



the cemetery. If the deceased was an adult, a burial ring is then placed on one of the fingers; it is inscribed, "I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate." The body is wrapped in a shroud of white cotton or silk. The length and manner of wrapping are not specified; the shroud can be either a single piece of cloth or, if the family can afford it, as many as five pieces. The body is then placed in a coffin, which must be made of crystal, stone, or the hardest wood available.

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The funeral service. Before interment of any person who has lived fifteen years or more an obligatory congregational prayer for the dead is to be recited; the recital of this prayer for children is, however, not prohibited. All the participants stand in silence while the prayer is spoken, but there are no further prescriptions for this part of the ceremony. Usually excerpts from Bahai writings and additional prayers are also read. The coffin is then placed in a grave or vault. The dimensions of the grave or the use of various kinds of vaults is left to the discretion of the family. The law does state, however, that it is more appropriate to assign an individual grave to every dead person. The law also requires that the body be buried so that the feet point toward Akka (Acre), the qebla, or primary holy site, of the Bahais. The headstone may be inscribed with a nine-pointed star (the nine-pointed star being the numerical value of the word baha?) and/or an appropriate extract from Bahai writings, in addition to the name of the deceased. After the interment a varied selection of Bahai writings may be read or recited at the graveside, but there is no fixed format. Funeral expenses are normally covered by the estate of the deceased, but, if the family does not have sufficient funds, it is the responsibility of Bahai institutions to offer financial assistance to provide a dignified funeral. Although memorial services are not obligatory, the Bahais of Iran do hold such gatherings if the family wishes; they may be held at any time after the funeral. At such a gathering the program usually consists of readings from Bahai writings and recitation of prayers for the progress of the deceased's soul. Members of the family may also make charitable donations in the memory of the person who has died. If a non-Bahai desires a Bahai funeral, individual Bahais are permitted to conduct it, but Bahai institutions may not sponsor it.

Bahai cemeteries. Abd-al-Baha described the appearance of the Bahai cemetery (golestan-e javid, lit. eternal garden) in a letter to the spiritual assembly of the Bahais of Bombay: The cemetery should be bordered all around by trees; its beauty would be enhanced if it had a pool with a tree in its center, and each grave must be separate and have a flower bed on all four sides (Akbar-e amri, 12 Farvardin 1328 Š./1 April 1949, pp. 5-6).

Cemeteries can be purchased by Bahai communities, donated by individual Bahais, or sometimes granted by governments. Ideally there should be a Bahai-owned cemetery in each community, but circumstances do not always allow it. Sometimes

plots are set aside in public cemeteries for Bahais. Bahai law does not prohibit burial of a Bahai in a non-Bahai cemetery or burial of non-Bahais in Bahai burial grounds.

Bibliography : For the principles of Bahai law on burial, see ?A. Ešraq Kavari, *Ganjina-ye hodud wa ahkam*, Tehran, 1971, pp. 135-47; A. Fazel Mazandarani, *Amr wa kalq*, Tehran, 1974, IV, pp. 199-205; H. Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 155-61; *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, Lon-don, 1973, pp. 14-15; *Star of the West* 11/9, March 1921, pp. 317-18; *Synopsis and codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Haifa, 1973, pp. 57-58, 62-63; E. Zohoori, *The Throne of the Inner Temple*, Jamaica, 1985, pp. 13-14. For the obligatory prayer for the dead and other prayers and selections from Bahai writings suitable for commemorative services, see *Bahá'í Prayers*, Wilmette, 1982, pp. 40-47; *Bešarat al-nur*, Langenhain, 1983. For description of a Bahai cemetery see *Ak-bar-e amri* 12, Farvardin 1328 Š./March-April 1949, pp. 5-6.

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