

ISSUES RELATED TO DEATH SAKARĀT AL-MAUT (THE AGONIES OF DEATH)

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Our Discussion Today

1. Death is a Union with Spiritual Fellowship
2. Do not Abuse the dead, they are relieved or they relieve the living
3. The Agony of Death (Sakrat al-Maut)
4. Reasons of Sakrat al-Maut
5. What to do in time of Sakrat al-Maut

Death is the Union with a Beautiful Fellowship

All who obey Allah and the Apostle are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah of the Prophets (who teach) the sincere (lovers of truth) the witnesses (who testify) and the righteous (who do good): ah! what a beautiful fellowship! (Al-Nisa 4:69)

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ
وَالصَّالِحِينَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Membership of 4 great and beautiful spiritual fellowship:

1. Prophets and Messengers of Almighty Allah
2. Companions (People of sincerity and truth who love and support the truth with their person, means, influence and whatever they had)
3. Noble army of witnesses, who testify to the truth by martyrdom, or by preaching the truth, or by the pen of the devoted scholar, or by the life devoted to service of Islam.
4. Large company of righteous people who live their life in a righteous way.

Prophet's Last Words "Allahumma Rafīq al-A'lā"

Narrated `Aisha: (the wife of the Prophet) When Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was in good health, he used to say, "No prophet's soul is ever captured unless he is shown his place in Paradise and given the option (to die or survive)." So when the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) approached and his head was on my thigh, he became unconscious for a while and then he came to his senses and fixed his eyes on the ceiling and said, "O Allah (with) the highest companions." I said' "Hence he is not going to choose us." And I came to know that it was the application of the narration which he (the Prophet) used to narrate to us. And that was the last statement of the Prophet (before his death) i.e., "O Allah! With the highest companions." *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith 6509.

Do not Abuse the Dead, They are Relieved or they Relieve others

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْجَعْدِ، أَخْبَرَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا تَسُبُّوا الْأَمْوَاتَ، فَإِنَّهُمْ قَدْ أَفْضَوْا إِلَى مَا قَدَّمُوا ".

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Do not abuse the dead, for they have reached the result of what they have done." (Bukhari, hadith 6516)

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ بِجَنَازَةٍ فَقَالَ " مُسْتَرِيحٌ، وَمُسْتَرَاخٌ مِنْهُ ". قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْمُسْتَرِيحُ وَالْمُسْتَرَاخُ مِنْهُ قَالَ " الْعَبْدُ الْمُؤْمِنُ يَسْتَرِيحُ مِنْ نَصَبِ الدُّنْيَا وَأَذَاهَا إِلَى رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ، وَالْعَبْدُ الْفَاجِرُ يَسْتَرِيحُ مِنْهُ الْعِبَادُ وَالْبِلَادُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ ".

A funeral procession passed by Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) who said, "Relieved or relieving?" The people asked, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! What is relieved and relieving?" He said, "A believer is relieved (by death) from the troubles and hardships of the world and leaves for the Mercy of Allah, while (the death of) a wicked person relieves the people, the land, the trees, (and) the animals from him." (Bukhari, hadith 6512)

Sakarāt al-Maut (Agony and Stupors of Death)

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ

And the stupor of death will bring truth (before his eyes): "This was the thing which you were trying to escape!" (Qāf 50:19)

Agony of death (sakar al-mawt) means unconscious state of a person who is about to die. Things which cause drowsiness in one's mind are generally called "muskir" or "musakkir". That word is also used to mean agony, love, sorrow, heedlessness or faint caused by a pain, and that state is called "sakar", which is what we also mean here. That is to say; what is meant with "sakarāt" which is the plural form of "sakar" is the agony and fainting when one is about to die. Accordingly, "sakar al-mawt" which is a Quranic term means "unconsciousness when one is about to die, which signals one's death."

4 Reasons of Sakarāt al-Maut

Scholars has provided 4 reasons behind agony and suffering at the time of death:

1. **To elevate the spiritual levels.** Such as the agonies of Prophets and saintly slaves of Allah. As they endure the severe agony of death patiently, their level in the eyes of Allah increases. Such people never complained about the agony of death, instead they always prayed Allah to increase their levels.
2. **To forgive the sins.** The agony of the death is the ransom for their sins. A true believer will have a remuneration for all pains and agonies he suffers in life, even the pain caused by a thorn pricked on his foot, and as this remuneration will be the forgiveness of a sin in case he does not have any sins, he will be gaining thawab (Tirmidhi, Janaiz, 1); of course, the agony of death will not be in vain. Umar, who comprehended that truth, said: "If something from a believer's sins he committed in life still remains – after repentance – Allah makes the agony of death severe for him. Eventually, his soul enters Heaven. And if an infidel did something good in life, Allah makes the agony of death easy for him, as remuneration for his good deeds, and sends him to Hell as he took the remuneration of his good deeds in life."
3. **Last trial.** The reason why they suffer at the time of death is testing and trying. Of course, they will get their remuneration eventually.
4. **Beginning of Punishment.** There are people whose agony of death is harsh because it is the beginning of their punishment; they are unbelievers and cruel, unfair people who have not had the honor of believing in life and always occupied themselves with evil deeds. The Quran depicts their state as follows: "the angels stretch forth their hands, (saying), "Yield up your souls: this day shall ye receive your reward, - a penalty of shame, for that ye used to tell lies against God, and scornfully to reject of His signs!" (al-An'am 6:93). The verse states that unbelievers and cruel, unfair people will suffer while dying. "Angels' stretching forth their hands" as stated in the verse means their beating them, which was sent down for idolaters who attended the Battle of Badr, yet its judgment is for all infidels as it can be seen clearly in the following verse: "If you could see, when the angels take the souls of the Unbelievers (at death), (How) they smite their faces and their backs, (saying): "Taste the penalty of the blazing Fire!" (al-Anfal 8:50).

What to Do in Time of Sakarāt al-Maut?

1. **Tawbah (Repentance):** Tawbah is accepted anytime even minutes before death. One must turn to Almighty Allah with *Ikhlas* and beg for forgiveness.
2. **Sadaqah (Charity):** Sadaqah expiates sins. “Charity extinguishes sinful deeds just as water extinguishes fire.”
3. **Du’a/Munajat:** Yusuf ‘alayh al-salam’s du’a, “O my Lord!...You are my Protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Let me die as one who has surrendered to You and unite me with the righteous. (Yusuf 12:101)

أَنْتَ وَلِيٌّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ طَوَّقْنِي مُسْلِمًا وَالْحَقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

Prophet’s dua upon death, “O Allah forgive Abu Salamah (substitute the name of the person) and raise his degrees with those who are guided, and replace those whom he has left behind (with benefits), and forgive us and him O Lord of worlds. Make his grave wide for him, and light it for him.” (Muslim, 2080)

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4. **Talqīn of Shahādah (Testimony of Faith):** Our Prophet advised, “Prompt your dying people to say, La ilaha illal-lah.” This is known as talqīn. If the dying person can speak, encourage them to recite the shahadah.

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم * لقنوا موتاكم لا إله إلا الله (رواه مسلم)

Moisten the lips, face and throat with water, so they can pronounce easily. Talqin should be gentle, not harsh and not with anger.

4. **Pray for the Dying Person:** Relatives and visitors should pray for the person. Pray for forgiveness, mercy, and Jannah. Only say good words. *“If you approach the sick or dead person, then only say good, as the angels are saying Ameen to whatever you say” (Muslim, 2079)*

5. **Surah Yasin:** It eases the pain of the dying person.

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : « اقرءوا على موتاكم يس » (رواه ابن حبان)

4. **Will and Testament**

5. **Wasiyah for charity:** Not exceeding one-third of his property.

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9. **Debts:** Family members should ensure that the dying person is debt free. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "A believer's soul remains in suspense until all his debts are paid off." The debt should be paid out of the property that he/she leaves behind. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "If anyone takes other people's money with the intention to repay it and then he or she should die without settling the debt (unable to pay it), God will pay the debt on his behalf. And if anyone takes money or property (of others) with the intention of destroying it (intending not to pay), God will destroy him." Death by itself does not annul one's debt or other responsibilities to the living. The survivors may pay the debt of their deceased from their own pocket and if they are poor the debt may be paid by the public out of the zakah (compulsory charity) funds specified as the portion for people in debt. This is one of the prescribed categories of zakah recipients.

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10. Forgiveness: If the dying person wronged anyone, he/she must ask for their forgiveness before departing this world, otherwise those who were wronged will demand justice on the Day of Judgment and the dying person may be setting himself up for disaster.

11. Husn al-Zann with Almighty Allah: Encourage the dying to have good zann (prasangka baik) with Almighty Allah. Remind them to have more hope than fear. “The Prophet (peace be upon him) entered on a young person dying, and said “how do you find yourself?” he said “I seek hope from Allah, and I fear my sins O Messenger of Allah,” so the Prophet peace be upon him said “They are not combined in the heart of a believing slave at this time except that Allah gives him what he wants and protects him from what he fears” (Ibn Majah, 4231) It is natural to fear in this moment, but fear should not overcome the hope on Allah. Remind them of this hadith:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي (رواه البخاري ومسلم)