

WISHING FOR DEATH



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Question: Is it permissible to wish for death and make Du'ā for it?

There's actually a book on this topic, falsely attributed to Imām Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhāb رحمه الله تعالى, and most of it is actually plagiarized from As-Suyūti's book *Sharh As-Sudūr*. When reading it, if you know the style of the Imām from his other books, you can clearly see that it's definitely not his work. It's falsely attributed to him, and there are other issues that indicate that the book is really not authored by him.

Now, the question here, "Is it permissible to wish for death and make Du'ā for it?" The answer to this question is not a summarized, general answer that one can give, as many do in this matter. There's Tafsīl to it, there's an explanation to it. No matter how high one is elevated by some, it's a sign of ignorance to summarize answers in a way that doesn't give the complete explanation, and it's a big indicator of one's lack of Fiqh — no matter how high they're elevated. For example, in this matter, some are asked about this, and they give you a short answer: it's Harām, and then they mention the popular Hadīth on this topic — but that's not how it goes. Those twenty to thirty-second answers misguide if they don't at least summarize all the essential points. Al-Qādhī 'Iyyād, for example, had a chapter titled "Disliking Du'ā for Death at Times and its Permissibility at Times", so there's Tafsīl to it. There's some proof that states one should not wish for death and there's other proof that seems to indicate otherwise. The answer is that there are different reasons why people wish or make Du'ā for death, and each has its own Hukm. Let me explain them briefly.

One of the most popular reasons people make Du'ā of death or wish it is because Dunyā trials and calamities overwhelm them. Trials of debt, loss of loved ones, midlife crises, divorces, car accidents, losses of jobs, disobedient children, illnesses, and other similar matters, may Allāh سبحانه وتعالى protect you all from that. In this case, one should not make Du'ā or wish for death, and this is what's meant in the famous Hadīth on this matter. When Dunyā calamities befall someone, this Hadīth applies to that. You should not wish for death because of a

calamity befalling you. If one insists on making Du'ā or wishing for death then he should say,

اللَّهُمَّ أَحْيِي مَا كَانَتْ الْحَيَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي، وَتَوَفِّي إِذَا كَانَتْ الْوَفَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي

Ya Allāh, keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and let me die if death is better for me.¹

Many Ulamā', like Al-Baghawi, An-Nawawi, Ibn Rajab, and others said it's Makrūh to long for death or make Du'ā for death in such a scenario. Some related an Ijmā' that it's a Makrūh, but that Ijmā' is not so accurate because some Ulamā', like Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr, considered this scenario Harām. Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr considered it Harām to make Du'ā for death if Dunyā calamities befall someone. It's more accurate to say wishing death in this scenario is Harām. because the origin in orders deterring from something takes the ruling that it's Harām, and here it's combined with discontentment in what has befallen the person from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, along with lack of acceptance of the Qadhā of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and lack of Sabr. One should have patience during calamities, and I've delivered many, many lectures on that topic. That's the reality of Dunyā, either you're in a trial or you're awaiting one, and one needs to strengthen his bond with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in order to be able to handle such calamities.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ

No disaster strikes except by permission of Allāh. And whoever believes in Allāh - He will guide his heart.²

¹ Bukhāri: 5671

² [64:11]

And one who makes Du'ā for death in such a scenario may be making Du'ā for something more miserable, because he doesn't know what's awaiting him in the life after. It could be worse, because death is only relief for the righteous, the ones who are forgiven, and one doesn't know if he's amongst those righteous people. So remaining in this Dunyā longer may be a means for one to excel and attain more good deeds and to ask the forgiveness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. In that scenario, it's Harām to make Du'ā to die or to wish for it. *Some* said it's Makrūh.

Another scenario for wishing or making Du'ā for death is when one does so in order to preserve his Dīn due to a Fitnah he fears in his Dīn. When one fears temptations or trials that may cost him his Dīn, when he fears drifting away from the right path, it's permissible to make Du'ā for death and to wish for death in such cases, and many of the Salaf did so. An example would be someone facing a trial that he feels will strip him out of his Dīn. [Like] Someone facing prison or torture by the Tawāghīt, and it will cause him a Fitnah in his Dīn. One of the Ad'iyah of the Messenger ﷺ that confirms this is,

وَإِذَا أَرَدْتَ فِتْنَةً فِي قَوْمٍ فَتَوَفَّنِي غَيْرَ مَفْتُونٍ

O Allāh, if you decree a Fitnah amongst people (where they're going to be led astray or they're going to drift away from their religion), then bring death to me without being misled or led astray.

Meaning, bring death to me adhering to the religion. An-Nawawi, Al-Baghawi, Ibn Rajab, As-Suyūti, Al-'Irāqi, and Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr said when one fears harm in his Dīn or he fears a Fitnah in his Dīn, it's not disliked for him to make Du'ā for death. And as I said, many of the Salaf did so. The Du'ā of Maryam عليها السلام in the Qur'ān is similar to this.

فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَلِّتَنِي مَتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنَسِيًّا

And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "I wish I died before this, and I wish I was forgotten and I wish I was out of sight."³

When she had the pains of childbirth near the trunk of the date palm, she said:

يَلِّتَنِي مَتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنَسِيًّا

I wish I died before this, and I wish I was forgotten and I wish I was out of sight.⁴

Because she knew she was facing a Fitnah. Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالى said this is proof that one can long for death and make Du'ā for death if there's a Fitnah to his Dīn. When Al-Bukhārī رحمه الله تعالى reached one of the towns of Samarkand, he stayed with some relatives, and they heard him making Du'ā during the nighttime — this is when trials were mounting upon him. He said,

اللهم قد ضاقت علي الأرض بما رحبت فاقبضني إليك

Ya Allāh despite how vast the earth is, it has become tight and narrow and troubling for me, so take my soul, Ya Allāh.

Before the month was over, he died. He actually mentioned that Du'ā early in the beginning of Ramadān the year he died. The night before 'Īd Al-Fitr, he died, and

³ [19:23]

⁴ [19:23]

he was buried on the first day of Shawwal, meaning on the day of the 'Īd. He was facing a Fitnah in his Dīn so he made that Du'ā.

Another scenario is when one is on his deathbed, and that's permissible. If someone is dying on his deathbed, they can make Du'ā or wish for death.

لا يتمنين أحدكم الموت ولا يدع به من قبل أن يأتيه

*No one should wish for death or make Du'ā for it before it comes to him.*⁵

Here, they said if one is certainly going to die, he's in his last days or moments — it's eminent that he's in his very last moments — it's permissible for him to make Du'ā for death, because the Messenger ﷺ said don't wish or make Du'ā for death *before* it comes to you. Here death came to that person, he's on his deathbed. Du'ā for death in such a scenario while he's on his death bed on the verge of dying is expressing acceptance in the Qadhā of Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* and being content and happy with what has befallen him from Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى*. It's also supported by the Du'ā of the Messenger ﷺ on his deathbed.

وألحقني بالرفيق الأعلى

*O Allāh, let me join the highest companion.*⁶

And it's also supported by the narration,

⁵ Muslim: 2682

⁶ Bukhāri: 5674

مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ

*Whoever loves to meet Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, Allāh loves to meet him.*⁷

And this Hadīth, مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ, This Hadīth is actually in the context of one on his deathbed in his last moments, as Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها explained.

Another reason or scenario where someone would long for death or ask Allāh سبحانه وتعالى for it is one yearning to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى — yearning to meet Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and he's confident with his deeds. Some Ulamā' said it's permissible. Why? Because when the Jews were challenged to ask for death, they refused because they knew they were astray and sinful. So, it indicates that if one is confident of his deeds, he can ask for death.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

*Say, [O Muḥammad], "If the home of the Hereafter with Allāh is for you alone and not the [other] people, then wish for death, if you should be truthful."*⁸

In another verse,

قُلْ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ هَادُوا إِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ لِلَّهِ مِن دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

*Say, "O you who are Jews, if you claim that you are allies of Allāh, excluding the [other] people, then wish for death, if you should be truthful."*⁹

⁷ Bukhāri: 6508

⁸ [2:94]

⁹ [62:6]

The speech here is directed to the Jews in both verses. If you claim you're the Awliyā' of Allāh, you're righteous, you're guided, then wish for death if you're truthful. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى responded and said,

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

But they will not wish for it, ever, because of what their hands have put forth. And Allāh is Knowing of the wrongdoers.¹⁰

They'll never long for it due to the evil their hands have committed. According to some Ulamā', they said this shows they hated death due to their sins and therefore that's proof that the Awliyā' of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, who do good deeds, don't hate death. A believer loves to meet Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and that comes after death. But even though some Ulamā' said it's permissible for one to make Du'ā or wish for death in such a scenario, that's somewhat questionable. Why? Because the verses are in the context of a Mubāhalah with the Yahūd, and the reality of the matter is that no matter how good one gets, no one can be confident enough with his deeds because no one enters Jannah through their deeds alone.

لَنْ يَدْخُلَ أَحَدًا مِنْكُمْ عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ

The good deeds of any person will not make him enter Paradise.

قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟

¹⁰ [62:7]

They (the Prophet's companions) said, 'Not even you, O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)?'

قَالَ: لَا، وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَّعِدَنِي اللَّهُ بِفَضْلِ وَرَحْمَةٍ فَسَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا

He said, "Not even myself, unless Allah bestows His favor and mercy on me." So be moderate in your religious deeds and do the deeds that are within your ability...

The Hadīth says no one will enter Jannah with their deeds alone unless the mercy of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى encompasses them.

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّيَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَوْتَ إِذَا مُحْسِنًا فَلَعَلَّه أَنْ يَزِدَّادَ خَيْرًا، وَإِذَا مُسِيئًا فَلَعَلَّه أَنْ يَسْتَعْتَبَ

and none of you should wish for death, for if he is a good doer, he may increase his good deeds, and if he is an evil doer, he may repent to Allah.¹¹

That's the final statement in the Hadīth. The same Hadīth ends by saying no one should wish for death, because if he's good, it's possible he may increase in good deeds, and if he's evil, sinning, and doing bad, he may repent. Who can be confident with their deeds when the best of the best, the Sahūbah, feared over themselves? It's not a deficiency if one tries to accumulate as many deeds as he can in this Dunyā while loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and at the same time asking for a longer life. The righteous ask for a longer life in order to gain more deeds so that they can attain a higher rank in Jannah. And also yearning to meet Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is every believer's wish, but that's different than asking for death. It's different than, "Oh Allāh take my life." Some use the Du'ā of Yūsuf عليه السلام towards the end of the Surah,

¹¹ Bukhāri: 5673

تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَحِقِّنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

*Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous.*¹²

Let me die a Muslim, they use that as proof to support the permissibility of making Du'ā on oneself in this scenario. And the meaning of that verse is actually asking Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* to remain Muslim until one dies. So, some said *تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا* means when my time comes. He's not asking for death, he's saying when my time comes, take me as a Muslim. I want to die on the state of Islām. Some Ulamā' said he was asking for death, but if he was, other Ulamā' countered that by saying if that's the case, then it's abrogated by the Sharī'ah of the Messenger ﷺ. And something else that some other Ulamā' said is that was the Du'ā of Yūsuf عليه السلام it could have been the Du'ā of Yūsuf عليه السلام while he was on his deathbed, just like the Du'ā of the Messenger ﷺ on his deathbed.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَأَحِقِّنِي بِالرَّفِيقِ الْأَعْلَى

O Allah! Excuse me and bestow Your Mercy on me and let me join with the highest companions (in Paradise).¹³

In Tārīkh Dimashq that's written by Ibn Asākir, he mentioned that the Amawi Khalīfah Sulaymān Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik Ibn Marwān entered the Damascus Masjid and he saw a very, very old man. He told the old man, "Wouldn't you like to die?" and the man said, "No, والله *I don't want to die.*" Sulaymān Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik was astonished. Why wouldn't a man who reached that age want to die? That old man was wise, he told Sulaymān Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik, "Youth and the evil that comes with it have departed and passed. The gray hair that you see and the goodness that comes with it remains. When I sit, I do Dhikr, and when I stand, I praise Allāh

¹² [12:101]

¹³ Bukhāri: 5674

سبحانه وتعالى, *and those are two states I would like for them to remain for me.*” It could be a Salāh or a Du'ā or Istaghfār or a Dhikr — something as simple as that, that changes one's entire status in the Ākhirah. So out of the two opinions on this matter, I believe the more correct one is that it's not correct to make Du'ā for death in such a scenario.

Another scenario is asking Allāh سبحانه وتعالى for death with the stipulation. What stipulation? The stipulation that's in the Hadīth, “*O Allāh, allow me to die if death is better for me.*” And the Hadīth says exactly that, so it's no doubt that it's permissible.

لَا يَتَمَنَّيَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ ضَرٍّ أَصَابَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا بَدَ فَاعِلًا فَلْيَقُلْ: اللَّهُمَّ أَحْيِنِي مَا كَانَتْ الْحَيَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي
وَتَوَفَّنِي إِذَا كَانَتْ الْوَفَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي

*None of you must wish for death because he is afflicted by evil circumstances, but if he cannot help doing so, he should say, 'O God, give me life as long as life is better for me, and take me when death is better for me.'*¹⁴

Keep in mind something about this scenario, something very important. This doesn't mean that this specific Du'ā is a Mustahabb Du'ā to make. This is not a Mustahabb Du'ā to make when one is afflicted with Dunyā calamities. What the Hadīth is simply saying is that it's permissible to say this form of Du'ā if you so insist on doing it. It may even be better not to make the Du'ā. The Hadīth is not encouraging one to say that Du'ā. The Messenger ﷺ said,

فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا بَدَ فَاعِلًا

but if he cannot help doing so...

¹⁴ Bukhāri: 5671

If he insists. If he insists on making Du'ā for death, then okay, he can say, “*Ya Allāh keep me alive as long as life is better for me and take my life as long as death is better for me.*”

Another scenario is asking Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* for death in the context of being a Shahīd, and it's permissible for one to ask Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* to be a Shahīd. That might not be under the topic of longing for death. It might be like the Du'ā of Yūsuf *عليه السلام* that I mentioned earlier. Some of the Ulamā' said the Du'ā of Yūsuf *تَوَقَّيْنِي مُسْلِمًا*, meaning, when my time comes Ya Allāh, I want to die as a Muslim. And the same with the Shahādah, when my time comes Ya Allāh, I want to be a Shahīd. It may fall under asking Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* for death or it may fall under asking Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* for a good ending when death comes. Either way, it's permissible to ask Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* to be honored as a Shahīd, and which Muslim knows the reward and honor of a Shahīd and doesn't yearn and long to become a Shahīd? 'Umar *رضي الله عنه* made that Du'ā,

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي شَهَادَةً فِي سَبِيلِكَ، وَاجْعَلْ مَوْتِي فِي بَلَدِ رَسُولِكَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

O Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, grant me the honor of being a martyr in Your path and let my death be in the city of Your Messenger ﷺ.

And he got exactly as he wished and made Du'ā for. The Messenger ﷺ said,

مَنْ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ الشَّهَادَةَ بِصِدْقٍ بَلَغَهُ اللَّهُ مَنَازِلَ الشُّهَدَاءِ وَإِنْ مَاتَ عَلَى فِرَاشِهِ

A person who asks Allāh sincerely for Shahādah — sincerely and truthfully — will be granted that status even if he died on his deathbed.¹⁵

An-Nawawi said it's *encouraged* to ask Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* to become a Shahīd.

¹⁵ Muslim: 1909