

The Soul Leaving the Body

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam tells us in a long hadith about the story of the soul leaving the body – the trip that the soul takes. He says that when the believer is dying, the angels come down with a coffin from jannah and some scent from jannah. They sit in front of the person. Then the angel of death descends and tells the believer, “Be happy and pleased with the promise of Allah for you. O you tranquil soul, come out to the pleasure that will be provided to you by Allah swt.” RasulAllah said that the soul will come out so easily, like a drop of water that is flowing down from a jug; it slides so easily out of the body. As soon as the angel of death takes that soul, all of the angels will jump – everyone one of them wants to take the honour of holding that soul and wrapping it in the coffin. And then they will carry it to the heavens. Whenever they would pass a group of angels, the angels would smell a beautiful smell and ask, “Whose soul is this?” And the angels would say, “This is the soul of so-and-so” and they would call him by his best names. They would seek permission at the gates of lowest heaven, and then the gates of that heaven will open up. And whenever this soul is being carried through a heaven, the angels of that heaven would accompany it until it reaches Allah swt. Then Allah will deliver the promise of Jannah to that soul and then Allah will say, “Take that soul back to earth, because that is where I created from, and that is where they will return and that is where they will be resurrected from.” So the soul would then descend down to the earth from Allah swt.

Then RasulAllah tells us what happens to the soul of a non-believer, or an evil doer. RasulAllah said that the angels come down to him with a coffin from Hell Fire. The angel of death will say to him, “O you evil soul! Come out to the punishment of Allah and His Anger!” So that soul would disperse around the body and cling to every nerve and muscle. That soul doesn’t want to leave the body. So the angel of death is pulling that soul out. RasulAllah said that the pain of that soul is like a branch filled with thorns being pulled out of a wet ball of wool. The person’s nerves and muscles would be tearing. As soon as that soul comes out, all of the angels would jump and cover that soul with the coffin from Hellfire and carry it up. RasulAllah said it has a stinking rotten smell. Whenever the soul passes by some angels they would curse that soul and say, “Whose soul is this?” So the angels would call him with his worse names. They would carry the soul to the first heaven and seek permission, but the door of that heaven would not open. Then Allah swt would say, “Throw that soul down to the lowest earth!” So that soul would be thrown down with the disgrace of Allah swt.

Now the soul is in the grave...

The Grave

Whenever ‘Uthmaan ibn ‘Affaan went to a grave, he would cry. So they asked him, “How come when you remember jannah and naar that wouldn’t affect you like when you remember the grave?” ‘Uthmaan ibn ‘Affaan said, “I heard RasulAllah say, ‘The grave is the first step of akhirah. If you make it through it, whatever comes after will be easier. And if you do not make it through the grave, whatever will happen after it is. And that is why I cry whenever I remember the grave.’ RasulAllah said, ‘Everything horrific that I have seen – the grave is more horrific.’”

Pretty soon we will be there – everyone will be there. We will leave the comfort of this dunya behind. Every single one of us will be put in that hole in the earth.

There was an old woman who used to clean the masjid. She was ill and then she died late at night. The sahabah buried her. They did not wake up RasulAllah because it was night. Later RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam asked, “Where is that old woman?” The Sahabah said, “She became ill and we buried her.” RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “Why didn’t you call me?” RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam was the father for this woman; he cared about every single one of them: the weak and the strong; the old and the young. He sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “Show me her grave.” He visited her grave and said, “These graves are dark, but Allah swt will give them light because of my salah on them.” And the grave, as soon as it meets you, because you belong there, the grave will squeeze you painfully. [Bukhari]

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “The grave squeezes. If anyone would have been saved from this squeeze, it would have been Sa’ad ibn Mu’adh. Even Sa’ad ibn Mu’adh, the waliy of Allah, the grave squeezed him.” RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, this is the man whom the ‘arsh of Allah [Throne of Allah] shook for his death. This is the man whom the gates of heaven open for. This is the man, who had 70,000 angels accompany his janazah, but the grave squeezed him, but then it released him. Sa’ad ibn Mu’adh was one of the leaders of Ansar; he was a leader in welcoming RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam; he was the best host to RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. He defended RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam until he died.

Once, a child was being buried. RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “If anyone would have been saved from the squeezing of the grave, it would have been this child, but even it is squeezed.”

Fitna al-Qabr

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam told us that two angels will descend on the person that is in the grave – munkar and nakir. They would scream at him and they would shock that person and surprise him. Their way of conversation is not very polite. They are very tough and strong. They expect a straight and immediate answer from you. Whether you are a believer or not, they will come in that fashion. These two angels will come down and ask three questions: “Ma rabbuk? Wa ma deenuk? Wa man nabiyuk?” Who is your Lord? What is your religion? And who is your Prophet?

Only three questions. This is the test we should prepare for. We study years for tests. How much time are we giving for this most important test? We know the questions, and we know the answers.

The believer would say, “My Lord is Allah. And my religion is Islam. And my Prophet is Muhammad sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam.” They would hear a sound coming from above, “Qad saddaqa ‘abdi” – “My servant is saying the truth.” So Allah swt is verifying the answer. That is why Allah says in the Qur’aan: “Allah sets firm the believers on the firm statement in this world.” And what is the firm statement? La ilaaha illallah. Allah will set the believer firm on La ilaaha illallah.

When the angels ask the non-believer, “Who is your prophet?” He would say, “Huh? What? I don’t know. I heard the people say this and I said it.” The angels would smash him with a hammer that would turn him into dust. That person is saying what he heard the people say about the Prophet (saws) – what Abu Jahl said, what newspapers wrote, etc. This is not the answer the angels are looking for. It needs to be clear that imaan in Muhammad is what you will be asked about in the grave. They want to hear you say, “Muhammad sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam is my nabi.” It is not sufficient to say that there is one God. You have to believe in God’s representatives, His Messengers – Muhammad, ‘Eesa [Jesus], Musa [Moses], Ibraheem [Abraham]. They are the ones conveying the Message of Allah to the people of the earth.

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said that this is the last test the believer will go through, the last ibtilaa`.

Al-Bulkhari narrates that Asmaa` bint Abi Bakr narrated that RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam stood in the masjid and gave a Khutbah. He started talking about the fitna of the grave until there was an uproar in the masjid – loud noises. What was that noise? The Sahabah radiyallahu anhum were crying. Asmaa` said, “I couldn’t hear the Khutbah. And I waited until the noise calmed down and then I asked a man next to me, ‘BarakAllahu feek. What was the last thing RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said?’ RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, ‘It has been revealed to me that you will go through fitna in the grave similar to the fitna of ad-dajjal.’”

They were crying and weeping because their hearts were soft. For us – we are not affected. If we are, it is a very temporary affect. One of us could witness a janazah, and we can see the grave with our eyes and see the end of the human being as he is dumped in a hole, and in the cemetery we can be joking and laughing. This is qaswat al-qalb, hard hearts, similar to rocks. The sahabah just heard RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam talking about the grave and Asmaa` said she couldn’t hear what RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam was saying. We are suffering from a disease that needs to be cured. This disease is worse than a medical heart problem. If we were suffering from a medical heart problem, we would spend our time and efforts to cure it. But if we are suffering from diseases like this, we let them go and don’t even worry about it.

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “This Ummah will go through tests in the grave. And if it wasn’t for the fact that you would not bury your dead, I would have asked Allah subhaana wa ta’ala to allow you to hear what is happening underground.”

Ibn Taymiyyah says that not only did RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam hear this, but we know of some people who hear the punishment of the grave and people seeing dead bodies coming out from the graves and being punished and they are screaming and the scars are on their bodies.

Ibn Taymiyyah says that when you sleep, your soul is separate from the body. Nevertheless, sometimes the dreams can be so intense that your body can start moving and acting upon that dream, even though your eyes are closed and your soul is gone from the body. Ibn Taymiyyah says that similarly, the punishment can be so severe, that the body starts acting upon that punishment, and you can see dead people coming out of the graves, running, and the angels are torturing them.

After the questioning of the believer, when the believer has given the right answers, a voice cries from the heaven, “An sadaqa ‘abdi” – “My servant is telling the truth. So furnish his grave from paradise, and provide him clothes from paradise and open for him a gate to paradise.” This grave on earth is hooked up to jannah. It is directly connected to paradise. This person in the grave is able to see his place in Jannah. He is not able to go there, but he can see it. Then a very handsome person will walk into the grave. The dead person would say, “Who are you?” That person would say, “I am your good deeds and I came to spend time with you until the day of judgement.” So the believer would not be alone.

One of the tabi’een said to one of his students, “You have studied under me for 30 years. Tell me what you have learned.” The student said, “I learned eight things. [One of these things is that] every one of us have some loved ones and some loved things. Some of these loved things we are going to leave in the dunya; some we will leave at home; some of these loved things will come with us to our graves. But then when we are in our grave, none of the loved things will be with us, except for our things. That is why I have taken my good deeds to be the most beloved to me.”

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam says that the believer will have window showing paradise, and a window showing hell. And he will be told, “This is where you could have been if you were not a believer. And this is what you have got because of your imaan.” When he sees that, he would say, “Ya rabb, ‘aqi mis sa’ah.” – “O Allah, start the day of judgement so that I can go to my family and my wealth!” His family and wealth is in jannah; he does not go back to what is in the world.

After the corrupt, or evil person, is questioned, an announcement will be made from the heavens, “He is a liar! Furnish his grave from hellfire, give him clothes from hell fire and open for him a gate to hell fire.” We have graves under the surface of the earth that we think are part of this dunya, but we don’t know that the people of jannah see jannah from their graves and the people of naar see an-naar from their graves. And an evil, ugly person will come to him in the grave. The person will ask, “Who are you?” The person will say, “I am your evil deeds and I will be with you until the day of judgement.” That man will have stinking, rotten smell. Two windows will be opened – a window to jannah and a window to hell fire. He will be told, “This is where you could have been if you were a believer.” Not only is he suffering physically, but he’s suffering psychologically because of regret. “This is where you will be in hellfire.” He will say, “Ya rabb, do not let the day of judgement start.”

Can the Muslim be punished in the grave? Yes. Al-Qurtubi says, “Realize that the punishment of the grave is not solely for the nonbelievers and is not only for the hypocrites. It could also happen to the believer for the shortcoming in their deeds.”

What are some of the reasons that could cause the punishment of the grave? The general reason is the shortcoming in deeds. There are some specific reasons:

Specific Reasons for Punishment of the Grave

Theft and Stealing

Theft/stealing: taking something that does not belong to you and cheating. There was a servant with RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. They were out in battle. This servant was preparing the saddle for the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam and he was hit by a stray arrow. The sahabah began to say, “Congratulations for him! He has got jannah.” Because he died on the battlefield. The Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “No, in the Name of Allah! The cloak which he stole in khaybar is wrapped around him and is burning him in the grave.” It was just a piece of cloth; he took it without permission. SubhanAllah – for a cloak! What about the ones who steal millions of dollars? What about the ones who cheat and abuse the rights of the Muslims by cheating? What will happen to these people? It is for what – a temporary enjoyment in this life? Allah will inflict you with diseases and disasters which you will have to spend your money on, because that money has no barakah. Monetary transactions are something that can cause you something great reward or punishment; it depends on how you use it. It is a test and Allah subhaana wa ta’aala wants to see if you will be grateful or ungrateful.

Slander and neglecting tahaarah

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam passed by two graves and said that the two men in these graves were being punished. RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said they are not suffering because of something major. One of them used to slander and the other would not purify and clean himself from urine (make taharaarah properly). And they were being punished in their graves for that. [Bukhari]

Neglecting Qur’aan, the Adulterers, Riba and Liars

Narrated Samura bin Jundub:

Allah’s Apostle very often used to ask his companions, “Did anyone of you see a dream?” So dreams would be narrated to him by those whom Allahwished to tell. One morning the Prophet said, “Last night two persons came to me (in a dream) [we know that the dreams of the ambiya are true] and woke me up and said to me, ‘Proceed!’

I set out with them and we came across a man lying down, and behold, another man was standing over his head, holding a big rock. Behold, he was throwing the rock at the man’s head, injuring it. The rock rolled away and the thrower followed it and took it back. By the time he reached the man, his head returned to the normal state. The thrower then did the same as he had done before. I said to my two companions, ‘Subhan Allah! Who are these two persons?’ They said, ‘Proceed!’

So we proceeded and came to a man lying flat on his back and another man standing over his head with an iron hook, and behold, he would put the hook in one side of the man’s mouth and tear off that side of his face to the back (of the neck) and similarly tear his nose from front to back and his eye from front to back. Then he turned to the other side of the man’s face and did just as he had done with the other side. He hardly completed this side when the other side returned to its normal state. Then he returned to it to repeat what he had done before. I said to my two companions, ‘Subhan Allah! Who are these two persons?’ They said to me, ‘Proceed!’

So we proceeded and came across something like a Tannur (a kind of baking oven, a pit usually clay-lined for baking bread).” I think the Prophet said, “In that oven t here was much noise and voices.” The Prophet added, “We looked into it and found naked men and women, and behold, a flame of fire was reaching to them from underneath, and when it reached them, they cried loudly.

[it was cone-shaped, and if they tried to escape, they would slide down because of the cone-shape] I asked them, 'Who are these?' They said to me, 'Proceed!'

And so we proceeded and came across a river." I think he said, "... red like blood." The Prophet added, "And behold, in the river there was a man swimming, and on the bank there was a man who had collected many stones. Behold, while the other man was swimming, he went near him. The former opened his mouth and the latter (on the bank) threw a stone into his mouth whereupon he went swimming again. He returned and every time the performance was repeated, I asked my two companions, 'Who are these (two) persons?' They replied, 'Proceed! Proceed!'

And we proceeded till we came to a man with a repulsive appearance, the most repulsive appearance, you ever saw a man having! Beside him there was a fire and he was kindling it and running around it. I asked my companions, 'Who is this (man)?' They said to me, 'Proceed! Proceed!'

So we proceeded till we reached a garden of deep green dense vegetation, having all sorts of spring colours. In the midst of the garden there was a very tall man and I could hardly see his head because of his great height, and around him there were children in such a large number as I have never seen. I said to my companions, 'Who is this?' They replied, 'Proceed! Proceed!'

So we proceeded till we came to a majestic huge garden, greater and better than I have ever seen! My two companions said to me, 'Go up' and I went up. The Prophet added, "So we ascended till we reached a city built of gold and silver bricks and we went to its gate and asked (the gatekeeper) to open the gate, and it was opened and we entered the city and found in it, men with one side of their bodies as handsome as the handsomest person you have ever seen, and the other side as ugly as the ugliest person you have ever seen. My two companions ordered those men to throw themselves into the river. Behold, there was a river flowing across (the city), and its water was like milk in whiteness. Those men went and threw themselves in it and then returned to us after the ugliness (of their bodies) had disappeared and they became in the best shape."

The Prophet further added, "My two companions (angels) said to me, 'This place is the Eden Paradise, and that is your place.' I rose up my sight, and behold, there I saw a palace like a white cloud! My two companions said to me, 'That (palace) is your place.' I said to them, 'May Allah bless you both! Let me enter it.' They replied, 'As for now, you will not enter it, but you shall enter it (one day).'

I said to them, 'I have seen many wonders tonight. What does all that mean which I have seen?' They replied, 'We will inform you: As for the first man you came upon whose head was being injured with the rock, he is the symbol of the one who studies the Quran and then neither recites it nor acts on its orders, and sleeps, neglecting the enjoined prayers. As for the man you came upon whose sides of mouth, nostrils and eyes were torn off from front to back, he is the symbol of the man who goes out of his house in the morning and tells so many lies that it spreads all over the world. And those naked men and women whom you saw in a construction resembling an oven, they are the adulterers and the adulteresses; and the man whom you saw swimming in the river and given a stone to swallow, is the eater of usury (Riba) and the bad looking man whom you saw near the fire kindling it and going round it, is Malik, the gatekeeper of Hell and the tall man whom you saw in the garden, is Abraham and the children around him are those children who die with Al-Fitra (the Islamic Faith) [children who died in young age].'" The

narrator added: Some Muslims asked the Prophet, “O Allah’s Apostle! What about the children of pagans?” The Prophet replied, “And also the children of pagans.” The Prophet added, “My two companions added, ‘The men you saw half handsome and half ugly were those persons who had mixed an act that was good with another that was bad, but Allah forgave them.’” (Bukhari 9/87/171)

[A friend emailed me the hadith. I put up some of the things in parenthesis that the speaker said in square brackets []. But I didn’t add too many of his comments, or else it would get confusing. The speaker also mentioned that the two angels with him were Gabriel (Jibra’eel) and Michael (Mika’eel)]

Debt

There are a few other things that can cause punishment of the grave, such as debts. There is a hadith in which one of the sahabah passed away. The Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam told his brother, “Go and pay the debt of your brother because your brother is being held from Jannah [because of] his debt.” He couldn’t go to Jannah because of the debt.

Excessive Weeping

If you pass away and your family weeps excessively on you, that can cause some pain to you. When ‘Umar ibn AlKhattab was injured and was passing away, Suhayb came and saw ‘Umar ibn AlKhattab and started crying. ‘Umar said, “The dead person would suffer because of the crying and weeping of his family.” He didn’t want anyone crying for him. Tears falling down and crying is ok, but you should not be excessive. Allah subhaana wa ta’aala wants us to be patient.

Tears would fall from the Prophet’s eyes when a loved one would pass away, but he wouldn’t allow himself or any of the Sahabah to cry excessively.

What saves from the Punishment of the Grave?

The good deeds

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “When the dead person is buried, he is able to hear the footsteps of the people when they are leaving the cemetery. Then his good deeds will surround him. So Salah would come next to his head; fasting would come on his right side and Zakah would come on the left side. The other good deeds would come next to his feet. So whenever this person would be attacked from the head, the salah would say, ‘No you cannot come from this side.’ And whenever the attack is from the right side, the siyaam [fasting] would say, ‘No, you cannot come from this side.’ The Zakah would say, you cannot come from this side. And the other good deeds would say, you cannot from the feet. And they would be making a shield, surrounding this person from every side and protecting this person.”

Seeking refuge in Allah from the punishment of the grave

The Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “When you make tashahud, seek refuge in Allah from four things: from punishment of the hell fire, from the punishment of the grave, from the fitna of life and death, and from the fitna of ad-dajjal (the false messiah). It is a sunnah to say this [Du'aa`] during salah, after tashahud (before salaam).

Who are the ones that are saved from the punishment of the grave?

The shuhadaa`

The Prophet sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam said, "There are six qualities for the shaheed: he would be forgiven with the first drop of blood that comes from his body; he would see his place in paradise; he would be saved from the punishment of the grave; he would be saved from the fear of the most fearful day; the crown of tranquility will be placed on his head – one emerald in it is worth the world and everything in it; he would be married to 72 hoor al `ayn; he would be given shafa`aa (intercession) for 70 of his relatives."

One of the sahabah said, "O RasulAllah, how come the believers go through the trials of the grave, but the shaheed doesn't?" The Prophet sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam said, "The shining of the swords over his head is enough of a fitna for him." When you see death in every moment, during battle, that is enough fitna for him. So Allah will give him pleasure and tranquillity to him.

Al muraabit

They are the soldier who is positioned in a station away from home, guarding the Muslims, waiting for instructions to fight. It comes from rabat – when you tie something. Al muraabit is someone who is tied to that post – they cannot leave. That guard/soldier has to guard day and night. It is a very difficult job. Because of that, Allah gives him a special reward. The Prophet sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam said, "Everyone's deeds would be terminated they die, except for the one who dies as a muraabat. Allah would continue his deeds for him, and they would keep growing until the day of judgement, and he would be saved from the punishment of the grave."

Those who die on Friday

In a hasan hadith, "Any Muslim who dies on Friday, Allah will save him from the punishment of the grave."

May Allah subhaana wa ta'aala protect us, our families and all of the Muslims from the punishment of the grave. Ameen.