media like Face book, Twitter, etc.) and observation in both English and Arab societies. The data are collected from interviews made by the researcher. Then, these data are analyzed and described according to the circumstances of death and funeral ceremonies in both societies.

2 - Circumstances of death

Circumstances of death refer to the way in which death takes place (suicide, suffocation, martyrdom, etc.) which differ from one society to another in its effect on the grief and the choice of condolence expressions.

Also Islamic society has its own traditions of funeral ceremonies which differ from Christian society. This condition is merely significant in Arab culture because Arabs normally show much care to people who die in an honorable manner (as in the case of death during praying, death in the holy month of Ramadan 'month of fasting', death in the battle-field, etc.) than to those who die in a shameful way (in a car accident as a result of drinking wine, fighting other Muslims without a justifiable religious reason, etc.). finally , it is found that the circumstances of death are highly affect the condolence expressions.

2-1 The circumstances of death in English society:

English people do not have reservation about the death of someone while drinking wine, or practising immoral acts. In English society social traditions control ritual consolation .Therefore, they do not care much about the religious aspect. You find that when a person dies in the English society, it does not matter that he died while practising religious rituals in the church or died drunk, but focuses on the deeds of the deceased in his life and the charity he provided during his life. So they write on the graves of their deceased his social life and the services rendered by him to his society and do not care about his religious background. Therefore, you find that circumstances of death do not affect the grief .We have noted that the condolence expressions used by the English society are almost the same despite the different ways of death (Holland ,2016.pp.177-202)

By making some interviews with people from the English society, and using the social media there is no difference in using the condolence expressions; and according to their culture, there is no shame if the deceased dies drunk, stealing something, etc.

Also, the researcher noted that people in English society focus on the deceased person's behavior during his life, was he good or bad? They do not focus on the way or the circumstances of his death. They estimate him according to what he did when he was alive.

As a result of this, the religious background of the deceased is not important, and it does not affect the condolence expressions.

The grief of the condolers depends on the personality of the deceased, whether he was helpful and hurt anyone.

The previous religious background of the deceased person does not affect the level of grief, while the community grieves a lot for the good works presented by the deceased person in his life.

Finally, the patience of the deceased person's family depends on using particular expressions to decrease the grief of the survivors like remembering them with the good deeds of the deceased such as:

1-" He was always there when I needed help with the kids "

2-"We lost a great friend. My condolences to you and your family

3-" Please accept our heartfelt condolences, your father was a wonderful man,
and he will be greatly missed "

4-" We are deeply and sincerely sorry for the loss of your amazing mother "

5-" I am very sorry for your loss. Your husband was a good man. We share your grief at this very sad and difficult time. "

6-"We lost a great friend. My condolences to you and your family"

The following expressions are presented as letters:

1- " Please accept our deepest condolences on the loss of your baby. He was a wonderful person and had a fantastic sense of humor. We will never forget his great smile. May your memories sustain you and bring

you comfort during this difficult season "

- 2- " I am so sorry for the loss of your beloved wife. Please accept my deepest sympathies. Through this time of pain, I just want you to know that I am here for your children. Whatever you need, don't hesitate to call me, day or night. "

2-2-circumstances of death in Arabic society :

Islamic society focuses on the circumstances of death in the Glorious Quran and the Prophet's Hadith in many situations, for example :

قال تعالى ((وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا))
(سورة النساء، اية 69)

Whoso obeyeth Allah and the Messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous. The best of company are they!

(Pickthal : 4. 69)

وعن أنس رضي الله عنه: أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: (إذا وقف العباد للحساب. جاء قوم واضعي سيوفهم على رقابهم تفتط دماً، فازدحموا على باب الجنة فقليل: من هؤلاء ؟ قيل: الشهداء كانوا أحياء مرزوقين)
(السيوطي، 2011، ج2، ص99)

Anas narrated: The Prophet said:(when the servants line up for the Allah's Judgment , some people will come put their sabers on their necks which that bleed blood, and then they congest in to the door of Paradise . some of them said who are they! The martyrs were alive in bless)

استشهد ابن لأبي أمامة الحمصي فكتب عمر إلى أبي أمامة: الحمد لله على آلائه وقضائه وحسن بلائه. فقد بلغني الذي ساق الله إلى عبد الله بن أبي أمامة من الشهادة، فقد عاش بحمد الله في الدنيا مأموناً، وأفضى إلى الآخرة شهيداً.
(المدائني، 1971، ص21)

Omer wrote to Abi Imama al-Himsi on the martyrdom of his son thank to Allah for his destiny and good trail. I knew what Allah has given to

Abdullah Ibn Abi Imama of martyrdom. He lived a peaceful life and joined the other world as a martyr.

There are many circumstances of death in the Arab society, and these circumstances affect the way of condoling survivors. Also through the observation these circumstances are divided into two groups:

The first group which is (positive circumstances), like martyrdom, death in a honourable manner like "death during praying, death in the holy month of Ramadan, death in the battle or field, suffocation, etc.

The deceased who dies through these circumstances will get 'special condolence ceremonies' which differ from any other ceremony, and often condolers use religious expressions to condole survivors which refer to patience and the Paradise.

There are specific expressions used to condole survivors like:

2-2-1-Martyrdom: The Quran says

((وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ))

(سورة آل عمران : الآية 169)

(Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their lord)

(Ali, 3 : 169)

2-2-2-Death during a honourable manner like the death in the holy month (Ramadan):

" إنه ذو حظٍ عظيم لأنه توفي في شهر رمضان "

(He is fortunate for he dies in Ramadan)

2-2-3-Suffocation:

" قال النبي مُحَمَّدٌ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) : (من مات غريقاً مات شهيداً)

(He who died drowned, died a martyr)

The grief of survivors will be decreased by using special expressions, which remind them with the Paradise and try to increase the patience of survivors by using these expressions:

" اللهم اغفر لميتهم، واسكنه الفردوس الأعلى مع الأنبياء و الصّديقين "

(May Allah forgive their deceased, and admit him in to the Paradise with the Prophets and righteous men)

The second group is (negative circumstances) such as suicide, death during a shameful way like (drinking wine, fighting other Muslims without justifiable reasons, etc.

When condolers try to condole survivors of the deceased who died through these negative circumstances, they use regular expressions to condole them, and the number of condolers will be less than any other positive circumstances.

In sum, Arab societies rarely use written expressions of condolence in contrast to English society .

3- Funeral ceremony

3-1-Christian Funeral ceremony

English people have the following distinctive rituals for the funeral procession : usually , Christian people announce the death of someone in the newspaper or on social media through an 'obituary'. The contents of the obituary are decided by the nature of funeral being ' public or private' . Public

funeral necessitates mentioning the time and place of the funeral which helps relatives and friends attend the processions at the exact time and place. The funeral is celebrated publicly when the obituary mentions all these details. Private funeral, on the other hand is held at the funeral home or family home when the bereaved invites few close friends. (Families First Funeral Home and Chapel Home Page , 2004 : Paragraph 12-13). In the Christian society , there are two important rituals in the funeral processions ; the calling hours and wake processions. The first ritual (:e. the calling hours) refers to a religious tradition where people congregate in the funeral home to view the dead and give good-bye look. The second ritual (:e. the wake procession) is where people express reverence and respect to the dead through observing the dead in an open or close coffin. (Baker , n.d : paragraph 1)

3-2- Islamic Funeral ceremony

Muslims have some rituals about funeral procession derived from Islam. Arab people announce the death of people on social media to let other people know about the death. Also, Arabs cooperate voluntarily in the funeral procession of Muslims because they view cooperation as a religious and social tradition for the establishment of a good society. This sense has both a religious and social origin because Islamic and tribal rules advocate this feeling. On one occasion , the Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) says that Muslims have several commitments among each other, one of which is the participation in the funeral . In Islam, relatives and neighbors are ordered to prepare food for the family of the dead during the first three days :

قال النبي صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: (اصْنَعُوا لِآلِ جَعْفَرٍ طَعَامًا ، فَقَدْ أَتَاهُمْ مَا يَشْغَلُهُمْ)

(ابن حنبل، بلا تاريخ، رقم الحديث 1762)

The Prophet said (Prepare food for Jafr's family because they have already been preoccupied by a thing disturb them)

After washing and shrouding the deceased , he is placed in the direction of the QIBLAH , and his head on the right . The funeral prayer is offered by Muslims and al- Imam leads them . There are four takbeers (to say: Allah is the Greatest) in the funeral prayer . The first takbeer is started by AL-Fatiha with some short Verse . The second takbeer is the Abrahemic prayer . The third takbeer includes supplication for the deceased. The fourth takbeer includes supplication for all prayers , and then he is burried and Al-Fatiha Sura is recited on the soul of the deceased. (Narrated by Abu –Dawood and Ibn Majah , cited in 534 الجناز ص 2014 ، عبد الله التويجري ، محمد بن ابراهيم بن عبد الله التويجري)

4-Funeral Processions

In English society , the funeral procession can be done as follows:

When the deceased dies , people say some farewell expressions with spreading flowers on his tomb in a special ceremony.

There is a common conception in Christianity which says that there is neither punishment nor reward before resurrection. Christians have two common beliefs about death (1) the former views death as the termination of the body and soul as mentioned in the Bible;(2)the latter views death as the departure of the soul from the body.

There are two religion rituals in Christianity; funeral services and memorial services are held when the family decided to make public processions to the deceased in the funeral home and the church. During the funeral services, people visit the bereaved family in order to view the dead and offer condolences in a religious ritual. The funeral services include recitation of the Bible and uttering some religious hymns. The memorial services are held

when the bereaved family make direct burial to the deceased without waiting any processions.

In Arabic society , people hold the deceased to the cemetery , perform funeral prayers: two types of prayers are performed according to the age of the deceased :

1- When the deceased is young, the supplication will be as follows:

"اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ ذُخْرًا لِوَالِدَيْهِ، وَفَرَطًا وَأَجْرًا، وَشَفِيعًا مُجَابًا، اللَّهُمَّ ثَقِّلْ بِهِ مَوَازِينَهُمَا، وَأَعْظِمْ بِهِ أَجُورَهُمَا، وَأَلْحِفْهُ بِصَالِحِ سَلَفِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَاجْعَلْهُ فِي كِفَالَةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَقِهِ بِرَحْمَتِكَ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ، يُقَالُ ذَلِكَ فِي الذِّكْرِ وَالْأُنْتَى إِلَّا أَنَّهُ يُؤْنَتُ فِي الْمُؤْنَتِ".

O Allah! Make him (or her) a treasure for his (her) parents, and make him (or her) as the one who prepares the way for his(or her) parents and as a source of reward for them , and make them for their parents an intercessor and accept his (or her) intercession . O Allah! Increase the weight of their parent's favours through him (or her) and make their rewards greater. O Allah! Make him (or her) join the pious predecessors, put him (or her)

2- When the deceased is adult , the supplication will be as follows:

"اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا، وَشَاهِدِنَا وَغَائِبِنَا، وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا، وَذَكَرِنَا وَأُنْثَانَا، إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مُنْقَلَبَنَا وَمُنْوَانَا، وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ، اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَالسُّنَّةِ، وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا، اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ، وَعَافِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ، وَأَكْرِمْ نُزُلَهُ، وَوَسِّعْ مُدْخَلَهُ، وَاغْسِلْهُ بِالْمَاءِ وَالتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ، وَنَقِّهِ مِنَ الدُّنُوبِ وَالْخَطَايَا كَمَا يُنْقَى التُّوبُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ، وَأَبْدِلْهُ دَارًا حَيْرًا مِنْ دَارِهِ، وَرَوْجًا حَيْرًا مِنْ رَوْجِهِ، وَأَدْخِلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَأَعِزَّهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ، وَمِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ، وَأَسْحَ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَنُورَ لَهُ فِيهِ، وَهَذَا الدُّعَاءُ لِلْمَيِّتِ الْكَبِيرِ ذَكَرًا كَانَ أَوْ أُنْتَى إِلَّا أَنَّهُ يُؤْنَتُ الصَّمَائِرِ فِي الْأُنْتَى".

(الموسوعة الفقهية الكويتية، وزارة الأوقاف والشئون الإسلامية - الكويت ، من 1404 - 1427: 16-25) .

O Allah! Grant forgiveness to our living and our dead, to those who are present and there who are absent, to our young and our old folk, to our males and our females. You (Allah) know our return and our dwelling place. O Allah! Whomsoever You grant to live, from among us, help him to live in Islam and Sunnah and whomsoever of us You cause to die in Islam and Sunnah. O Allah! forgive him, have mercy upon, give him peace and absolve him. Receive him with honour and make his grave spacious, wash him with water, snow and hail. Cleanse him from faults as You would cleanse a white garment from impurity and give him an abode, in exchange, more excellent than his home(in this world), and a family better than his family, and a wife better than his wife. Admit him to the paradise and protect him from the torment of the Fire. O Allah! make his grave spacious and fill it with light. This supplication is recited for the old dead man or woman. However, the pronouns should be used according to whether the dead is male or females.

Among prophetic Hadiths which refer to follow the funeral is the following:

عن البراء (رضي الله عنه) قال:

(2402) امرنا النبي (ﷺ) (اتباع الجنائز) (البخاري. بلا تاريخ. رقم الحديث

(Al-Bara narrated: The Prophet ordered us to do seven things...(to visit the patient and to follow the funeral procession)

5-Conclusion

The present study has arrived at the following concluding remarks :

- 1- In English society, the death circumstances do not affect the condolence expressions, whereas in Arab society, they play a significant role in choosing the condolence expressions. Also they have an effect on the number of condolers.
- 2-The funeral procession differs in Arab society from the English one

Arab society has a special ceremony as to the deceased .

3-In both societies, the purpose of condolence is to share the grief with survivors and to strengthen the social relationship with the members of society.

4-The condolence expressions in English society are often taken from the English culture and norms, while in the Arab society, the condolence expressions are always taken from the Holy-Quran and the Prophetic tradition.

5-In English society, condolence expressions are often non-verbal expressions, whereas in Arab society, condolence expressions are usually verbal expressions.

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