

### Is it compulsory to prostrate on the clay from Karbala?

No it's not! But the followers of Ja'fari school of law prefer to prostrate on the soil from Karbala because of the importance given to it by the holy Prophet (S) and the Imams from his family, the Ahl al-Bayt. After the martyrdom of Imam Hossain (A), his son, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (A) declared the soil of Karbala sacred soil and kept some in a bag. He used to perform prostrations on it and make a *tasbeeh* out of it. [Ibn Shahrashub, *al-Manaqib*. Vol. 2. P. 251]

They also encouraged their followers to perform prostration on them, with the understanding that it was not compulsory, but with a view to achieving greater recompense. The Imams (Peace be unto them) insisted that prostration before Allah (SWT) must be on pure earth only and preferable if it was performed on that of Karbala. [al-Tusi, *Misbah al-Mutahajjad*, P. 511], [al-Saddooq, *Man la yahdhurul faqih*, vol. 1. P. 174]

The followers of Ja'fari School of law for a long time have kept this soil with them. Then, fearing that it might be desecrated, they kneaded it into small tablets or pieces, which are now called *mohr* or *turbah*. During prayers they prostrate **on** it (they don't prostrate **for** it) and not as a compulsory act but in view of its special nature. When they have no *turbah* with them, they prostrate on clean soil or what grows from the earth, given that it isn't something that is considered wearable or edible, although in some circumstances, it is permissible to even prostrate on those too.

It is a pity that some people maliciously insist that prostrating on *turbah* from Karbala or soil is worshipping. Prostrating **on** *turbah* or clean soil is different from prostrating **for** *turbah* or clean soil. We can only worship Allah (SWT). Prostration for other than Allah is *shirk* (polytheism) according to all Ja'fari School of law scholars.

**Conclusion:** Prostration on *turbah* from Karbala or clean pure earth/soil/dirt is in accordance with Allah's command. We can only prostrate on what grows from earth, given that it isn't something that is considered wearable or edible.

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### In His Holy Name

"Therefore celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and be of those who prostrate themselves in adoration" (Qur'an 15:98)



## Why do the followers of Ja'fari School of law prostrate on *turbah*?



The followers of Ja'fari School of law prefer to prostrate on a small block of earth, called *turbah* or *Mohr*, which is usually made from the soil from the land of Karbala in Iraq. **Why? What is the philosophy behind prostrating on *turbah*?**

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According to Ja'fari school of law / fiqh – which is one of the five main schools of law in Islam – prostration must be performed on pure clean soil or what grows from the earth, given that it isn't something that is considered wearable or edible. This includes dust, stone, sand and grass, provided that it is not a mineral. Prostration on paper is permitted because it is made of a material, which grows on earth, but not cloth or carpets.

Legal sources, Jurists and scholars from all other four schools of law in Islam (Hanafis, Shafi'is, Malikis and Hanbalis) tell us that prostration has to be on soil and after that, on anything that grows from the earth, given that it isn't something that is considered wearable or edible. For some of these cases, we will mention a hadith (tradition).

### **Did the Prophet (S) and his companions ever do this?**

Prostrating on soil was certainly the practice of the prophet (s) and those around him.

1: In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Eng. Translation), Vol. 1, book 12, hadith # 798 Abu Sa'id narrated: "I saw Allah's apostle prostrating on mud and saw the mark of mud on his forehead".

2: In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Umm Salim requested the prophet (pbuh) to come to her house and pray there, so that she would make the same spot her permanent place of worship. The prophet accepted it and came there, spread out a straw mat she had in her home and they prayed on it and she made it her praying place from then on. This indicates that prostrating should be done on what grows from the earth.

3: In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Eng. Translation), Vol. 2, book 22, hadith # 299 Anas Ibn Malik Narrated: " We used to pray with the prophet (pbuh), and because of the degree of heat, we would place a part of our clothing on where we would prostrate, and prostrated on that." According to this hadith only in exceptional circumstances would the prophet (s) and his companion prostrated on cloth.

The prophet (s) also used to have a *Khumrah* on which he would put his forehead for prostration.

1: In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Eng. Translation), Vol. 1, book 8, Hadith # 378 Narrated Maymuna: "Allah's Apostle used to pray on a *Khumrah*."

### **So what is a khumrah?**

1: In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, (Eng. Translation), Vol. 1, book 8, No. 376 [as explained by the translator in parenthesis] " a *Khumrah* is a small mat sufficient just for the face and the hands while prostrating during prayers."

### **Narrations on the subject of prostration:**

There are numerous authentic narrations in different well-known and reliable hadith books such as *Sahih of Muslim, Sunan of Tirmidhi, and Beyhaqi* that emphasizes prostration on earth. Here we will mention two hadith that is mentioned in all the hadith books. The holy Prophet (s) has said: "*Earth was made a place of prostration and a means of ablution for me*". In another hadith, the second caliph Omar bin Khattab says: "We came out on a rainy night for the morning prayer, we each picked some rocks and carpeted the mosque's floor and prayed on them. When the prophet (s) noticed this, he said: "what a good thing [you did]. It was since then that prostrating on stone began" this hadith is mentioned in *Sunan Abu Dawud, Vol. 1, P. 105*.

### **But why the earth of Karbala?**

The special characteristic of the soil of Karbala (Iraq) were known and it was an object of special attention during the time of the Prophet (s) as well as in later times:

-- **Umm Salama says:** I saw Hossain (a) sitting in the lap of his grandfather, the Prophet (s), who had a red block of soil in his hand. The Prophet (s) was kissing the dust and weeing. I asked him what that soil was. The Prophet (s) said: "Gabriel has informed me that my son, this Hossain, will be murdered in Iraq. He has brought this earth for me from that land. I am weeping for the suffering that will befall my Hossain. " Then the Prophet (s) handed the soil to Umm Salama to keep and she had it with her until the day of Ashura. *al-Mustadrak, Vol. 4, P. 398*. This hadith is also mentioned in several other books.