

Imam Ahmad's Death

'Abdullah ibn Imam Ahmad said that he was there when his father was passing away. His father was going into sakaarah, the state of unconsciousness. When you are going from dunya to akhirah, it's a very difficult change. You've been in this world for 60 or 70 years and now you are going to a completely different world. That change between these two stages is difficult, sometimes it doesn't happen immediately. Sometimes you'll find that the person goes back and forth.

To simplify this, think of sleep, because sleep is the minor death. Allah says, "And He is the One who takes your souls when you are sleeping." Sleep is a minor death.

You go through an interface in which you're not awake and you're not sleeping. The same thing happens before death; you are going through this interface between life and death. There are moments where you are on the other side and on this side [living].

'Abdullah's father started saying, "la ba'ad. la ba'ad" [meaning] "No, not yet... no, not yet". 'Abdullah was worried. Imagine you hear your father saying, "No, not yet... no, not yet," [at the time of death]. What would you interpret it to mean? I don't want to die yet, right? You would interpret it as meaning "I do not want to die yet." So 'Abdullah asked his father (when he woke up), "O my father, why were you saying 'No, not yet'?" Imam Ahmad said, "Shaytaan was standing right next to me, biting on his fingers and saying, 'O Ahmad, you have slipped out of my hands. O Ahmad, you have slipped out of my hands.' So I was telling him, "No, not yet. No, not yet...not until I die." [Meaning] The battle between me and you is happening. Not until I die will I be free from you. Shaytaan was biting his fingers, so angry and upset, thinking that Imam Ahmad had slipped out of his hands.

Look at the believer – how he keeps on fighting until the last moment. We never give up. If we were proud, we would say, "Yes, I won against you!"

If this could happen [that you lose at the last moment], it is something extremely dangerous. Ibn Taymiyyah says that the reason this happens is because shaytaan realizes that this is his last chance with you. If he misses you in the last moment, he missed you. That is why shaytaan gives special attention to the last moments of your life.

Put a criteria to yourself – if you are losing to shaytaan now, while the battle is easy, what will happen to you in the last moments, when it gets tough? If you are already losing the battle now, when shaytaan is giving you half of his attention, what will happen when he gives you his full attention?

These are the fitaan. That is why we say in our salaah, "We seek refuge in You from the fitna of life and death."

Reasons for Evil Ending

Let's talk about asbab su-al khatimah (the reasons for evil ending). The most important stage of your life is the ending. "Whoever dies on something will be resurrected on it." If you die in Hajj, with ihram, making talbiyah, RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "On the Day of Judgement, you will be resurrected saying labbayk Allahumma labbayk." "When you die on something, you will be resurrected on the same thing you were doing."

RasulAllah said: "Oh Allah, make the best of my deeds, the last deeds."

RasulAllah said: "One of you would do the deeds of the people of Paradise until only one foot [a short distance - transcribers' note] is between you and paradise, and then in the end he would do the deeds of the people of hell fire and he would die and he would enter into hell fire." And the opposite can happen to – you do the deeds of the people of hell all of your life and then you do the deeds of the people of jannah in the end and enter jannah.

What are the reasons for evil ending? We ask Allah subhaana wa ta'aala for a blessed ending.

1. Al-Fasaad fil al-'Itiqaad

Al-Fasaad fil al-'Itiqaad corruption and defect in the belief. Analogy: You buy a computer and work on that computer. It works fine for a few months. Then you put it through a rigorous application; it fails and breaks down. You find that it had a defect from day one. This defect didn't show up because it was being dealt with gently. When you put it through a rigorous test, this defect showed up. You thought that it was brand new and nothing was wrong with it. There was a hidden defect. Similarly, you can think that you're fine now and your aqeedah is fine. You have some doubts in the corner of your heart – about Allah, about the ambiya, for example. Death approaches and shaytaan comes and puts you through a test. That defect or problem shows up. When you find out that there is a corruption in your belief, you give up your whole belief. You would lose it all. You lose the whole battle. That's why Ibn AlQayyim says, "We believe that out of the mercy of Allah, Allah will not mislead the person if he was of true righteousness." There must be something wrong with that person.

Allah says: "Say (O Muhammad SAW): Shall We tell you the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their deeds." (18:103-104) The biggest losers are the ones who think they are doing right, but they are doing wrong. You find that someone is very righteous, but he is not doing things the way of the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam. It is all unaccepted.

2. ???? al-Istiqamah

Diversion from the straight path. A person could be on the straight path, but then he decides to take a turn. When this person takes this short turn (onto the wrong path), it's like a fork – it starts out as a small turn, but the further you go, the farther you become [from the straight path]. Iblees was one of the righteous. He did that small mistake out of a great problem – kibr (arrogance). He became the worse of creation.

Allah says: "And recite to them the story of him to whom we gave our ayaat, but he threw them away so shaytaan followed him up and he became of those who became astray. And had We

willed, We would surely have elevated him therewith, but he clung to the earth and followed his own vain desires.” This man received the ayaat of Allah, but he detached himself from the ayaat of Allah and followed his own desires. This person had the knowledge, but he was misguided because of his attachment to dunya because he followed his own desires. This is contrary to Islam. Islam is submission to Allah. You submit to Allah, even if it’s against your own will and desires. You give up your desires for Allah. We do not custom make Islam to serve us. We change ourselves to fit into Islam. We change our own characters to fit Islam. Islam is COMPLETE submission. Submission to Allah. This man had the knowledge, but it didn’t do him any good because he followed his own desires.

The Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: “The thing that I fear most on you is a man who memorizes Qur’aan until the light of Qur’aan shows up on his face and then he detaches himself from the ayaat of Allah. Then he carries the word on his neighbor and accuses him of shirk.” Hudhayfah ibn AlYamaan asked RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, “Who is the mushrik among them? The accuser or the accused?” RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “The accuser.” The man fell into fitna and accused his neighbor of shirk – and he himself has become a mushrik.

The Story of Barsisa

Another story: Barsisa. He was a man from children of Israel was a famous worshipper. He was an ‘aabit. He had his temple and devoted himself to worship. Three men from the children of Israel had to go for a battle. They didn’t know where to leave their sister. They couldn’t leave her alone; they looked around and found that the best place to leave her was with the ‘aabit. They said they would leave her with that ‘aabit and would leave her with him because he is the most righteous and trustworthy.

They went to the ‘aabit, Barsisa, and told him the situation and said, “Can you please take care of our sister?” The ‘aabit said, “I seek refuge in Allah from you.” Shaytaan came to him [Barsisa] and said, “Who are you going to leave her with? If you don’t take care of her, an evil person may take care of her, and you know what will happen. How can you let this good slip out of your hands?” Shaytaan is encouraging him to do good. The ‘Aabit called the brothers back and said that he would take care of her, but she is going to stay in that house over there and I will stay in my temple.

So she would stay in that house and Barsisa would bring food and leave it on his doorstep. He didn’t even want to see her. She would come out and get the food. Shaytaan came to him and said, “What are you doing? Don’t you know that if she walks out from her room and comes to your temple, people can see her? You have to deliver the food to her doorstep.” Barsisa said, “Yes, that’s true.” Shaytaan is not speaking to him face to face; this is wasa (inspiration). Barsisa started to take the food and leave it on her doorstep. That continued for awhile.

And then shaytaan told him, “She’s coming out to get the plate and somebody can still see her. You have to deliver the plate into her own room.” Barsisa would take the food in the room and leave it there. This continued for awhile.

The three brothers were late. This gazwa took awhile. So shaytaan came to him and said, “Are you going to leave her alone? There’s nobody to take care of her. She’s been in there [so long]; it’s like she’s in prison, speaking to no one. Why don’t you take that responsibility and speak to her a little? She can go out and speak to another man and have a relationship with him.” So Barsisa would go outside of her and speak to her from there.

He would talk from outside and she would talk from inside her room and they would be screaming to hear one another. Shaytaan told him, “Why don’t you make it a little convenient for each other? Don’t scream to each other. Sit in the same room.” So Barsisa would go inside the room and slowly they spent more and more time with each other.

And they started getting closer and closer until the great ‘aabid committed zina.

She became pregnant. She delivered a child. Shaytaan came to him and said, “What have you done? Do you know what the brothers will do when they come back? They’re going to kill you. Even if you say ‘This is not my son’, they’re going to say that he was supposed to take care of her and you were responsible for her. The only solution is that you murder the child and bury it.” The ‘aabid chopped off the head of the infant and buried him.

Shaytaan came to him and said, “Do you think the mother will keep the secret after you have killed her son? You’re a fool if you think so. You should kill her too.” And so Barsisa killed her and buried them both in that room.

The brothers came back and said, “Where is our sister?” Barsisa said, “Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi ra ji’oon. She was ill and she died. She is buried in that place.” And he went and showed them a fictitious grave. They said, “Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi ra ji’oon” and they made du’aa` for her.

At night time, one of the brothers saw a dream. Who came to him in that dream? Shaytaan. He said, “Did you believe Barsisa? He’s lying! He committed zina with your sister and then he killed her and her son. The evidence is that she is not buried in the place that he showed you, but he is buried in her room, under the rock.” So he woke up and he told his brothers about the dream. They said, “We saw the same dream. It must be true.” So they went to the fictitious grave and dug it up. They went to her room and uncovered the earth. They found their sister buried with an infant.

They grabbed Barsisa and told him, “You Liar! This is what you have done!” They took him to the king. While they were taking him, Shaytaan came to Barsisa. Now shaytaan didn’t come in the form of inspiration. He came in human form. He said, “Do you know who I am, Barsisa? I am shaytaan. I caused you all of that mess. And I am the only one who can deliver you out of it. If you want me to save you, I can.” Barsisa said, “Please save me!” Shaytaan said, “Make sujood for me.” Barsisa made sujood for shaytaan. What did shaytaan say? He said, “Thank you very much! It was a pleasure meeting you.” And then he never saw him.

Barsisa made sujood for shaytaan and that was the last thing he did in his life because shortly afterwards, he was executed. The last thing he did in his life was make sujood for shaytaan. This was an ‘aabid on the straight path. He took a small turn – in the name of maslaha, the benefit – look at where he ended. That is the danger of following desire. Sometimes we feel confident because of our knowledge or the Qur’aan that we know or the ‘ibaadah that we do. We should always be afraid and never be over confident. That is the true knowledge – “The ones that have

khashiy (fear) of Allah are the scholars.” Otherwise, it is just memorization of words. A side note: what policy was shaytaan using on Barsisa? If shaytaan came to Barsisa and the first thing he said was “make sujood to me”, would Barsisa have done that? No. He wouldn’t. Shaytaan took a step-by-step policy.

Abu ibn ‘AbdurRahim

Ibn AlJowzee says that (in the year 270 Hijra) there was a man named Abu ibn ‘AbdurRahim. He was a fighter in the armies that were fighting in the Roman Empire. On one of their battles, they were surrounding a Roman fortress. While they were surrounding, this man saw a woman. It was a fitna for him. He started corresponding with her (she was a Roman woman in that city). He asked her, “How can I get in?” She told him, “Become a Christian and I’ll let you in.” So he became a Christian, and the next day, suddenly, his comrades found him on the opposite side. This thing depressed them a lot. This man has been with them for a long time, he knew a lot of Qur’aan, he had a lot of knowledge, and suddenly he left the religion and became a Christian to run after that woman. Ten years passed and some Muslims, who knew that man, passed that Roman village/fort again. They saw him and they told him, “Come with us.” He said, “No, I cannot come with you, I’m settled and married. And I have children and business.” So they told him, “What happened to your knowledge? What happened to your Qur’aan?” He said, “I forgot all of that. I forgot all of Qur’aan except for one verse. Perhaps those who disbelieve will wish that they had been Muslim. Let them eat and enjoy themselves and be diverted by [false] hope, for they are going to know. (15:2-3).” [Another translation: One day the non-believers will desire that they were believers...]

When you diverge from the straight path, this is what happens. This man was so knowledgeable, but he didn’t stick to the straight path. “Fastaqim”, Allah tells RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam to follow the straight path after receiving guidance. One of the Sahabah asked RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam to give him one advice that would be sufficient for him. RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “Qul AmantuBillah thumma istaqim” meaning “Say ‘I believe in Allah’ and then stay on the straight path.” Because we can say that we believe, but the important thing is that we stay on the straight path – that is where the test is. That’s where a lot of people fail. They start on the straight path, but then the winds of change in this world take them from right to left.

That is the khashiy of Allah – you know the truth, and you are so worried that you are asking Allah 17 times a day: “Oh Allah, we seek assistance from You and we seek assistance from You, so guide us to the straight path.” We ask Allah 17 times in the faraa'idh to keep us on the straight path. And then we repeat it in the nawaafil. Why are we repeating this ayah over and over? Because it is very important to stay on the straight path.

3. Alisraaru 'ala al ma'aasiyy (insistence on sinning)

A person may be committing a small sin, but the ‘ulamaa` say that insisting on a small sin makes it a major sin. When you keep on doing it again and again, it becomes a major sin. Adh-Dhahabi, in his book AlKaba'ir, talks about evil ending. There was a man who was obsessed with chess. They kept on telling him to say la ilaaha illallah, but he couldn’t. At the end, he kept on repeating, “Checkmate, checkmate” until he died.

He mentioned another man. He kept saying, “Give me the bottle.” Because he was obsessed with drinking and he kept asking for that.

There was another man who was an accountant and he just kept saying, “ten, eleven, twelve” and he kept saying numbers.

Ibn AlQayyim mentioned the story of a man who they told to say la ilaaha illallah, but he said, “I can’t.” He didn’t have a problem with his tongue; he could speak fluently. He couldn’t say la ilaaha illallah, because Allah didn’t give him the tawfeeq.

Think about it this way – when you go to bed, what are the things you dream about? They’ll most likely be what you were thinking about during the day. If you keep thinking about something all day, you’ll most likely dream of it at night.

Another way to know what’s on your mind is to look at what you think of first thing in the morning?

Death is similar to sleep. Sleep is called “the minor death.” When you go from sleep to the state of awakening, it is similar to sakaraat al mowt. That is why the thoughts that are on one’s minds are most likely going to show up in the last moments of life.

We always think that we can live how we want and sin as much as want. Then, five minutes before we die, we will take the shahaadah and be guaranteed jannah. It’s not that easy. You are making a plot against Allah. Why? Because you are making the intention to not worship Allah until the last moments of your life. Allah is telling us to worship Him day and night. We are saying that we want to outsmart Allah and make tawbah in the end. “They are plotting and Allah is planning and Allah is the best of planners.”

A scholar mentioned that they visited a man who was dying. When they came in the house, everyone in the house was listening to loud Umm Kulthum music (a singer). The tape recorder was high. The shaykh said, “itaqullah! This man is dying and you are listening to songs?” So they turned it off and put on Qur’aan instead. When the old man heard the Qur’aan, he said, “Turn that off and turn Umm Kulthum back on because she soothes my heart!” And he died.

When you grow up on something, you are going to die on that thing.

Never think that you can outsmart Allah. You have to have khashiy of Allah. The ones who are the greatest losers are those that feel safe or secure of the punishment of Allah. “Only the losers are the ones who feel secure from the punishment of Allah.” Khashya is an integral quality of a Muslim. To be a Muslim you have to have fear of Allah in your heart.

4. Da’ful Imaan (weak faith)

Sulayman ibn Abdil Malak, a khalifah of the Muslim world, visited Makkah and Madinah. He was asking, “Is there anyone here who has met the companions of RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam?” They said, “Yes, Abu Hazim.” He said, “Call him.” So they bought Abu Hazim. Sulayman ibn Abdul Malik asked him, “How come we dislike death?” He said, “Because you have built and established this world and you have destroyed your akhirah. So you hate to go from what is established, to what is destroyed.” If you’re not preparing for akhirah, why would

you want to go there? When we love this world, we don't want to go to the akhirah. Scholars have said, if somebody has the love of the world at heart, then just before their death – when the person realizes they are leaving dunya for akhirah – they will become attached to the thing he loves (to dunya). And then that person will start hating Allah because Allah is the One who wants to take him away. If that happens, this is khulood fin naar – eternal punishment in Hell, because you are hating to meet Allah, so Allah will hate meeting you.

When Mu'aadh ibn Jabal was passing away. He said, "Welcome to death. I have been waiting for you for a long time. I have been waiting for the Promise of Allah to me. Welcome to death." He's happy. He said, "O death, don't think that I ever wanted to live in this dunya because the love of this world. The reason I wanted to live in this world was to fast in the hot summer days and pray in the long, cold winter nights. So as long as it is time for me to leave, I welcome you. Take my soul." He wants to meet Allah, so Allah will want to meet him.

RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam says, "Every Prophet, before he dies, is shown his place in Paradise and then he is given the choice to stay in this world or die." So the ambiya are given the choice. This hadith is narrated by 'Aa'isha. When RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam was dying, he had his head on my lap, she said. Then he fell unconscious, then he woke up. He started staring at the sky and he said, "O Allah, with the highest companion. (Allah)." 'Aa'isha said that she knew at that moment that the Prophet was being given the choice, and he was not choosing us. RasulAllah was given the choice by the angel of death, and the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam was saying that he wanted to be with Allah. And that was the last thing he said. [Bukhari]