



**Guidelines For
Zoroastrian Funeral Ceremonies
in Ontario, Canada**

Zoroastrian Society of Ontario

October 2017

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***** The information in these items relate to the Funeral Homes in Toronto and Oakville only.**



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FOREWORD

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) is pleased to publish the Third edition of the "Guidelines for Zoroastrian Funeral Services in Ontario". The first edition of the Guide was prepared in 1988 by (Late) Mrs. Putli Byramji and Mrs. Putli Mirza. The second edition was prepared in 2012 by the ZSO Religion Committee led by Freddy Mirza. Due to an increasing demand, there was a need to update the information and hence this Third edition has been prepared by the ZSO.

The Guide has proved to be a very valuable resource for our members. This Third edition includes information related to the latest rates, additional funeral homes that are familiar with the Zoroastrian rituals, as well as information related to the Scattering Grounds (for the Toronto and Mississauga areas). The Guide is meant to provide some direction to the members of the community in Ontario, and is not meant to be a comprehensive compendium on Zoroastrian Funerary practices.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the ZSO and myself I would like to thank Hoshang Udwadia, Freddy Mirza, Putli and (Late) Noshir Mirza and Dhun Contractor for their dedication and perseverance in accomplishing this task.

Russi Surti

President - Zoroastrian Society of Ontario

October 2017

Part 1

Immediate Requirements

1.1 What should I do if I am with the dying person?

- a. If possible, the dying person should be made to recite as many Ashem Vohus as possible.
- b. If the dying person is not able to recite the Ashem Vohu, then a family member or friend should recite the prayer close to the dying person.
- c. After the person has expired, a family member or a friend should recite the Ashem Vohu prayer in the dying person's ears.
- d. Contact a physician (e.g. family doctor or a hospital) and/or a funeral home and inform them of the death.
- e. Contact a Mobed of your choice ("List of Mobeds" – Appendix A.)
- f. Contact a funeral home in your neighborhood (Reference Item 1.3)
- g. Light candle(s) or an oil lamp for at least 4 days, or as many days in addition to those 4 days, near the bedside of the deceased.
- h. If the family would like to inform the community, then they should contact the Presidents of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) (<http://www.zso.org/>) and of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF) (www.ozcf.com) to post the message on the electronic communication and/or the auto dialer. The message should have information related to the name, age of the deceased person, as well as the deceased person's relatives and the location and timings of the funeral and post funeral ceremonies as per advice from a Mobed.

- i. It is our belief that continuous recitation of Avesta prayers will help the soul, which is in a transitional state in the new environment outside the body.
- j. A “prayer vigil” consisting of the prayers mentioned below may be recited either at home or in the Funeral Home in front of the deceased body, preferably with a candle burning during visitation, if arranged by the family. These prayers may be recited by a Mobed or a para mobed (mobedyar) or by a family member or a relative or a friend after performing the kusti ritual: Sarosh baj, appropriate Gah, Khorshed and Meher Niyaesh and Sarosh Yasht Hadokht if it is daytime; and Sarosh baj, appropriate Gah and Sarosh Yasht Vadi if after sunset. Please note that when reciting the different prayers, Ahmai Raescha and Kerfeh Mozd must be omitted and in the Jasa me Avanghe Mazda prayers, omit the paragraph of “Ramano khastrahe” up to “Spento Mainyaom”. If the prayers are not known or cannot be recited for any reason, then continue reciting as many Ashem Vohu prayers as and when possible until the funeral ceremony.

1.2 What documents are required and who should arrange for them?

- a) If the death occurs at home as a result of terminal illness, and the person is under the care of a family doctor, call the doctor and he/she will provide a death certificate. A coroner’s certificate will be required.
- b) If there is a sudden death at home, then call 9-1-1. The Emergency Medical Service paramedics will try to revive the person and will transfer to the nearest hospital in order to be pronounced dead by a doctor. The doctor-on-call in the hospital will provide the death certificate. A coroner’s certificate will be required.

- c) If the death occurs in a nursing home or hospital, then they will provide the necessary documents. A coroner's certificate may or may not be required.
- d) Call the funeral home of your choice to make arrangements for the transfer of the deceased person. They may be able to provide guidance regarding the coroner's certificate etc.
- e) Call the Registrar General's office (Ontario Government) to register the death (1-800-461-2156) or fill out the form on line: www.vitalcertificates.ca

1.3 Are there any Funeral homes that are familiar with the Zoroastrian ceremonies?

Yes. The below mentioned funeral homes in Toronto and Mississauga/Oakville areas are familiar with the Zoroastrian rituals and funeral ceremony, and special rates have been negotiated with them. These funeral homes offer Cremation, Burial and other services at additional cost.

Toronto Area

1. Kane-Jerrett Funeral Home

(Formerly R. S. Kane Funeral Homes, prior to Dec 1, 2020)
 8088 Yonge Street, Thornhill, ON. L4J 1W3
 Tel: 905-889-8889
 Website: www.dignitymemorial.com

2. York Funeral Centre

160 Beecroft Road, Toronto, ON. M2N 5Z5
 Tel : 416-221-3404
 E-Mail : yorkvcinfo@mountpleasantgroup.com
 Website: www.mountpleasantgroup.com

3. The Simple Alternative-Toronto

275 Lesmill Road, Toronto, ON M3B 2V1

Tel : 416-441-1580

E-Mail : tsatorontoinfo@mountpleasantgroup.com

Website: www.mountpleasantgroup.com/

Note: Please contact the York Funeral Centre to make arrangements for this location

Mississauga/Oakville area

Glen Oaks Funeral Home & Cemetery

3164, Ninth Line, Oakville, ON

Tel: 905-257-8822

Website: www.arbormemorial.ca/en/glenoaks/

1.4 Are there any arrangements made for scattering the ashes?

Yes. **York Funeral Centre** can provide for scattering of the ashes at York Cemetery or at any of the 9 cemeteries managed by the Mount Pleasant Group in the Greater Toronto Area, in a designated common scattering area available for general public.

Arrangements have also been made with the **Glen Oaks Funeral Home and Cemetery** for scattering the ashes on a site dedicated to Zoroastrians, at a negotiated price.

Part 2

At the Funeral Home

2.1 What rituals and ceremonies are performed at the funeral home?

There are 2 types of rituals/ceremonies performed at the Funeral home:

- (a) “Sachkar” and
- (b) “Geh Sarna”

2.2 What is “Sachkar”

“Sachkar” is a ritual which includes procedures and prayers for the preparation of the body, prior to the funeral service. Full details are described in Appendix B.

2.3 What is “Geh Sarnu or Paydast”?

This is the term used for the main funeral prayers during the funeral ceremony performed by two Mobeds.

2.4 What arrangements should be made with the Funeral Home Director?

It is recommended that the following discussions be carried out by a friend or family member, instead of the immediate member as they might not be emotionally prepared to negotiate rates for items mentioned section 3.2 and in addition to the

negotiated service package mentioned in section 3.1

- a. Complete the information necessary for “Statement of Death” form. This form will include the deceased’s date and place of birth, marital status, occupation, social insurance number, father’s full name and mother’s full name.
- b. Complete the documents which can be obtained from the Funeral Home Director. The Funeral Home Director will assist in filling the forms.
- c. Make arrangements for the permit for burial, or crematorium, newspaper notices and all other necessary details.
- d. Discuss the details of funeral, cremation or burial relating to the timing and location for the same.
- e. The Funeral Director will advise you of the legal requirements related to the timings.
- f. Request the funeral home director that after the body is embalmed or washed, the Zoroastrian ritual of “Sachkar” has to be performed and our volunteers should be allowed to prepare the body. The funeral home director may assist by making arrangements for towels, water etc.
- g. Take permission to burn an oil lamp during the prayers. Request the funeral home to maintain a candle or an oil lamp and keep the casket open during the night.
- h. If the family wishes to arrange for the visitation at the Funeral Home, there will be an additional cost (Reference item 3.2(h)). Discuss the timings for

viewing, whether it will be an open or a closed casket or photo only, and whether it would be possible to maintain a “prayer vigil” as mentioned in section 1.1. (j) and whether they would be allowed to continue to stay and maintain the prayer vigil after the visitation timings.

- i. Advise the funeral home that the Zoroastrian funeral can only take place during daylight hours. The actual prayers usually last an hour and some families may have eulogies after the prayers.

Part 3

Funeral Expenses

Please note that the cost (in Canadian dollars) mentioned in this Part is related to the Funeral Homes mentioned in Sections 1.3 and 1.4 and are as of March 2017 and may change without notice.

3.1 What is the approximate cost involved?

The negotiated cost of the various services offered by the Funeral Homes mentioned in section 1.3 varies from \$2,090 to \$4,430 and includes, but not limited to, Professional services, administration fees, alternative preparation, documentation, funeral coach, staff charges, use of facilities and chapel for the funeral prayers, etc.

3.2 What additional costs are involved?

The following are some of the additional/optional costs to be taken into consideration:

- a. Funeral Homes have been advised that Zoroastrians do not require expensive caskets. The cost of a Basic Victoriaville Caskets-Hampton cost \$725 to \$880 and Batesville Blue Steel Flat top cloth is \$745.
- b. Death Registration Fee: \$50
- c. Cremation fee varies between \$550 and \$670 and additional charge for people attending the cremation (witnesses) varies from \$110 to \$220.
- d. Arrangements have been made at The Glen Oaks Memorial that has a plot of land dedicated to the

Zoroastrian community as a “**Scattering Ground**” for the ashes, for a fee of \$500 and additional \$500 for a name marker.

- e. The cost of **scattering** the ashes at York Cemetery is \$365 plus \$25 for the Care and Maintenance fee plus the applicable taxes. Cost of any urns is extra depending on the urn. However, an urn is not required when the cremated remains are scattered, that is, freely distributed on the surface of the ground in a designated common scattering area. If a family wishes to bury the ashes in an urn in a private lot, there will be additional cost involved. Please discuss with the Funeral Director.
- f. Arrangements have also been made at The Glen Oaks Memorial that has a plot of land dedicated to the Zoroastrian community **for burial (internment)**. As of March 2017, there are very few plots still available. Each plot measures approx. 1 meter by 3 meters or approx. 3 feet by 9 feet and can accommodate 2 burials one above another, or 6 urns with ashes. Biodegradable environmentally friendly boxes may be used in lieu of urns. The cost of each plot is \$4,975.
- g. The cost of internment varies between \$1,105 and \$4,700, and the cost of a head stone or a plaque in the ground varies between \$2,500 and \$5,000.
- h. Cost of Visitation at the funeral home varies between from \$435 to \$715 per day.
- i. Flowers through a funeral home may cost between \$500 and \$1,000, whereas a flower basket from a shop may cost \$200 to \$300. You may make arrangements for the visitors to make a donation in

lieu of flowers to a charity, such as, Canadian Cancer Society, Heart & Stroke Foundation, etc. and keep the necessary forms available for receipts.

- j. Suggested token of gratitude (“Ashodaad”) for the services offered by Mobeds is listed in Appendix C.

Part 4

Post Funeral Ceremonies and Prayers

4.1 What ceremonies are performed after the funeral?

The following ceremonies have to be performed for four (4) days. They are dedicated to the angel Sarosh.

- (a) “Sarosh-nu-patru” or “Kardeh-i-Saroosh performed after sunset on the first day.
- (b) “Sarosh-nu-patru” or “Kardeh-i-Saroosh performed after sunset on the second day.
- (c) “Uthamna ceremony” or “Avesta-e-Ruz-e-Sevom” in the evening (Uzirin Gah) on the third day.
- (d) Sarosh nu patru or Kardeh i-Saroosh after sunset.
- (e) “Uthamna ceremony” in the night (Ushahen Gah).
- (f) Chahrum Daham Afringan ceremony in Havan Gah (dawn of the fourth day).
- (g) Ardafravash Afringan ceremony in Havan Gah.
- (h) Farokhshi and Stum ceremony in Havan Gah.

The above ceremonies are performed by two Mobeds, where available.

These ceremonies can be performed at the home of the deceased or at Darbe Mehr. Please consult with your Mobed regarding the ceremonies, the timings and the items required for the ceremonies as per Appendix D.

4.2 I live in a remote area and do not have any Mobeds. Can I say the prayers and perform the ceremonies?

You may discuss with any one of the Mobeds listed in Appendix A and they will guide you, or you may arrange for their travel and accommodation to the site. You may contact a Mobed overseas and they can perform the ceremonies for a fee. You can obtain a list of the Mobeds in North America by visiting the **North American Mobed Council** (NAMC) web site: www.namcweb.org. You may obtain the current list from your association's website. People residing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) may obtain the names by visiting "www.zso.org" or "www.ozcf.org".

4.3 What ceremonies are to be performed after the dawn of the fourth day?

There are essential prayers and ceremonies to be done on the 10th day ("dasmu"), 30th day ("siroza") and the following day ("masiso") and on the death anniversary ("varsi") as per the roz. It is recommended that prayers and ceremonies be performed once every month for the first year as well as the day before the death anniversary ("varsi"). If no priest is available the prayers can be recited by any individual or by a priest overseas. Furthermore, the "Fravashi" of the departed is remembered annually during the Muktaf/Gatha days usually from 1 year to 5 years or more, depending on the wishes of the deceased and the family.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF MOBEDS IN ONTARIO, CANADA FOR FUNERAL CEREMONIES

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>City/Town</u>	<u>Contact Number</u>
Bagli	Jehan	Toronto	647-344-3531
Bamji	Athavian	Toronto	416-283-1179
Bamji	Xerxes	Terra Cotta	905-702-1034
Bulsara	Firdosh	Mississauga	905-824-7692
Dastur	Mehbad	Toronto	416-917-9195
Dhabhar	Farrokh	Mississauga	905-819-0089
Dhabhar	Jamshed	Mississauga	905-819-0089
Katrak	Kerman	Toronto	905-707-7359
Kotwal	Bomansha	Mississauga	905-819-9124
Kotwal	Nozer	Mississauga	905-820-0461
Madan	Xerxes	Mississauga	905-232-0799
Mirza	Tehemton	London	519-660-1135
Panthaky	Jal	Mississauga	905-568-4946
Udwadia	Hoshang	Toronto	416-499-4957
Zarolia	Kobad	Mississauga	905-542-9885

APPENDIX B

“SACHKAR”-FINAL HOLY BATH AT THE FUNERAL HOME

Kindly contact the Mobed of your choice to discuss this ritual in more details.

- 1 Suggested items to take along to the Funeral Home:
 - a) Prayer cap for deceased man
 - b) Scarf (“mathu banu”), preferably white, for a deceased woman.
 - c) Sudreh-(not new but one that has been washed and clean), for the deceased person.
 - d) Kusti/koshti for the deceased person.
 - e) Six washed and clean sudrehs of a male person) to be cut into five (5) long strips and 2 (two) short strips. If the sudrehs are not available then a clean white washed bed sheet or similar cloth may be used.
 - f) White or light coloured shirt and pajama or a white pant for a deceased man.
 - g) A white or light coloured gown for a deceased woman or a white petticoat and a white blouse, if available
 - h) Prayer caps/scarves for all attendees assisting with the Sachkar ritual.
 - i) One fresh lime or lemon if “taro” is not available
 - j) One white bed sheet to cover the deceased person in the coffin.
 - k) One white towel and a sponge. These would be supplied by the Funeral home if requested.

2. Please note that a Mobed may not be available and if present, he will not touch the deceased person's body in order to maintain his spiritual purity. He will guide and advise in carrying out the "Sachkar" ritual, as follows:
- (i) The body is usually kept in the preparation room of the funeral home.
 - (ii) One or more persons perform the *padyaab* (wash their hands) and then do the Kusti/Koshti.
 - (iii) Remove any clothing from the body of the deceased, except the diaper placed by the funeral home, starting with the Kusti. Usually the body is simply covered with a sheet by the funeral home as it lies on a gurney in the preparation room.
 - (iv) Wash or sponge the bodies with lime or lemon or water as per Mobed's advise and dry the body.
 - (v) Ensure, **if possible**, that the head is **not** pointing towards the north.
 - (vi) Cover the head with a white scarf or a cap, tie a strip of cloth around it over the forehead (optional) and tie a knot at the back, making sure that the ears are open.
 - (vii) Put on the Sudreh/Sedreh,
 - (viii) One person takes the deceased's washed Kusti/Koshti and while reciting the Kusti/Koshti prayers, ties the Kusti/Koshti on the deceased in the normal way reciting from "Ahura Mazda Khodae" prayers.
 - (ix) Layout **five long cloth strips, previously cut**, horizontally in the coffin, with the long ends hanging out.
 - (x) Close family members may then wish to pay their final homage to the deceased by touching the body for the last time. The body is then placed in the casket with the help of those present.

(xi) Two other persons perform their personal Kusti/Koshti prayers and recite “Sarosh Baj” (that is, take the baj of Sarosh), up to the phrase—*ashahe* of the *Kemnaa Mazdaa* prayer.

(xii) Thereafter, **seven knots** are tied in the following manner **reciting the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer each time:**

-**Two short strips of cloth, previously cut**, (other than the five long ones placed in the coffin), are tied respectively to the two arms forwarded on the chest at the wrist and the other one at the ankles or the big toes.

-**The five long strips of cloth** placed earlier in the casket are now used to tie the following five knots:

- i. Around the neck
- ii. Around the chest and the arms previously tied at the wrist
- iii. Around the waist, similar to a belt
- iv. Around the thighs, just above the knee
- v. Around the lower legs, just below the knee

The person or persons performing the above procedure then move away, and complete the Sarosh Baj, resuming at-*Nemaschaa yaa Aarmaitsh izhaa-chaa* of the *Kemnaa Mazdaa* prayer to the end of *Kerfeh Mozd* prayer.

3. Where a deceased person does not have any next of kin or friends in the area, the person receiving the news of the demise should contact the President of the Zoroastrian association or organization or any other knowledgeable person in their area and obtain a list of male and female volunteers to perform the “Sachkar” ritual. This list should be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.

APPENDIX C

Suggested token of appreciation (“Ashodaad”) for the services performed by the Mobeds.

**The suggested “ashodaad” (in Canadian dollars) is
provided as a guideline and may vary depending on
the ceremonies performed. There may be additional
cost of reimbursement for travel and incidental
expenses, if incurred by the Mobed(s). It is
important that the family discuss the cost with the
Mobed(s) before requesting their services.**

1. Funeral ceremony at the Funeral Home \$250
2. Total cost per Mobed for the 8 ceremonies
mentioned in item 4.1 (a) to (h) (\$150 per
ceremony) \$1,200
3. Total cost per Mobed for items 1 and 2
above..... \$1,450

**Each of the above ceremonies generally requires
two Mobeds, where available.**

**Total cost for all the ceremonies, including the
Funeral Ceremony for two (2) Mobeds.....\$2,900**

APPENDIX D

Items required for the Post Funeral Ceremonies

(Reference section 4.1)

Sarosh-nu-patru (every day for 3 days)

1. Flowers (at least one bunch)
2. Sukhad and lobaan

Uthamna (afternoon of the 3rd day)

1. Flowers (at least one bunch)
2. Sukhad and lobaan
3. New Sudreh and new Kusti/Koshti

Uthamna (night)

1. Flowers (at least one bunch)
2. (Optional) New Sudreh and new Kusti/Koshti
3. Sukhad and lobaan

Afringans (Daham and Ardafravash) and Farokhsi

1. Flowers (at least three bunches)
2. Sukhad and lobaan
3. Fruits (pomegranates, apples, bananas, oranges, etc - 3 of each fruit)
4. Dry fruits
5. Milk
6. Lime or lemon
7. Dates

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1. Tea or milk
2. Cooked eggs (scrambled etc)
3. Bread or chapatti.
4. Any other favourite dish of the deceased person.

NOTES

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