

## Death

### No Other Source of Knowledge Except Revelation

The root of 'Ma'ad' (Hereafter) is 'Aud' which means to return or to come back. As on the Day of Resurrection souls will be made to return to their bodies, it is called Ma'ad.

'Ma'ad' is one of the principles of the Holy religion of Islam and to have faith in it is absolutely essential or obligatory and it is that everyone will, after his death, become alive again and would be rewarded or punished according to ones belief and deeds.

'Ma'ad' which begins with death and then passes through grave and then Barzakh and then Qiyamat al-Kubra (the great resurrection) and ends with either Paradise or Hell cannot be comprehended by the apparent senses and even though the occurring of the original 'Ma'ad' or Resurrection is proved by logic or brain (the details of which will be discussed later on), it is impossible for one to ponder in solitude over it and to understand what will happen after death, and through which stages one will have to pass.

For understanding this, there is no way except to rely on and take help from divine revelation because man wherever he is, his power of understanding cannot cross the limits of his world. For example, it is impossible for a baby in the womb to get the idea of the outside world and to fathom its vastness. Similarly it is also beyond his powers to understand the endlessness of the space and to know about the things therein.

Likewise, the man who lives in this world like a captive of matter and nature cannot have the ability to understand the world of angels and spirits, which is hidden from him. To reach that state will be possible only after getting freedom from this material world. In short, a man who is living in this material world, can never be able to know the details of the world after death, unless he puts faith and trusts in the truths made known by the Creator of this Universe.

## **Characteristics of the Hereafter have nothing to do with Intellect**

So if anyone says, “It is far from my brain that such and such thing will happen after death,” then his saying so is absolutely unacceptable because the conditions and events after death have no relation with the bodily brain.

Even if all the thinkers and philosophers join together and make collective efforts to understand the conditions beyond death (in the other world) through the materials available to them in this earthly life they can never succeed in their manoeuvrings. So if we do have any source, it is only those things and those words, which the Holy Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.s.) and His Holy Progeny have shown to us. Hence we also confirm them, as all of those great persons who are Infallible are those to whom God Almighty, the Lord of the Universe sends Revelation.

## **Does a Dead Body Talk?**

This discussion will prove that the doubts and distrusts expressed by some senseless people are totally baseless. For example, they say that the body of a man who has died is just like dust and stone or like dry wood and so how can it be questioned in a grave? In other words, can stones talk? If we fill up the mouth of a dead body with something and, on the next day, open his grave and see we will find that nothing has gone out of that mouth. (The answer to this question will be given soon).

## **Talking is not Limited to the Tongue**

Possibilities and probabilities are essential to intellect. An intelligent man (having brain) hears a thing and if it is impossible according to intelligence, he doubts it's being either true or untrue. But if the one from whom he heard that thing is an infallible person then the former will at once say that whatever he has said is true.

But if the hearer is unwise and ignorant he would exclaim, “What kind of talks are these, which we fail to understand!” So not to accept the words of the infallible would be based on senselessness and foolishness. Such a fellow is like a quadruped but has two feet whose senses are limited only to eating, sleeping and intercourse with the opposite sex.

Obviously if it is told to an ox or an ass that an angel appears before our eyes at the time of death or that there will be a questioning in our graves, they will not be able to agree because their intelligence is limited and cannot go far from their bellies and genitals. Only a higher level of soul can accept such news and matters.

There is no scope here to deal at length and with full details. Therefore, we mention briefly what has been narrated by Ahlul Bayt regarding what happens right from the first stage (death) up to the last one (Resurrection).

## Death: The First Station

Truth About Death: The dislocation or the breaking of the relationship between body and soul is called death. Several examples have been quoted to explain this connection. Some say it is like the relation between a ship and its captain wherein death snatches away the ship from the control and authority of the captain. When you say my hand, my leg and my eye, this means 'I' (my) is something other than the said hand, leg and eye.

When you say: I walked, it is true that you moved but you walked through your legs. This shows that 'You' are something other than the limb called leg. Likewise, you say: I saw, I heard, I said. In all these three sentences the word 'I' (my) refers to a person and this person is the same as your soul which becomes manifest through the said scenes and which has been expressed through the above sentences.

It is the soul that sees and hears but through the eyeballs in the eyes and the holes in the ears respectively. These eyes and ears are, of course, the means of seeing and hearing. Soul is a lamp lighted by God's Might in the dark house of body, which shows its light through eyes, ears and other organs.

## What is Death?

Death is like shifting of the lamp from one place to another place. For instance, suppose there is a hut having many holes. If a lamp is placed in it, its light would be emitted through those holes. But as soon as that lamp is moved out of that hut it will make the hut dark. Similarly, so long as the lamp of soul remains in the body it manifests its existence known through the light, which comes out from limbs like eyes and ears etc. But as soon as this lamp of soul is removed from the body, all its manifestations also cease and the body becomes dark. This is Death. This was just an explanatory example. Otherwise

## The Soul Neither Enters the Body nor Gets Out of it

It must be understood that the relation between the soul and the body is not by way of Hulool (penetrative migration). It is not like the entrance of water in a utensil or of air in vacuum. It also cannot be said that it remains out of body or it goes out of it at the time of death because soul is essence, not matter. There is no question of its entering or vacating. The only thing is that its relation with body is such that it remains fully attentive to the body. Death disconnects this relation.

It is also obligatory for us to believe that death occurs by the command of God. The same Power, which had, established this relation in the womb, at the last moment of the worldly life, disconnects this relation between the body and soul. Only He is the bestower of life and death. The Holy Qur'an says,

***“God gives life and only God causes death also. “(39:42)***

Some common people are very angry with Izra'eel (The angel of death). They do not even like to hear his name. They even condemn him though they know that these angels do not do anything of their own wish or authority. They have been employed by the Lord of the Universe and hence do everything by His order or command.

## How the soul is taken

How soul is retrieved from body has been narrated in the traditions about the Me'raj (ascension) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). In short, there is a board in front of Izra'eel, which contains names of all the people. The name of the person whose time for death arrives is removed from that board and Israel at once takes possession of his or her soul.

It is also possible that names of thousands of people may be wiped out at one moment whereupon Israel takes the souls of all of them instantly. This is not astonishing. It is just like a gust of breeze blowing off thousands of lamps in a split second. All of it is by the power of the Almighty. Doubtlessly it is Israel who snatches souls but, as a matter of fact, it is only God Who causes it because it is only His command and Will.

## Who causes death? God, Izra'eel or the angels?

Here comes up a question: Who takes away the soul? It is God or Izra'eel or the angels? There are three verses about this in the Holy Qur'an. At one place it says: God causes Death. At another place it is mentioned that:

***The angel of death takes away the soul. (Surah Sajdah 32: 11)***[1](#)

On yet another occasion it is mentioned:

***Angels collect the souls. (Surah Nisa 4:97)***[2](#)

The fact is that all these statements are true because, the angel of death and his subordinate angels collect souls as commanded by God Almighty. Doubtlessly it is just like this: A king, through his army and its chiefs, conquers a country. It is correct to say that such and such army won such and such territory. Similarly, it is also correct to mention that such and such commander captured such and such country.

But in both the statements the fact remains that the country has been conquered by the king who owns, manages and directs the affairs of his state through officers and personnel under his command. This example also is only for making the matter understandable. Otherwise such examples cannot fully describe and explain the power of the Almighty.

## **The Lord of the Universe has fixed Some Causes for Death**

It is agreed that it is only God who takes away life at the time of death. But you should also remember that God has made this world a world of causes. He has created causes for death also like falling from roof, becoming ill or being murdered etc.

Surely all these events become causes of death but the same is not absolutely essential because it can be also be seen that some people were seriously ill but they did not die of that illness. Of course when their lifespan comes to end even a light and ordinary thing can also become the reason of death and the Lord of the universe takes away his life. It is also seen that some people die without even the slightest illness.

## **Appearance of Izra'eel According to the Deeds of the Dying Person**

A matter pertaining to the angel of death is that when he comes to take the soul of any person he assumes a face according to the deeds of the dying person.

It is mentioned in narrations that once Ibrahim (a.s.) asked the angel of death, "What shape do you assume while fetching the soul of unbeliever?" The angel replied, "You will not be able to look at that frightening shape."

The Friend of God repeated, "I intend to see it." He saw the angel in the form of a black man. His hair was standing on its end all over his body. A foul stench emanated from that frightening figure. His clothes were dark and flames and smoke leapt out from his mouth and nose. Ibrahim (a.s.) became unconscious. When he came to sense he said, "Even if the unbeliever is not given any other punishment, seeing you in this form is torture enough for him."

On the other hand the shape in which the angel of death appears before a believer has been mentioned in a number of traditions.<sup>3</sup>

## **Arrival of Angels and Satans at the time of Death**

During the last moments of man's life, angles arrive and stand on his right side. Likewise the Satans (devils) also approach him and stand on the left side of the deathbed.<sup>4</sup> The job of Satans is to deceive and betray, particularly at the time of death so that, if that person has any faith, it could be destroyed. The scale of man's luck or misfortune is his last word and deed.

The way in which he passes his life is the same manner and the state in which he has died, will be his state when he will be made to rise in Qiyamat. His wish at the time of his death will be what it was during his life and so he will die with the same ambitions.

If in your heart there was an aspiration to see the charm of Amirul Mu'minin (a.s.) you will be able to observe that beauty at the last moment. But if, God forbid your wish throughout your life was only the fulfilment of desire and passion then that lust of yours will become more intense at the time of death. But the one who had perfect faith is promised by God that He will protect him and Satan will not be able to gain control over him.

***“Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter...  
“(14:27)***

When Abu Zakaria Razi was about to die, those sitting around him asked him to recite, Laa Ilaaha Illallaah (There is no God except Allah). He replied, “I will not recite it.” Then he became unconscious. When he gained sense he said, “Just now a man had come to me who said, 'If you wish to be lucky and fortunate then say: Isa is the son of God. I said, 'I will not say.' After a number of requests and denials that fellow said, 'Okay then say: There is no God but Allah.' Yet I said, 'Since you are asking me to say so I will not.' Suddenly there appeared a weapon, which killed that fellow. Now I am conscious and am reciting the Kalimah (formula of faith).” Then he recited the two formulae (Shahaadatain) and passed away from this world.

Verily, how Satan can subdue a man who had the belief that there is only one God at the time of his death? Of course the man who had been the follower of devil throughout his life will be a companion of devil on his deathbed also.

## **Comfort and Discomfort at the Time of Death**

Much has been mentioned in narrations about comfort and discomfort at the time of death. In some, it (the trouble or pain) has been compared with the pain experienced when one's skin is peeled. In some it is said that the pain of death is much less compared to the revolving of a large stony door of a castle having nails, in one's eyes.

In yet another narration it is said that the pain of death is like that experienced when one's body is cut into pieces by scissors or torn with a saw. So it has come to notice that some dying persons have suffered pains beyond description, which make the observers tremble.

But, on the other hand, for some persons death has been as pleasing as smelling a fragrant flower.

***“Those whom the angels cause to die in a good state, saying: Peace be on you: enter the garden for what you did. “(16:32)***

In some traditions it is mentioned by the infallibles, that for some people, death is like taking off dirty clothes and putting on a clean dress. In some other narrations it is compared with liberating the body from chains and yokes, as if death is like being freed from the imprisonment of this material world.

## Sometimes Discomfort at the Time of Death Redeems Sins

Discomforts or comforts at the time of death mentioned above do not represent a hard and fast rule. It is not that a righteous person never experiences trouble at death time. There are many a faithful whose souls depart easily. Also there are some good and faithful people who get God's mercy whereby their sins are wiped out through the death pains and discomforts.

This is because though one is faithful, he must also leave the world in a clean state (after removal of the blemishes of sins) so that he may be clean in the Hereafter also and may become eligible for divine grace right from the first stage of grave. In the case of infidels the death time pain is the starting point of his post-mortem punishments and tortures.

*“But how will it be when the angels cause them to die smiting their backs. “(47:27)*

## Comfort on Deathbed, Reward of Good Deeds of the Dying

### Disbeliever

It is also sometimes seen that infidels and sinners die easily. It is so because they had some good deeds in his life? His soul departs comfortably so that this account may be cleared in this world (he never believed in the post-mortem accounting). So he gets the reward here instead of the Hereafter. For example, a man spent his money for some good cause or helped a poor oppressed person. As a reward of this good deed he is given ease at death so that he may get the reward of this good deed in this very world and may have no claim in the Hereafter.

The same is regarding the trouble faced by a believer at death time, which makes him, clean from the impurities of the sins of his lifetime. Anyway the fact of the matter is that, for an unbeliever, death is the beginning of his misfortune, be it comfortable or painful. For a faithful both pain as well as ease is the start of bounties and comforts of everlasting nature. So the deathbed condition indicates no fixed rule.

## Confiscating a disbeliever's Soul through Torture

There is a tradition in the third volume of Biharul Anwar according to which once the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) went to visit his cousin 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.). The latter was suffering from an illness of the eyes. He was sighing and groaning due to acute pain despite the fact that he was a mountain of patience in bearing troubles. At that time the Holy Prophet gave 'Ali frightening news, which made the latter forget his pain.

The Holy Prophet said, “O 'Ali! The archangel Jibraeel has informed me that when the time of taking the soul of a disbeliever comes, some angels of torture arrive and retrieve his soul hitting him with bars and whips of fire.” 'Ali (a.s.) asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Does such a terrible thing happen to anyone from

your Ummah also?" The Holy Prophet said, "Yes, even in Muslims there are three groups whose souls are taken in this harsh manner: First is a tyrant ruler, secondly, who usurps the orphan's property and third is the one who gives false testimony."

## [A Student of Fuzail who Died the Death of a Disbeliever](#)

Biographers have written that when the time of death approached for his most knowledgeable and intelligent student, Fuzail and some other persons went to see him. Fuzail began to recite the Surah Yasin<sup>5</sup>The unfortunate student at that time hit his teacher Fuzail saying, "I don't want you to recite the Surah (Qur'an)."

Just think over the bad luck of a man who had learnt the Holy Qur'an throughout his life and who had spent his lifetime in mosques, madressas and assemblies of worships and prayers, and at his last moment he says, "I don't want you to recite Qur'an before me!" The unfortunate fellow did not recite even the Shahaadatain<sup>6</sup>and passed away from this world.

This made Fuzail extremely sorrowful. He took to a corner of his house and stopped going out until he saw his unlucky student in a dream and asked him the cause of his bad behaviour on his deathbed. The late student said, "I had three evil habits due to which I left the world in a state of a disbeliever. They were: I was jealous and never liked that anyone should surpass me."

Yes, jealousy is the bad habit, which destroys faith just as fire reduces wood to ash.

***"Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the communications of Allah and used to mock them. "(30: 10)***

## [Dying in Disbelief Due to Sinning](#)

The second evil habit was backbiting and inciting one against another. It causes separation even between a man and wife. Therefore if someone backbites about a person before you, you should not tell the latter the former was speaking ill of him. Rather, in order to remove dislike between the two, you may tell one that the other was praising and using good words.

Remember that it is no evil to tell untruth with a view to remove ill will and mistrust between two persons because the intention is only to improve relations between two brothers. There is a Persian proverb: Untruth resulting in improvement of relations is better than a truth causing strife.

Contrary to it, backbiting is the worst evil as besides increasing ill will and enmity between two human beings, it deprives the backbitten one of peace and calm. Then it sows seeds of trouble and unrest, which is worse than murder.

***"And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and***

***persecution is severer than slaughter, and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers. “(2: 191)***

***“...and persecution is graver than slaughter; and they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever- these it is whose works shall go for nothing in this world and the hereafter, and they are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide. “(2:217)***

The third evil, which was found in Fuzail's student, was that of alcoholism. These were the three greater sins, which cause a man faithless death even though he were a scholar and a high-class teacher.<sup>7</sup>

## **Being Pleased with Death**

It is also very important to remember that one must be eager to meet the Lord. It means that a faithful servant should not dislike death and must never be afraid of it. This is not to say that one must long for death. May God protect! One must never think of suicide because it is possible that one may, in ones lifetime repent for sins and do more good deeds.

The meaning of being pleased with death is that whenever Almighty wants to him to die he should, in those circumstances, consider death a bounty because (according to Islam) he is a loyal and an obedient one of God and he will get great reward very soon and taste the sweetness of his good deeds and if he had been a sinner, his sins would come to an end and so also his punishment would decrease.

In short, a wise man should be pleased with death at the moment of God's will because death is the only means of scaling the peak of his good fortune, that is, to get rid of the web of deceptions and conspiracies and to enter the house of eternal happiness (Paradise) and to get nearness to God Almighty and to see the Holy Prophet and His Holy Progeny (a.s.) as well as to meet the shining souls of all pious people and Holy saints. The only way to get all this is death.

Similarly one must also like and be pleased with a long life and delay in death at the will of God so that he may, to the best of his or her ability, make provisions for the journey to the Hereafter.

## **Love for the World-Condemed by reason and Shariat**

It is also wrong and misplaced to abhor death and to be crazy after worldly life for enjoying more and more pleasures, as is the way of many. It is against both reason and Shariat.

It is unwise because, firstly, real pleasure cannot be achieved in this worldly life. There is a proverb that says: Until a mouth does not taste a hundred fists it cannot swallow a morsel. There is no pleasure in the world, which is not surrounded by hundreds of pains and troubles. If there is youth, old age and weakness is bound to follow it.

If there is health, which is primarily essential for enjoying every pleasure of life, then there are a number of ailments and illnesses, which pose threats to it. If there is wealth, which makes it possible to get comfort and ease, then it is not possible to gain it (wealth) without hard labour. Thus earning of wealth is also not without hazards. Any high position is not attained without labouring hard and facing deterrents and oppositions. Besides all this, what is most significant is that all such worldly gains and benefits, and comforts and positions etc are bound to perish one day.

According to a meaningful Persian proverb couplet: “Do not become an ardent lover of this world because this disloyal bride had not passed even a single night with sincere love to anyone”.

## **Love for this World is an Attribute of Infidels and a Source of Sins**

Deep involvement in material world is, from viewpoint of religion condemnable because the Holy Qur’an has regarded love for world an attribute of disbelievers. Almighty says,

***“Surely those who do not hope in Our meeting and are pleased with this world's life and are content with it, and those who are heedless of Our communications: “(10:7)***

It means that the unbelievers are happy with their worldly life.

At another place:

***“...are you contented with this world's life instead of the hereafter? But the provision of this world's life compared with the hereafter is but little. “(9:38)***

Which means: Have you given preference to the material worldly life over the Hereafter?

Referring to Jews it says:

***“...everyone of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement, and Allah sees what they do. “(2:96)***

This means that every one of them likes that he should live in this world for a thousand years.

There are many verses like this in Holy Qur’an. Similarly there are innumerable traditions and narrations. Here we mention a famous tradition of the Holy Prophet from the book Usul al-Kafi:

The root all evil is love for this world.

## **Dislike for Death and Weeping Over Demise of the Beloved**

Whatever we have mentioned above makes clear that if the dislike for death and longing for living longer in this world is because of one's madness (excessive affection) or due to the thought that death becomes a barrier between his beloved things depriving him of worldly pleasures and luxuries, then it is unwise from the viewpoint of reason and an unpleasant attitude from religious viewpoint too.

But if one dislikes death and desires its delay thinking that, in that case (in a longer life), he will continue to make more and more provision for his post-mortem journey to the Hereafter because death closes all possibilities to do good deeds in this world and hence he desires that death may not come very soon then it is a very good intention.

But if the wailing, crying and lamenting over the demise of beloved persons and to become angry on such occasions and to denounce the death is due to material reasons and thoughts then it also is wrong and undesirable. For example, to weep asking why the happiness of this worldly has been snatched from him or why he has been deprived of the comforts available from his deceased beloved relative then such wailing is also wrong and misplaced.

But if the unhappiness and sorrow and mourning is only because of the separation, like that of a co-traveller (who reaches first of all to his beloved native place) then his other companions will naturally be emotionally affected (even though the departing soul has reached his beloved place and joined his beloved ones) then also the said sorrow and unhappiness is very well, rather it is desirable that a faithful should mourn over the demise of his faithful brother especially when the departing person was helping the living one in his good deeds which formed a kind of provision for journey to Hereafter.

## **Expression of Impatience is the Result of Carelessness about the Hereafter**

Since most of the people, especially women, are more inclined towards worldly matters they become all the more restless and agitated and go to extremes in crying and complaining, thinking as if they were to live in this world forever and imagining that the one who died has been annihilated. Had they thought correctly they would have realized that the departed person was a traveller who has reached his or her destination earlier and that he or she had to go there. Then they will not show such excessive impatience and restlessness.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) once saw a man whose son had died. He was crying and complaining too much. The Imam told him, "How is it that you are crying over this little calamity and have totally forgotten the far more hard and troublesome calamity (of the Hereafter)? If you yourselves would have been properly busy making provision for your travel to the other world, you would not have ever exhibited so much impatience and dislike over the demise of your beloved son. Your not being anxious and careful about

your Hereafter is a calamity, which is harder than the calamity of your son's death.”[8](#)

## **Divine Mercies and Bounties**

Similarly, the condition of a man, regarding death should be like that of the one who had been in the service of a king for a few days. In the meanwhile he gets a word from the king that you will be, at an unfixed time, be made to stand in front of the king so that you may be rewarded and honoured by the king for your good service and loyalty.

Surely that man will feel happy due to these good tidings. But at the same time he will also wish that he might be called up somewhat later so that he may perform some more functions liked by the king and get more rewards.

Similarly a faithful person, though he feels happy at his death which is the door to the place of rewards and gifts, also likes and wishes that the said hour may be delayed somewhat so that he may perform more worship and at the same time remain satisfied and happy when God decides to call him up, with the conviction that God is most merciful and kind and with the longing to meet the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his Holy Progeny (a.s.) whom he respected and honoured very much during his lifetime.

## **The Arrival of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) at the Moment of Death**

It is mentioned in many traditions that the Holy Prophet and ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and, according to some narrations, even the Holy five (Panjetan), and also all the fourteen Infallibles (a.s.) arrive at the head of the dying person. (More about their radiant faces and appearances will be mentioned henceforth).

One of the companions of Imam Ridha’ (a.s.) was on deathbed. The Holy Imam went to him and stood near his head. That man had closed his eyes at his last moments. Yet he said once, “At present the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and Amirul Mu’minin (a.s.), Siddiqa Fatima Zahra (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), Imam Husain (a.s.) and all the Holy Imams right up to Imam Kazim (a.s.) have arrived here and I am getting the honour of seeing their Holy faces,” and added, “O Sir! Your honour's radiant face is also visible to me here.”[9](#)

In short, it is agreed that every person sees the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) at the time of his or her death and derives happiness in proportion to his or her love and respect for them.

According to a famous tradition narrated by Harith Hamadani, Amirul Mu’minin (a.s.) said, “Everyone sees me on his or her death bed and will do so in future also, be he a believer or an unbeliever.”[10](#)

Of course what is significantly important is that, for the faithful, the visit of ‘Ali (a.s.) will be a bounty because the handsome face of the Imam is the sweetest pleasure for the faithful, whereas, for an unbeliever, his frowning face will be showing God's terrible anger.[11](#)

## Even After Death

After the soul leaves the body it remains hovering over it. Angels take the soul of the faithful towards the sky and that of the unbeliever is dragged downwards. When the corpse is being taken to the grave, if it is that of a faithful, it cries out, "Carry me to my destination as soon as possible." If it is a disbeliever the soul says, "Do not make haste and do not rush me so speedily to my grave." At the time of bathing body if the body is that of a believer, an angel tells him, "Do you desire to go back to the world?" The body (of the faithful) replies, "I do not want to be entangled in difficulty and sorrow again."

The soul of the dead body remains present at the time of washing (Ghusl) and also during the funeral procession. It sees the washer as well as the carriers. It hears their talks. This is why it has been advised that people should not engage in unnecessary talk near the body and that they should be busy with reciting the Holy Qur'an and remembrance of God.

After the burial, as some tradition writers have said, "The soul gets reconnected with the body. It becomes gloomy observing that people have gone away leaving it alone in the grave."

The very first good news given to a faithful in grave is: The Most Merciful God has forgiven you and all those who participated in your burial.

Here it may be mentioned that the faithful should take care to see that all religious rituals are performed at the time of death, washing, shrouding and burying etc. All that is desirable (Mustahab) must be performed. The legal heir of the deceased should, after all others leave the graveyard, return to the grave and recite Talqeen sitting near the grave. This has to be the last Talqeen. According to tradition it has to be recited twice before this: First when the body breathes its last and second after placing the body in the grave.

## Questioning of the Grave

Among those things in which one must have faith and which form the essentials of the Shi'a faith is that the deceased one will have to face questioning by Munkar and Nakeer (angels) in the grave. It is agreed that man must believe that there will be questioning in the grave.

We need not go in details like whether this material worldly body will confront the said questioning or another Misaali (similar) one or it will be this dusty grave or any another pit or whether the questions will be addressed to the soul and/or whether the material physical body will also be affected by it or not etc.

It is not obligatory for us to know all these details also because there is no source of knowing it except traditions and there is no specific description in traditions and reports. Of course, Allamah Majlisi has, in Biharul Anwar Vol. 3 and also in Haqqul Yaqeen, mentioned that reliable traditions show that this worldly body in which the deceased had lived in the world will experience questioning in the grave and the

squeeze.

It is understood that the departed soul will be made to return to either the entire body or in some part of it (that is up to the chest or the waist as mentioned in traditions) so that the deceased may be able to understand the questions and give replies.

## Questioning about Beliefs and Deeds

We should also know about the things involved in questioning in the grave. It will be about beliefs and actions or deeds. It will be asked, “Who is your God? Who is your Prophet? Which religion were you following?”

These questions will be asked to everyone, the believer as well as the unbeliever. Of course lunatics or mentally retarded persons and minor children will be exempted from it. If the dead had faith in true beliefs it will state his or her beliefs and will testify to the Oneness of the Lord of the worlds and the Messengership of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) and to the Imamate of the Holy Imams (a.s.). Otherwise the dead will remain dumb and will not be able to speak. Frightened by the said two interrogating angels some will say, “You are my Gods.” Sometimes they will say, “People say Muhammad is the messenger of God and Qur’an is the Book of God.”

They will not give clear and correct replies. In short, if the deceased is able to give correct replies a gate is opened near his or her head and the grave is widened as far as one can see. Thus the door of Barzakh (which will continue till Resurrection) is the door of comfort and spaciousness:

***“Then if he is one of those drawn nigh (to Allah), Then happiness and bounty and a garden of bliss. And if he is one of those on the right hand, Then peace to you from those on the right hand. And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones, He shall have an entertainment of boiling water, “(56:88-93)***

Then the body will be told: Have a sweet and restful sleep. [12](#)

If the deceased is unable to give correct answers, a door of the Hell of Barzakh will be opened for him or her and a breath from the breaths of Hell will fill up his or her grave. (All these sentences have been taken from narrations. Original text has not been mentioned for the sake of brevity).

## Why this Questioning?

God already knows that this person is faithful or faithless, righteous or sinful. Then what is the use of this interrogation? Questioning in the grave is, in fact, for the faithful, the beginning of the manifestation of Divine bounties. How much happy and pleased will be the faithful; when he will see the beautiful and pleasing face of the angel and smell the fragrance of the gardens of paradise accompanying the said angels. That is why such angels are called (have been named “Mubasshir and Basheer” (announcers of

good tidings).

Moreover, the said questioning will be a cause of happiness for a faithful person. You must have seen students who had carefully and painstakingly studied their lessons in the school. They feel happy at the thought of being examined or questioned so that they may be able to show their talents and merits. Likewise a faithful servant of God also entertains a wish that he should be questioned about his Lord so that he may give satisfactory testimony to the Oneness of the only one God and the Messengership of His Beloved Messenger Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).

## **Unbelievers will see the Divine Punishment and the Beginning of their Pains**

Whereas the questioning in grave will make a believer happy, as it will herald an era of eternal happiness for him, the same questioning will for the faithless turn out to be the start of misfortune and torture. The very arrival of angels will terrorize the unbelievers. It is mentioned in narrations that the frightening angels will threaten the infidels in a terribly harsh tone. Flames will be leaping out from their eyes. Their hair will be very long, dragging on the ground. These are the angels who will approach the unbeliever and this is why they are named 'Munkar and Nakeer' (the abhorring ones).

## **The Disbeliever will Fail to Reply all Questions**

A man who had passed his entire life without any thought of God and who never cared to know his Lord Creator. It can be well imagined what he will face. He will be asked about his God. But he had worshipped (was mad after) only money and wealth. He was devoted only to name and fame. He only longed for power. He had nothing to do with the Lord of the worlds. So he will tremble and shiver in such a way that he will not be able to reply any question.

Some of such fellows will reply rightly about God but they will fail to reply regarding the Holy Prophet. Some will be unable to reply rightly about all the true beliefs. Some who will reply rightly about beliefs will fail in the questioning about their deeds and actions.

## **There will be Questioning about Deeds too**

It is mentioned in Biharul Anwar, vol. 3 that a man was questioned about his beliefs in the grave. He gave correct replies. Then only one question was put to him, "Do you remember that on such day you had seen that a person was being oppressed but you did not go to help him? You saw that his honour was being trampled upon and his wealth was being grabbed. You were in a position to help him but you did not do so?"

That fellow did not give any reply. (Do remember that it is one of the obligatory duties of every faithful to

help the oppressed). As he failed in fulfilling his responsibility in this respect, the angels told him, “A punishment of a hundred lashes has been ordered for you.” Then they inflicted the first lash, which filled his grave with fire. Yes, this is the punishment of giving up an obligatory duty or deed.

The aim is that you should not say that all your deeds are good and that there is no risk or danger. Suppose your beliefs are true and you leave the world with the same beliefs in your heart. But then, what about your deeds? Can you say that you have committed no mistake?

The Infallible complains, “I am weeping remembering the questioning by Munkar and Nakeer in the grave.” Then who are we?

## Deeds are the Companions in Grave

It is agreed that, in the grave, everyone's companions will be their deed as specifically stated in the Qur'an and traditions. Sadooq (a.r.) has in Khisaal, Amali and Maniul Akhbar, narrated from Qais bin Asim that once he went to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) along with a group of people from the tribe of Tameem.

He submitted, “O Messenger of God! Give us some admonition by which we may benefit, because, most of the time we roam in wilderness and deserts (and have few chances of visiting your honour).” The Holy Prophet gave them a number of admonitions. One of them is: O Qais! It is necessary for you to have a companion to be buried in the grave. That companion will be alive whereas you will be dead.

So if that companion (you will necessarily have) is a nice and kind person, he will keep you in a respectable condition. If he is a bad fellow he will leave you there in your grave in total solitude without any help or assistance. (Also remember that) that companion will be necessarily with you in the grand gathering (Hashr) on the Day of Judgement. You will also be asked only about him. So it is very essential for you to select a good companion. If he is a good person he will make you happy. But if he is a corrupt fellow he will frighten you terribly and that companion is your deeds.

Qais instantly turned this admonition into a poem of advice in Arabic language:

*Select a companion from your deeds because, in the grave, the only companion of a man will be his deed.*

*It is essential for you to reserve a companion for life after death, for the Day when man will be called and he will attend at once the Grand Gathering.*

*So if you are busy in any deed then beware and never engage yourself in any deed disliked by God.*

*Be it before death or after death, man will have nothing with him except his deeds.*

*Beware! Man is only a guest among his family members in this world.*

*He stays with them only for a few days and then marches off.*

## **The Lord of the World Warns**

There are many Qur'anic verses showing that after a man dies his companion will be his deeds, that is, the result of the deeds done by him in the world.

Here we suffice with only one verse. The Almighty God says,

***“On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long duration of time; and Allah makes you to be cautious of (retribution from) Himself; and Allah is Compassionate to the servants. “(3:30)***

It is God's Mercy that He has conveyed innumerable admonitions and warnings to mankind through His Messengers.

## **The Disbeliever will be accompanied by a Fearsome Face**

His honour, Qazi Saeed Qummi, in his book *Arbaeen*, quotes Shaykh Bahai (a.r.) thus: A friend of mine was living in the graveyard of Isfahan. He used to remain busy praying near a tomb. I used to visit him frequently. Once I asked him, “Have you ever, during your stay in the graveyard, observed any astonishing thing?”

He said, “Yes. Only the other day people brought here a body, buried it in this corner and went away. After sunset, a very foul smell spread, the like of which I had never known. Then all of a sudden I saw a terribly horrifying form of a black dog. The foul smell was emanating from its body. That fearsome form came nearer and disappeared after approaching the aforesaid new grave.

After a little while, a very sweet and pleasing fragrance began to spread around the like of which also I had never felt in my life. In the meantime, I observed a very handsome form, which also approached the aforesaid grave and disappeared. (All these are the wonders of the world of spirits, which appear in such forms).

Anyway, after a few moments, that beautiful shape (form) emerged out of that grave but in a wounded and bloodstained condition. I exclaimed, 'My Lord! Explain to me what is this all that I am observing? Who are these two forms?' (In my sleep) I was informed that the good-looking form was that of the good deeds done by the dead person and the ugly form was of his evil deeds.

As the bad deeds were more than the good ones, the latter (bad deeds) remained with him as his companion in the grave. Only God knows when this fellow will become clean of his sins! Who knows when he will have a good companion in the form of that handsome being?”

## Squeeze of the Grave is a Fact

Allamah Majlisi says in Haqqul Yaqeen:

Muslims have a unanimously agreed belief that the squeezing of grave and both reward and punishment therein are real facts. According to reliable traditions, the grave will press the same body, which was buried. Of course, every body is not necessarily squeezed in the grave. It depends upon the deeds, that is, this punishment is inflicted only on those who have earned it by sinning. The degree of squeeze will also depend on the severity of his sins. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is reported to have said that the squeezing of the grave is the expiation of the sin of wasting away the bounties granted by God.

Shaykh Kulaini (r.a.) has, reliably narrated from Abu Baseer that he asked Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s), "Is any body spared the squeeze in grave?"

The Imam replied, "Refuge God from this matter! Very few people escape the squeeze of the grave."

When Ruqaiya, the stepdaughter of the Prophet expired, the Prophet stood at her grave raising his head towards the sky. Tears flowed from his eyes. Then he told the people, "I remembered the calamity this lady has just passed. It made me extremely gloomy and I prayed: O Allah! Forgive her. You are Most Merciful. Please save her from the squeeze of the grave." Then he said, "God has pardoned her."

It seldom so happens that a person is saved from the squeeze of grave. This is because the squeezing of the grave is the result of sins. The matter is so sensitive that even an unwise and unjust behaviour with one's own family members can cause squeeze in the grave. As a testimony to this statement and with a view to show the importance of this squeeze, we narrate below a tradition related to Saad bin Muaaz Ansari.

Saad was a chief of the Ansars as well as a respected person in the eyes of the Holy Prophet and also in the opinion of all Muslims. Once he was riding to visit the Holy Prophet. The latter asked Muslims to receive him.

The Holy Prophet himself had also stood to welcome him. The Holy Prophet had once appointed Saad as arbiter in a case concerning some Jews. When he (Saad) expired, seventy thousand angels joined his funeral procession. The Holy Prophet shouldered all the four corners of his coffin and said, "There were columns and rows of angels in the funeral of Saad. My hand was in the hand of Jibraeel. I was following him (Jibraeel) wherever he moved."

In short, he was such a nice gentleman that, besides all these things, the Holy Prophet lowered his body in the grave. Seeing this, the mother of the deceased cried out, "Congratulation to you, O Saad! Congratulations for winning paradise."

The Holy Prophet asked that lady, "From where did you know that your son has reached paradise?"

Right now he is under squeeze of the grave.” The companions asked, “O Messenger of God! Is a pious man like Saad is also being squeezed in the grave?” The Holy Prophet replied, “Yes.”

According to another narration, when people asked the reason for the squeeze of Saad's grave, the Holy Prophet replied that Saad was not behaving nicely with his family members and his attitude towards his wife was rather bad.

## Squeeze of Grave is Possible Everywhere

The respectable scholar, Kulaini (r.a.) has narrated from Yunus that he asked Imam Ridha' (a.s.) in the matter of one who was hanged. (In the past people were not only being hanged but their corpses were also left hanging for days. Zaid, the martyr was kept thus hanging for three years and birds had made nests in his body). The Imam replied, “Yes. The Almighty God commands air to squeeze the body.”

Imam Ja'far (a.s.) has been quoted in another tradition saying that the Lord of the earth and air is one. He orders air to squeeze the hanging body more forcibly than the force of a grave. The same is the case of those who drown in water.

## Reasons of Squeeze of the Grave

It is known from the above that wasting (not appreciating) the bounties granted by God causes grave squeeze. Similarly not behaving nicely with family members is also a reason for such squeeze of the grave. (Details about non-appreciation of Divine graces and bad behaviour with wife can be seen in the second volume of Ayatullah Dastghaib's book Gunahane Kabira (Greater Sins)).

Some other causes of such squeeze are, not purifying oneself after urinating, backbiting, making false allegations etc. The soul is squeezed. It is also likely that the body is also affected.

Contrary to this, the graves of those whose behaviour and attitude towards all is good become spacious in proportion to their nice manners. For some the width goes up to seven yards or seventy yards. For some it is up to the reach of one's eyesight. Consequently their souls live in comfort and ease.

1. Say: The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die, then to your Lord you shall be brought back.

2. Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say: In what state were you? They shall say: We were weak in the earth. They shall say: Was not Allah's earth spacious, so that you should have migrated therein? So these it is whose abode is hell, and it is an evil resort.

3. Biharul Anwar, Vol: 3, Chapter on Angel of death.

4. Biharul Anwar, Vol: 3, Chapter on Angel of death.

5. Holy Qur'an Chapter 36

6. Dual formulae of faith in Islam

7. Greater sins have been discussed in detail in Ayatullah Dastghaib's book Gunahane Kabirah, Greater Sins, available also on line at: <http://www.al-islam.org/greater-sins-complete-ayatullah-dastghaib-shirazi> [1]

8. Uyoon al Akhbar ar Ridha', Vol.2, P.81.

[9.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol.3.

[10.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol.3.

[11.](#) Ziyarat no. 6 of Amirul Mu'minin.

[12.](#) Usul al-Kafi.

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