

BURZUKH

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Material Progress

They say that the contemporary world has made tremendous progress. Modern fields of learning have revolutionized every aspect of life and man's knowledge in the arts and the sciences is increasing at an astonishing rate. It is claimed that man's remarkable achievements have provided him with every luxury and comfort to the extent of his total satisfaction.

At this point, however, I do not intend to debate the authenticity of man's belief in his material progress, nor do I propose to discuss the scientific advancements he has made through centuries of research and experiment. Instead, I intend to play a different tune altogether.

Travelling a Different Path

I spread before them a different banquet and invite those people--completely captivated by the world, fallen prey to its deceptions, intoxicated by its material pleasures and having made this world their final end--to try a change of taste. I offer them a vehicle that will take them on a completely new journey. I wish to proclaim out loud the words of Allah:

"O my People! This life of the present is nothing but (temporary) convenience: it is the Hereafter that is the Home that will last." (Sura Al-Momin, Section 5, Ayat 39).

Far-sightedness

Loud and clear, I wish to repeatedly call out to these people. Do not be deceived! Come out of your state of heedlessness! Do not be totally content with your present condition! Do not sacrifice your future for your present comforts! Rather, open your eyes and look in front of you. If you cannot see afar, take the aid of telescopic lenses to look into the distance. But look, for God's sake, look ahead of you and see where you are going!

You, and this entire world with you are on a single path. All of you are advancing in a particular direction, towards a certain goal. See where you are going. Every sensible person looks ahead of him to see where he is going. Every sighted person makes use of his eyes to see which direction he is proceeding in. Even a blind person seeks help from the sighted or relies on a walking stick to aid him. What then, is the matter with you that you do not remove this blinding veil from your eyes?

You advise your children not to waste time in play, but instead, to learn, to gain knowledge and to develop capabilities whereby the future can be spent in comfort and with dignity. You advise your youth against wilting away their youthfulness in fun and sport. You teach them to avoid bad habits that deplete one's physical and financial resources. You guide them to take care of their health so that they are be physically fit in old age; to avoid being extravagant; and, to save money for old age, when they will no longer be able to earn. You advise them to plan for old age.

You give your children and youth such sound advice. But how astounding it is that you do not heed your own advice! You counsel others not to lose sight of their future and their goals; and yet, you do not keep your own future in sight. What! Can you not see your own future? How then, can you advise others to plan for theirs?

Your vision is limited to old age. You cannot see, nor do you wish to see beyond this. Surely, you know that there exists something beyond old age--a certain and powerful something against which you are helpless; the certainty of which is greater than the certainty of youth is for children, and old age is for the young.

Death

This certainty is death. Death, which destroys your happiness and completely erases your pleasures. You see with your own eyes that death comes, and, in fact that it does not discriminate between nations and religions or between the highly placed and the lowly. It comes in all its ruling grandeur and when it does, not all the powers in the world can stop it. Neither the doctor nor the philosopher, neither the wise nor the intelligentsia, in spite of all their knowledge and wisdom can delay its arrival by a split moment.

"To every People is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation)." (Sura Al-Araf, Section 4, Ayat 34)

You witness also that death comes in every place, during every season, and at every age. Moreover, experience has proved that death comes more in youth than in old age, more in boyhood than in youth, and more in childhood than in boyhood.

"Wherever ye are, Death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" (Sura Al-Nisa, Section 11, Ayat 78)

Although you witness this certainty, you do not wish to think of it, hear of it or even talk about it.

"They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder clap, the while they are in terror of death." (Sura Al-Baqarah, Section 2, Ayat 19)

I, however, would like to talk to you for a short while about death. I wish to have you participate in the thoughts of its bitterness and pleasure, and to share with you a glimpse of that which is a certainty for each one of you.

Impermanence of the World

If you are desirous of hearing what I have to say and of deriving beneficial pleasure from it, then for a short while, put aside the alluring attractions of this world. Join me briefly in viewing worldly pleasures as temporary. Look contemptuously upon the charms and deception of this mortal abode and contemplate the warning in these words of Allah:

"Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude; how rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah). And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?" (Sura Hadid, Section 3, Ayat 20)

Meditate upon the admonishment of your true Lord and ponder the transiency of this world. Imagine yourself facing death and turn your attention towards it, because the wonders that I want you to enjoy, and the path on which I would like to lead you, begin at the threshold of death--the threshold that every human being, great or small, special or ordinary must cross. "Kullo Nafsin Zaiqa-at-almaut," (All living things must taste death). No one can avoid it. It is one of the obvious, self-evident facts that none can deny, regardless of his faith or religion.

The Meaning of Death

The only dispute is the true meaning of death. For some, it is the bugle that heralds the beginning of a new life; a change in state. But there are others--and these are in majority today--who deceive themselves into believing that death is the final end; that it terminates all mental, physical and emotional faculties. There is no life after death, they say.

"And they (sometimes) say: 'there is nothing except our life on this earth, and never shall we be raised up again.'" (Sura Al-Anam, Section 3, Ayat 29).

The understanding of the latter category reaches a certain limit and stops there although they think their knowledge is at the peak of perfection. Their knowledge falls short at the boundaries of understanding and simply because they fail to comprehend something, believe that it cannot possibly exist. Their limited understanding appears unlimited to them, and, despite their restricted vision they are convinced that nothing in the universe is hidden from them. As a result of false pride, such people draw a definite line between what is possible and what is not. Since life after death is beyond their comprehension, they incorrectly conclude that it is impossible and end up becoming total disbelievers.

"...and were deceived by the life of the world." (Sura Al-Araf, Section 6, Ayat 51)

It is concerning these people that Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, has said:

"They know but the outer (things) in the life of this world: but of the end of things they are heedless." (Sura Al-Rum, Section 1, Ayat 7).

Who are my Audience?

These pages are not addressed to people who idolize their inadequate knowledge and whose belief is based on personal weak assumptions. I do not wish to dispute with the materialistic atheist, for I have not the strength to argue with those about whom the Omnipotent Supreme One has said:

"Even if We did send unto them angels, and the dead did speak unto them, and We gathered together all things before their very eyes, they are not the ones to believe, unless it is in Allah's Plan. But most of them ignore (the truth)." (Sura Al-Anam, Section 14, Ayat 111).

Furthermore:

"If there were a Quran with which mountains were moved, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak (this would be the one!)." (Sura Al-Rad, Section 4, Ayat 31)

And again:

"Even if We opened out to them a gate from heaven, and they were to continue (all day) ascending therein, they would only say: 'our eyes have been intoxicated. Nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery.'" (Sura Al-Hijr, Section 1, Ayat 14).

My words are not directed at people about whom the Quran says:

"In their hearts is a disease, and Allah has increased their disease." (Sura Al-Baqarah, Section 2, Ayat 10)

I only desire to address those who have humbled themselves before their true Lord, the Creator of everything, the All-Powerful; those who bow before the Master who has made possible that which is impossible. I wish to convey Allah's message only to those of His servants who readily answer the summons of their real Provider, made through His emissary, with "we hear and we accept."

"Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present, and those who heed not Our Signs, their abode is the fire, because of the (evil) they earned." (Sura Al-Yunus, Section 1, Ayats 7 and 8). 1/

So that the believers may develop an immunity to the objections of the critics and be indifferent to the opposition from opponents, I draw their attention to the following words of Allah:

"O ye who believe! Guard your own souls. If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is to Allah: it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do." (Sura Al-Maida, Section 14, Ayat 125).

Need for Discourse

I believe there is a need for this discourse as I can see the termites of universal materialism eating away at the faith of simple muslims. It is shaking the very pillars of their religion and eroding the steadfastness of their faith. There are many among them, who verbally attest to Islam, but whose hearts have not accepted Islam. They cannot believe in anything beyond common scribe and the question of life after death throws them into confusion. The blessings that follow the trials of death perplex them; they are in confusion concerning these things.

Since it is imperative for a true believer (momin) to believe in Burzukh (life after death), I want to guide Muslims and advise them on the truth of Burzukh.

/ According to Ibn Kaseer, this Ayat reveals that one who has the following three signs is destined for hell: (1) who does not fear the Day of Judgement; (2) who loves only this materialistic world; and, (3) who is negligent of Allah's commands.

Knowledge of the delights of Burzukh serves to rejuvenate one's faith and increases a yearning for Allah. I will attempt to explain this, in simple language, on the following pages.

An Example

Have you ever had the opportunity to visit a different city? One that is renowned for its charm and glamour, its beautiful sites and innumerable recreational facilities? A city where the inhabitants are kind and hospitable? A place that offers a variety of culinary delicacies, fresh and delicious fruits; where the very air is exhilarating?

Before embarking on a journey to such a destination, what would you do? You would probably make extensive enquiries about the place in order to familiarize yourself with it. You would plan to take with you everything that you think you may need in order to settle down comfortably and avail maximum enjoyment once you are there. You may try to obtain a letter of introduction to someone there so that upon arrival, you have an acquaintance who would help ease your rehabilitation. And the more you learn about your exciting destination, the more eager you are to reach it.

Being well prepared, upon reaching this new place you find yourself quite at home. You begin to enjoy its fascinating attractions and, in fact become so totally immersed in its ways, that you don't even think of home. And if you do, there is no feeling of anxiety or restlessness.

Contrarily, suppose that you are quite happy in your present location but that, under the orders of a superior and against your wishes, you are compelled to relocate to a place that, however alluring to others, doesn't interest you. Such a transfer would be most distressful and every moment spent in your new location would be unbearable and could seem like a lifetime. Your despondency and apprehension, your desperate yearning for familiar grounds makes you wish you could take wings and fly home instantly. But then you realize that even this is not possible. Your superior commands that you have to stay. Living becomes more difficult than dying and though you may want to kill yourself, you realize that even this will not allow you to return home. You constantly suffer the grief of separation.

Such is the condition in Burzukh. If you have taken interest in, and familiarized yourself with the delights of Burzukh you will find yourself losing

interest in this temporary worldly sojourn and eagerly looking forward to Burzukh. On the other hand, if you have not acquired any familiarity with life after death and are completely engrossed in the affairs of this world, in Burzukh you will face regret, shame, anxiety, restlessness and considerable torment.

By providing you with a brief glimpse of Burzukh on the following pages, I will attempt to incite you to its fascinating world.

Terms and Conditions of Belief

A person cannot be a believer until he believes in the Quran in its entirety. Believing in some parts of the Quran and disbelieving in others is a sign of blasphemy.

Open the Quran-e-Majid and read the beginning words of the Sura which immediately follows Sura-e-Fatiha:

"Alif Lam Mim. This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah; who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; and who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true guidance) from their Lord and it is these who will prosper." (Sura Al-Baqarah, Section 1, Ayats 1,2,3,4, and 5).

The qualities of the believer, of the God fearing, and of those who are on the right path have been clearly defined in the above Ayats. Included among those qualities and categorically stated as being an essential one, is firm belief in the Hereafter.

A Hadith is reported from Hazrat Omer (rd) that the people of Paradise are those who have been mentioned between "Alif Lam Mim" and "Humul Muflihoon." Ibn Kaseer, in his detailed explanation of "Bil Akhirat-e-hum Yuqinoon," states that the Hereafter encompasses apostleship, judgement, heaven and hell, and accountability.

Following these Ayats, Allah, The Most Exalted speaks of those who have gone astray:

"Of the people, there are some who say: 'We believe in Allah and the Last day;' but they do not (really believe)." (Sura Al-Baqarah, Section 2, Ayat 18)

Of such people, Allah says that they deceive Allah and the believers; however, their deception boomerangs, even if they may be unaware of this. This condition is called 'sickness of the heart,' and Allah has served notice of a painful torment to those with diseased hearts. This is a chastisement for those who give only lip service to the claim of being Muslims, and cannot find it in their hearts to believe in life after death. In the same Sura, Allah, the Almighty says:

"How can ye reject the faith in Allah? Seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return." (Sura Al-Baqarah, Section 3, Ayat 28)

Life after death has been mentioned with such clarity and eloquence!

In yet another Ayat, Allah, the Most Pure and Exalted says:

"There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have We omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end." (Sura Al-Anam, Section 4, Ayat 38)

This Ayat confirms that besides mankind, birds and beasts will also be resurrected. The following words of Allah reaffirm this, "...when the wild beasts are herded together (in human habitations)..." (Sura Takwir, Ayat 5).

In Sura Al-Anam, Allah says:

"Nor follow thou the vain desires of such as treat Our Signs as falsehoods, and such as believe not in the Hereafter: for they hold others as equal with their Guardian Lord." (Sura Al-Anam, Section 18, Ayat 150)

According to this verse, no distinction has been made between the disbelievers and the idolaters; thus, one who worships other gods and one who does not believe in the Hereafter, are equal in their paganism.

In Sura Yunus, Allah states:

"One day, He will gather them together. (It will be) as if they had tarried but an hour of a day: they will recognize each other. Assuredly those will be lost who denied the meeting with Allah and refused to receive true guidance." (Sura Yunus, Section 5, Ayat 45).

This Ayat reveals that there will be a life in the Hereafter--a life in which people will have feelings, will recognize one another and will have recollections of their life on earth. The reality of this corporeal life will be disclosed, which in comparison with the Hereafter will seem a mere trifling part of a day. Those who did not expect to encounter the Day (of Judgement) in the Hereafter, will find themselves having gone astray and in great loss.

In Sura Al-Nahl, Allah the Blessed and Most Exalted has reconfirmed reward and punishment.

"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, and life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions." (Sura Al-Nahl, Section 4, Ayat 97)

In Sura Bani Israel, Allah says:

"When thou dost recite the Quran, We put, between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter, a veil invisible. And We put coverings over their hearts (and minds) lest they should understand the Quran, and deafness into their ears." (Sura Bani Israel, Section 5, Ayats 45 and 46)

It is apparent from the above Ayat that disbelieving in the Hereafter results in worldly loss as well. One loses his wits; reasoning is confused; and, one even fails to understand essential matters on which happiness and prosperity depend.

In Sura Al-Muminun, Ayat 74, Allah says: "And verily those who believe not in the Hereafter are deviating from that way." Guidance, in fact, is entirely dependent on belief in life after death.

Sura Al-Naml states:

"As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing in their eyes; and so they wander about in distraction." (Sura Al-Naml, Section 1, Ayat 4)

The same admonition is in this Ayat also, but with an additional penalty for not believing in the Hereafter. That penalty is an unawareness of one's wrong ways and foul deeds, the consequence of which is a lack of desire to change and improve. What can be worse for a sick man than to be totally unaware of his sickness?

The Quran contains in-depth information on life followed by death; on the Day of Judgement and rendering of accounts; on reward and punishment; and on heaven and hell. And belief in all this is a mandatory requirement of faith. If all the material in the Quran on this subject was to be gathered and explained here, the result would be a voluminous compilation.

Furthermore, in Sura Hashr, Ayat 15, Allah commands: "So take what the Messenger assigns to you." According to this directive of Allah's, it is as necessary to believe in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (slm), as it is to accept the words of Allah in the Quran.

The Hadith of the Holy Prophet (slm)

Particularly worthy of mention is the famous Hadith of Gabriel (elsm) as narrated by Bokhari and Muslim. For the education of the muslims, Gabriel (elsm) appeared in human guise before the Holy Prophet (slm) and questioned him on faith (Iman). The Prophet's (slm) response was that faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and evil thereof. This Hadith clearly stipulates that one cannot qualify as a believer without believing in the Hereafter.

In a sense, the very foundation of Islam is based on the next world, and this is repeatedly mentioned in numerous places in the Quran and the Hadith. If understood correctly, one realizes that Islam cannot be Islam without this belief. I am amused at the intelligence level of those people who call themselves Muslims but make light of the Day of Judgment and of man's accountability. Carelessly and with disdain, they laugh at the mention of resurrection and their interpretation of life after death is so ridiculously absurd, that it becomes a distortion of facts and a mutilation of the Islamic viewpoint.

A Muslim must graciously accept all guidance given to him by Allah and the Prophet (slm), so long as he is assured that the source is authentic. Opinion, in comparison with reality, is insufficient.

Removing Doubts

Incapacity of the Intellect

Human intelligence is limited. Even in worldly matters, the prudent and the wise recognize the limitations of their intellectual capabilities. For example, when a person falls ill, his reason acknowledges the need for treatment by a medical expert. In the selection of the doctor, he uses his intelligence and experience. However, once the doctor has been chosen, the patient puts his full trust in the doctor, and does not question the why's, how's and what's of the course of treatment. The patient recognizes that he does not have the medical knowledge required to understand the doctor's treatment.

Similarly, if one has to go to court to fight a case, he uses his intelligence to find a suitable lawyer. Having done this, and recognizing that he has no knowledge of the nuances of the law and legal procedures, he hands over his case to his legal representative.

Yet another example can be found in the field of construction, in which one relies completely on the advice of the engineer. Governments today solicit the advice of specialists in every field and blindly follow their recommendations.

What then, is the matter with people that they break this practice in affairs of religion? If you have understood and accepted that God and His prophets are true; that God's word is the Truth; and that the news given by God is true, then why is there any room for doubt in your hearts? If you fail to understand any of this, why do you not attribute your failure to the shortcomings of your own intellect?

Belief in the Unseen

Take the example of acquiring an education. In the primary stages of learning, many of the facts stated by the teacher are beyond your understanding and being a novice, you do not have the evidence or knowledge to verify or refute his teachings. However, due to your relationship with your teacher--a relationship based on trust--you accept and learn what he teaches as being correct. It is only as you progress and start gaining a better understanding of the subject, that you become aware of your intellectual inability to have fully comprehended the matter in the initial stages of your education.

Consider when you start learning tables in arithmetic. In the beginning, you cannot understand what is meant by $8 \times 2 = 16$ and $16 \times 2 = 32$. Upon the instructions of your teacher, you blindly believe in and learn the rules of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. You memorize the tables without fully comprehending them. As your knowledge of arithmetic increases, you gain greater clarity in understanding. In spite of this, you may find it difficult to explain the same to a novice. Yet another example is when you are taught the alphabets (in Urdu). What evidence do you have that "alif" is "alif" and "bey" is "bey?" Why do you not argue with your teacher on why "tey" has two dots above and not below and why "ye" has two dots below and not above?

In acquiring knowledge of the temporal world--knowledge which deals with substantive matter--the starting premise is belief in the unseen. How then, do you expect to succeed in acquiring religious knowledge--knowledge which concerns the spiritual realm--without having faith in the unseen?

Further Assurance

As reassurance for those who have faith in the unseen, in the words of God, and in the message conveyed by His Prophet (slm), I present further evidence on the basis of which one can intellectually deduce that life after death is not impossible.

During the time that the Quran was being revealed, pagan Arabia viewed the concept of life after death with great astonishment and wonder. They questioned how this could be. Allah, the Supreme replied that is not possible for God, who created man the first time, to create him again?

"Were We then weary with the first Creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new Creation?" (Sura Al-Qaf, Section 1, Ayat 15)

Actually, these people doubt the possibility of a new creation, that is, to be given life after dying, although they should realize that creating a thing the second time is much easier than creating it the first time.

"Does Man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)? Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)? Then did he become a clinging clot; then did (Allah) make and fashion (him) in due proportion. And of him He made two sexes, male and female. Has not He (the same), the power to give life to the dead?" (Sura Al- Aiyamah, Section 2, Ayats 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40).

This was further explained to the unbelievers using the following analogy. Do you not see with your own eyes that when the earth dries up, nothing grows from it? Then when it rains, the soil is rejuvenated and new life springs forth from the earth. Does God, who has the power to renew the dead earth, not have the power to bring to life, the dead?

"Then contemplate (O man!) the memorials of Allah's Mercy! How He gives life to the earth after its death; verily the same will give life to the men who are dead: for He has power over all things." (Sura Al-Rum, Section 5, Ayat 50)

For the prudent and the contemplative, this reasoning is more than adequate. However, in the case of the stubborn and the argumentative, even if they were to witness the dead come to life, it would not be enough (to make them believe).

"So leave them alone until they encounter that Day of theirs, wherein they shall (perforce) swoon (with terror)." (Sura Al-Tur, Section 2, Ayat 45)

Tell them only this:

"The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you (from the more serious things), until ye visit the graves. But nay, ye soon shall know (the reality). Again, ye soon shall know!" (Sura Al-Takathur, Ayats 1,2,3 and 4)

Objections

Undoubtedly, the criticisms and objections raised by the opponents of Islam create uncertainty in the minds of superstitious and ignorant muslims. In order to provide further reassurance to such muslims, I would like to draw their attention to certain points.

The protestors' argument is as follows. When we open the graves, we cannot see the angels striking the dead with iron rods, neither do we see the snakes and scorpions, nor do we feel the flames of fire. The corpse appears unmoved and the grave remains unchanged. As far as the eye can see, the grave has not expanded, nor has it contracted so tightly as to crush the ribs of the dead. We further notice, in the case of a person who has been put to death by hanging, that the body remains stationary. It does not move, is not engulfed in flames, nor can we see the deceased being questioned by Munkir and Nakir (the angels).

When someone is killed, for example, by a lion, a vulture or by a poisonous snake, a part of the body is devoured and eaten by the predator; a part is dispersed

in the air. How then, can the dispersed parts be held accountable? How can one even imagine that the angels would question such a person? How can one conceive that the grave of such a person can become a piece of heaven or the pit of hell?

An Answer

Objections such as these cause the disbelievers to be misled and further perplex the weak and wavering Muslim. However, the steadfast believers are not dissuaded by such thinking. Not only do they believe in death and resurrection and that which follows as being possible, but they have total faith in it and with certainty of heart and mind, verbalize their belief.

The Soul (Ruh)

In order to understand the affairs of Burzukh--which are related to spirituality--man's heart first desires to gain knowledge of the soul. However, since matters relating to the soul are of a difficult and subtle nature, the common man does not possess the ability to fully comprehend it.

In order to test the Holy Prophet's (slm) knowledge of spirituality, the Jews questioned him on the soul. Allah revealed the following Ayat:

"Say: 'the Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord, of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!).'" (Sura Bani Israel, Section 10, Ayat 85)

The fact is that knowledge of the soul cannot be explained either through speech or written word; it has to be sensed. 1/ For example, one cannot make a person who is born blind comprehend color by describing it, or convey the exact taste of something to a person who has never tasted it. Similarly, it is impossible to explain the reality of the soul. Just as true understanding of color comes by seeing it and the correct flavor by tasting it, so the condition of the soul can only be understood by personally experiencing it. Advice to those who desire true knowledge of the soul is this: develop the ability to see, and witness for yourself; taste and determine the flavor!

With the intention of simplifying the meaning of life after death as best as possible, I enumerate the following points, a thorough comprehension of which will remove any mental obstacles that may exist in man's understanding of the same.

/ Sense in this context implies comprehension and not sensory perception.

The Temporal Eye and Ear

The human eye and its purpose, that is sight, is a gift from God and God has limited its range. This temporal eye is unable to witness or experience matters relating to the world of angels and what happens to man after death concerns the domain of angels. Affairs of the angels are constantly occurring in the corporeal world as well; however, the temporal eye is incapable of witnessing these and of understanding them except to the extent that Allah permits. Such also is the condition of the temporal ear.

Bukhari and Muslim narrate from Hazrat Ibn Abbas (rd), that for seven continuous years preceding the Divine revelations, the Holy Prophet (slm) could see various kinds of lights and hear a particular voice although people around him could neither see the luster nor hear the sound.

After the commencement of the Quranic revelations, Hazrat Jibrail (elsm) would visit the Holy Prophet (slm) in the presence of his companions. He would reveal and teach God's messages to the Prophet (slm); hear the recitation of the Quran from him; and, converse with him. None of the companions, although physically present, could see or hear any of this.

On some occasions, the descent of a Divine revelation was accompanied by the sound of bells ringing. Such revelations proved to be the most difficult for the Holy Prophet (slm) to bear. According to a tradition of Hazrat Ayesha (d), Haris Bin Hisham questioned the Holy Prophet (slm) on revelations. The Holy Prophet's (slm) response was that sometimes a revelation is accompanied by the sound of bells and this kind is the most difficult to bear (Bukhari and Muslim). However, the sound of this bell was not heard by the others present. You, yourselves have angels appointed to you. They are around you, protect you and record your deeds, but you cannot see them.

"For each (such person) there are (angels) in succession. Before and behind him: they guard him by command of Allah." (Sura Al-Rad, Section 2, Ayat 11).

"Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings). Learn (and note them), are sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it)." (Sura Al-Qaf, Section 2, Ayats 17 and 18).

You also cannot see or hear the jinns, although they are in close proximity to you and converse with one another in your presence. Similarly, Satan, your worst

enemy, is beside you creating mischief and tempting you to stray. He sees you, but you cannot see him.

"...for he and his tribe watch you from a position where ye cannot see them." (Sura Al-Araf, Section 3, Ayat 27).

Even in the material world, your scope of vision is limited to that which God allows you to see. At times, God makes a thing appear greater than it really is and at other times, He makes it appear lesser. For example, in the battle of Badr, the purpose of Allah deemed it necessary to make the muslims view the infidel's army to be smaller than it actually was and also made the Muslim army appear lesser in number to the infidels.

"And remember when ye met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes: that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted. For to Allah do all questions go back (for decision)." (Sura Al Anfal, Section 5, Ayat 44).

The ability of the eye to see is a God-given gift, and God at His Will permits man to make use of this gift. Why then, is it astonishing that He has concealed life in the grave from you? Just as you are unable to behold the angels, the jinns, and the devils, similarly you cannot see the snakes and scorpions that torture the corpse in the grave. If you disbelieve in punishment in the grave simply on the basis that it is not visible to you, by the same token therefore, you cannot believe in angels and divine revelation. As a result, Islam cannot find a place in your heart. That He has veiled the spiritual world from the world of substance, is Allah's infinite wisdom and a great blessing upon man, for the temporal heart and mind would not have the strength to endure the vision and experiences of the spiritual world.

When the spiritual world was unveiled and the condition of Burzukh revealed to some people, they could not tolerate it. Some were overwhelmed by fear, others became unconscious, and yet others passed away. Those who struggled hard to understand the angelic world and established a connection with it developed the strength to tolerate it. God revealed to them the conditions of Burzukh according to their level of endurance. Such revelations have been discussed later.

Dreams

Focus now on another aspect of this topic. When someone amidst you falls asleep and dreams, he senses himself in the dream to be walking, talking, eating,

drinking, happy, sad, etc. However, you, as an observer cannot participate in the experience of his dream--you only see the person sleeping. Even when the dream is narrated to you, the events are unreal, and you may attribute the dream to an over-active imagination. But the one who has dreamt is as affected by the events in his dream as you are by wakeful, real-life events. In fact the happy feeling resulting from a pleasurable dream can last for days and sometimes even weeks. A nightmare, on the other hand, can cause one to shout and tremble and turn pale with fear. The pain and anxiety caused by a nightmare is not diminished by the fact that it is only a nightmare. When your inability to see and understand another person's dream has no affect on that person's dream experiences, then how can your limited vision have any impact on what occurs with the dead in the grave? Just as you cannot deny the reality of a person's dream on the grounds that you are physically incapable of seeing it, how can you dare deny the experiences of those in the graves--experiences that have been transmitted to us by the Holy Prophet (slm).

Know that the sight of the temporal eyes can only see certain events of the physical world and even that, within limited parameters. A different vision is required to see and experience the events of the angelic world, and as mentioned above, that which takes place with the dead belongs to the kingdom of angels. The shrinking and expansion of the grave; its brightness or its gloom; its snakes and its scorpions; and its blessings and torments are all of the sphere of angels. What happens within the grave can and does also occur outside of it; however, you cannot see these manifestations. For those of the physical world, matters of the spiritual world are virtually unbelievable and non-existent.

Similarly, the physical restrictions of the tangible world do not exist for those of the spiritual realm and hence, they are not affected by these. Physical barriers such as rocks, stones, roofs and walls are not an obstacle for the celestial beings just as the atmosphere does not create a barricade for creatures that fly. The angels travel through these with complete ease. To illustrate, consider what happens in a dream. The physical restrictions that surround the dreamer (e.g., the four walls of the room in which he sleeps; its closed door; the blanket that covers him; and the time that he sleeps) do not restrict the activities in the dream (e.g., talking, laughing, eating, drinking, movement, travel through valleys, jungles, mountains, highlands, lowlands, etc.). In the same manner, nothing of this physical world obstructs or interferes with the activities in the realm of angels.

Those who think that dreams are a result of imaginative thought should not misunderstand and wrongly conclude that the affairs of Burzukh and of the domain of angels are also a figment of the imagination. I will not discuss the

reality of dreams here and will briefly touch on this subject at a later stage. At this point, it is sufficient to say that, in spite of believing a dream to be a flight of imagination, no one would like to find himself entrapped in an eternal nightmare from which he is powerless to awaken!

Distinctions Between the Corporeal and the Spiritual Worlds

Understand well that the spiritual world is totally different from the corporeal one. Simply because certain activities are not possible for creatures of the physical world does not necessarily mean that they are impossible for inhabitants of the spiritual world. For instance, it is impossible for a person to be physically present in more than one place at a given time; however, the soul is not confined by such restriction. During his spiritual ascension (*mairaj*), the Holy Prophet (slm) observed Hazrat Mussa (eslm) performing prayers in his grave and also met with him in the sixth heaven. Abu Yala, Behaqi, and Ibn Munda have narrated from Hazrat Anas (rd) that the Holy Prophet (slm) stated that during his spiritual journey, he found the prophets alive and praying in their graves, and in spite of this, he also met a number of them in the different heavens. The reason for this is that the soul is not a thing of substance. To compare something insubstantial (which is concealed from your vision and of the nature of which you have no knowledge) with something substantial (which you can see) is wrong. It is self deception.

To liken the qualities and attributes of things of the spiritual world with those of the physical world is incorrect. To exemplify, when it is said that sugar is sweet, you correctly assume that the properties of sugar are sweet. However, when reference is made to a conversation or words as "being sweet," you realize the difference and understand what is meant, even though the physical qualities of sugar are not present. In the same manner, when further in this treatise it is said that the soul's contact with the body remains after death, you need to comprehend that contact exists, but not in the sense of the physical realm.

Relationship Between the Soul and the Body

The human soul has four different relationships with the human body. Each relationship is different from the other, is unique in itself, and is based on specific attributes and laws.

1. The first of these is that connection which the soul has with the fetus in the mother's womb.

2. The second is that which the soul has with the body from the moment it leaves the mother's womb and is born into this world until it is in the arms of the grave. Its attributes and the laws governing it are quite different from those of the first stage.

3. The third link--an extraordinary one--is that which the soul has with the body in Burzukh (the period between burial and resurrection). Death, on the one hand, is the cause for the separation of the soul from the body, and on the other, creates a new relationship between the two. This connection is totally different from the first two and, being quite difficult to conceive, it is incorrect to liken it to the relationship that the body and soul have in this world.

4. The fourth is that which the soul will have with the body on resurrection. This relationship is a distinct, absolutely complete, and a perfected one. It will produce a condition in which death is impossible. To illustrate, in spite of the extreme torment that the inhabitants of hell undergo, they cannot die. If even an atom of that torment were inflicted on people in this world, death would be certain. It will be as impossible to die in that world as it is impossible not to die in this one. The divine laws governing the corporeal world are not applicable to the spiritual one and to form an opinion of the latter based on the order of things in the former, tantamounts to naivety and ignorance.

Conclusion

In contrast to the body, the soul can travel great distances in the twinkling of an eye and at lightening speed. Furthermore, the soul can be in multiple places and absorbed in different activities simultaneously. It hears and responds to the salutations of those who visit its grave, and at the same time, remains engrossed in the activities of Burzukh. It can be in the presence of Allah and enjoy the pleasures of paradise whilst being aware of the goings-on in the physical world. How can you possibly deny that the soul is capable of all this simply on the basis that the body is not?

If you were to fully comprehend these few points, as you grasped a few basics when acquiring worldly knowledge (e.g., tables, multiplication, division, the definition of a Euclidian point, etc.), then understanding the Hadiths and the various experiences and sayings of the saints, which appear on the following pages, will become easier. These may appear contradictory and may cause some confusion in the mind of someone who formulates an opinion of the invisible world based on his comprehension of the visible one.

An Introduction to Death

Reality of Death

Religious scholars unanimously agree that death is neither a total extinction nor a mere nothingness. Rather, it is the transformation of a state; a severing of that connection which the soul has with the body in this world; a passing away from one abode to another. Since it is an atonement for their sins and an end to their problems, it is a joy and an award for the believers.

In "*Thya-al-uloom*," Imam Ghazzali states that the fact that the soul, after leaving the body, is either in anguish or at rest proves that death is only a transformation of a state. This is substantiated by Quranic Ayats and the Hadith.

The separation of the soul from the body means the termination of its control on the body which ceases to be its vehicle of transport and is no longer able to obey it. Bodily organs (e.g., hands, mouth, ears, eyes, etc.) are instruments of the soul which do as it bids. The soul listens with the ears, sees with the eyes, etc. It comprehends realities however, with the heart (in this context, heart implies the soul). The soul learns the fact of matters independent of the body (that is, in sorrow it feels pain; upon receiving good news, it feels joy). These qualities of the soul are imperishable and are not dependent on the body. Hence, after death the soul retains these characteristics. Its knowledge and perception, its ability to feel pleasure and pain do not die. Only that understanding, which is dependent on the bodily organs (i.e., physical tools), ends at death and resumes when the soul re-enters the body. And its return to the body in the grave or on the Day of Resurrection is neither difficult nor impossible.

There are two aspects of transformation in the condition of the soul which occur after death.

! First, it is deprived of all its physical parts (eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet). In addition, its family, spouse and children, close associates, and all its worldly belongings (horse and carriage, servants, property and riches) are taken away. At this stage, it is immaterial whether its possessions are removed from it or it from them; whether it is robbed of its assets or is itself imprisoned (and therefore, has no access to its belongings). What proves painful is the separation and, in either case, the result is separation. The grief in both situations is the same.

Death is like this. A person is removed from all his worldly goods and dependents and is transported to a world which bears no resemblance to his world. The separation from anything or anyone to which he was closely attached will cause severe pain and he will find himself yearning for the same. His desire for all that he left behind (his home and belongings) will be so strong that even a particular shirt which he enjoyed wearing will be greatly missed and its loss deeply regretted.

If, however, he had found no pleasure in anything besides God's remembrance and was detached from all but God, death will bring immense peace. All obstacles and impediments between him and the Beloved (God) will be removed and he will find himself enjoying the privacy of God's company. Worldliness, a hinderance to the remembrance of God, will be annihilated.

! The second aspect of the transformation is that death reveals what was not disclosed during life. Life can be compared with sleep and death with awakening. The awareness one experiences when one is awake is not experienced whilst sleeping. In the physical world, man is as though in a state of sleep. When he dies, and awakens, he will be able to see all that he could not earlier.

Before Death

When man is close to death, much before his soul is seized, he establishes contact with the world of angels. His vision is broadened to encompass affairs of the spiritual world which are normally hidden from him in the physical world.

In his book, "*Al-Momineen*," Ibn Abi Addanya narrates the following from Hazrat Amir Al Momineen, Omer (rd). "Be in the presence of the dying and learn from them for they can see that which you cannot." In "*Sanam*," Saeed bin Mansoor narrates from Hazrat Omer (rd): "Instruct those who are on their death bed to recite the Qalma 1/ and understand what you hear from them. Surely, the truth of affairs is manifest upon them."

Once the decree to seize a soul is passed, the angels immediately surround the dying person and, as far as the eye can see, he beholds only angels. He can no longer see even his family and friends, although he appears to be looking at them and at all who are around him.

/ The muslim proclamation of faith, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is the messenger of God."

Muslim, narrating from Abu Hurraira (rd) states that the Holy Prophet (slm) questioned his companions as follows: "Have you not seen that when a man is near death, his eyes are raised upwards?" The companions responded, "Yes." The Prophet (slm) continued, "That is the time when he is witnessing what is being meted out to his soul." Ibn Maja narrates from Abu Musa (rd) that when he questioned the Holy Prophet (slm) on when it is that a man's ability to recognize his people ends, the Prophet (slm) answered, "When he beholds." Qurtabi (rh) further expounded: "It is when he beholds the angels and their world that the door to acceptance of his repentance is closed."

"Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil, until Death faces one of them, and he says, 'Now have I repented indeed;'" (Sura Al-Nisa, Section 3, Ayat 18).

According to Qurtabi (rh), the devil appears to the dying person in the semblance of his father, advising him to become a jew. A second devil appears in the guise of his mother, suggesting he become a christian. Qurtabi (rh) also narrates the following important tradition in the same chapter. Abdullah bin Ahmad observed that the condition of his father, Ahmad bin Hambal, when he was on his deathbed, was vacillating between intense perspiration and the abating thereof. His father was making signs with his hand as though to say "Do not return, do not return." He enquired of his father "What is it that you can see?" His father answered, "I see the devil standing before me, biting his fingers and lamenting, 'O Ahmad, I have lost you.' I am telling him not to come here till I have passed away."

According to Ibn Abi Sheba, Ibn Abi Addunya, and Ibn Munda, in explanation, Dahak (rd) quoted the following Ayat:

"For them are glad tidings, in the life of the Present and in the Hereafter." (Sura Yunus, Section 7, Ayat 64).

He further expounds that man becomes aware of his destination before dying. Hazrat Amir Al Momineen Ali Ibn Abu Talib states that a soul is forbidden to leave this world before knowing its destination.

"In the case of those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time). 'Fear ye not!' (they suggest), 'Nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of the Garden (of bliss), that which ye were promised!'" (Sura Ha Mim, Section 4, Ayat 30).

In explanation of this Ayat, Behqi quotes Mujahid (rd) that this good news is given when death is at hand. Sufyan (rd) states that good news is given on three occasions: (i) when death is upon a person; (ii) when arising from the grave; and (iii) at judgement (qayamat), when one is awe-stricken. Furthermore, it is said that when the good news that he is destined for heaven is imparted to someone, an angel places a hand over the person's heart to prevent it from popping out with joy.

Ibn Masud (rd) states that when it is time to take a virtuous soul, Allah commands the angel of death to convey His salaam 1/ to His servant. Upon receiving his Lord's salaam, the soul departs from the body. Behqi, in his book, "*Sha-ab Al Iman*," cites Bara Bin Azab's (rd) explanation of Sura Al Ahza, Section 6, Ayat 44, "*Their salutation on the Day they meet Him will be, 'Peace!'*" There is no believer whose soul will be taken before the salaam from his Lord is conveyed by the angel of death.

The Agonies of Death

Everyone normally suffers the agonies of death, albeit in varying degrees.

"If thou couldst but see how the wicked (do fare) in the flood of confusion at death! 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 Allah, and scornfully to reject of His signs!'"
(Sura Al-An'am, Section 11, Ayat 93).

A believer also undergoes death's anguish although comparatively less than a disbeliever. The pain experienced by the believer becomes an atonement for his sins, in lieu of which Allah accepts his penitence and erases the burden of his sins before admitting him into the Divine Presence. A degree of pain precedes death in order that a person may achieve expiation for his sins. In the event that this pain and suffering is not enough to achieve atonement, a lengthy terminal illness may occur providing the opportunity for forgiveness of sins. In the event that a person is spared the above, the agony of death compensates. At other times, it may be Allah's Will to exalt a person's status for which he has to undergo suffering.

It is said that our Prophet, Huzoor Sayyed Al Mursaleen Khatimul Nabeen Ahmed Mujtaba Mohammed Mustafa (slm) suffered intensely on his deathbed. One reason for this was the further elevation of his status. A second reason was to prevent the followers of the Prophet (slm) from forming conclusions about a

/ The muslim greeting meaning peace.

person's spiritual status (prosperity or misfortune thereof) and from looking down upon the agony of death.

Ibada bin Saamat narrates the following tradition of the Holy Prophet (slm): "Whosoever holds dearly the meeting with Allah, Allah also holds dear meeting with him," (Muslim and Bukhari). Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqa (rd) said to the Holy Prophet (slm) that we look upon death unhappily. He commented "This is not so. When death is upon a believer and he is given good news of Allah's magnanimity and pleasure, there is nothing dearer to him than that which awaits him. He dearly looks forward to his meeting with Allah just as Allah holds dear, meeting him. However, when death is upon a disbeliever (*kafir*) and he is given news of Allah's wrath and punishment, there is nothing he despises more than that which awaits him. He does not look forward to meeting Allah just as Allah dislikes meeting him.

From Death Until Burial

Barae Bin Aazeb (rd) states 1/ that they attended the funeral of an *Ansar* in the company of the Holy Prophet (slm). The corpse had not yet been lowered into the grave when the Holy Prophet (slm) sat down by it. We sat around him with heads bent (as though there were birds on our heads). The Prophet (slm) had a stick in his hand with which he was scratching the earth in a sad and anxious manner. Then, lifting his head, he repeated the following words three times: "*Take refuge in Allah from the punishment of the grave.*" He continued to say that at the time of death, when one is ready to sever connections with this world and enjoin ties with the Hereafter, angels, with faces shining as bright as the sun, and carrying a shroud and *hunoot* (aromatic used for embalming the dead) from the heavens, are sent towards him. They surround him and, as far as he can see, he beholds only angels. Then the Angel of Death arrives, sits near his head, and says, "O peaceful soul! Come towards's Allah's peace, mercy and pleasure." Thus, although you may see it differently, the soul leaves the body with the ease of a drop of water slipping out from the mouth of a waterbag. The Angel of Death then takes the soul and passes it on to the surrounding angels who do not leave it alone for a moment. They place it in the heavenly coffin and apply *hunoot* to it; the fragrance emanating from the soul is like the most beautiful of musk found on earth.

/ Narrated by Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud, Hakim Ibn Abi Shaeba, Behqi, Tialisi, Abd bin Hameed, Hanad bin Siri, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim.

Journeying with the soul towards the heavens, each time they pass a group of angels who ask, "Who is this pure soul?" they respond, "He is the son of so-and-so," introducing him by the most complimentary of his earthly names. They transport the soul to the first of the heavens and request that a door be opened for it. The door is opened. The soul proceeds on its journey, ascending through the heavens, enjoined in each heaven by the angels closest to it, until it reaches the seventh heaven. Here, Allah, the Pure and Exalted commands: "Write the book of my servant (his name and his deeds) in the *Illayn* ^{1/} and return him to earth for I have created him from earth and shall return him to the same earth wherefrom I shall resurrect him again."

His soul is returned to his body. Two angels approach him, make him sit up, and question him thus, "Who is your Lord?" He replies, "My Lord is Allah." They ask, "What is your religion?" He answers, "My religion is Islam." They inquire, "Who is this person who was sent amongst you?" He responds, "He is the Holy Prophet (slm)." They ask, "What is your knowledge?" He replies, "I have read the book of Allah, believe in it and testify to it."

Allah then proclaims from heaven, "My servant has spoken the truth! Lay, therefore, a carpet from heaven for him and open unto him a heavenly door." The comfort and fragrance of the Garden reaches him, and as far as his eye can see, his grave is widened. A handsome, well dressed and perfumed person appears to him, saying, "Be pleased with that which gives you pleasure. This is the day which was promised to you." The soul inquires, "Who are you? You bear the countenance of goodness." Upon receiving his answer, "I am your good deeds," the soul prays, "O Lord! Bring forth resurrection so that I may meet my family and friends."

The Holy Prophet (slm) continued to say that undoubtedly, when a disbeliever is in the state of being separated from this world, and his attention is focussed on the Hereafter, angels dressed in black, carrying coarse rags of cloth descend upon him from the heavens. They sit beside him and as far as he can see, he is surrounded by angels. The Angel of Death then arrives, sits near his head and says, "O wretched soul! Come towards Allah's anger and fury." The soul, upon hearing this, disperses throughout the body and the Angel of Death extracts the soul as painfully as wrenching a wet iron skewer from a body. The surrounding angels take the soul, place it in coarse rags and a foul smell, like that of decaying flesh emanates from it.

^{1/} Literally, it means the "high places." It may imply the place where is kept the register of the righteous or the name of the register of good deeds. It contains every detail of the righteous.

Journeying with the soul towards the heavens, each time they pass a group of angels who ask, "Who is this wretched soul?," they answer, "He is so-and-so," and introduce him by the most demeaning of his earthly names. They reach the first heaven and request that a door be opened for him; the door is not opened.

At this point, Rasool (slm) recited the following verse:

"...no opening will there be of the gates of Heaven, nor will they enter the Garden until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle: such is Our reward for those in sin." (Sura Al A'raf, Section 5, Ayat 40).

Allah commands: "Write his book (his name and deeds) in the *Sijjin*, 1/ in the lowest of low order. The soul is then returned to the body, its reentry being excruciatingly painful and difficult.

The Prophet (slm) then prayed the following verse:

"...if anyone assigns partners to Allah, he is as if he had fallen from Heaven and been snatched up by birds, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far distant place." (Sura Al Hajj, Section 4, Ayat 31)

Two angels approach him sit him up and question him thus: "Who is your Lord?" With extreme anxiety, he responds, "'I do not know." They ask, "What is your faith?" He replies in distress, "I do not know." They inquire, "Who is this person who was sent amongst you?" In anguish, he says, "'I do now know." Allah then proclaims from heaven, "My servant lies! Lay, therefore, a carpet of fire for him, dress him in a garb of fire, and open unto him, a door towards hell." The hot winds and intense heat of hell descend upon him and his grave shrinks to the extent of crushing his ribs. An ugly, slovenly attired and foul smelling person appears before him, saying, "Be pleased with that which displeases you. This is the day which was promised to you." The soul asks, "Who are you? You bear the countenance of evil." And upon hearing the reply, "I am your evil deeds," the soul laments, "O Lord! Do not establish the day of Judgement!"

Meeting with Souls

/ This is a word from the same root as "Sijn," a prison. It is therefore understood by many commentators to be a place, a prison or a dungeon in which the wicked are confined pending their appearance before the Judgement Seat. In this context, *Sijjin* may imply the name of the register of black deeds. It is inscribed fully, on one is omitted who ought to be there and for every entry there is a complete record so that there is no escape for the sinner.

From the moment the soul is separated from the body, it journeys past the seven heavens to its destination--the foot of the Throne of God. Along the way, it is greeted by angels as well as by other human souls. A number of Hadiths testify that when man dies he meets souls which have preceded him. His family, relatives, friends and near ones greet him and enquire about the affairs of the world. The souls recognize one another.

Ibn Abi Adduniya (rhm), narrating from Ibn Labiba states that Bashr bin Barah's (rd) mother was deeply grieved at his death. She said to the Holy Prophet (slm), "When a member of the Bani Salmah Qabila 1/ dies, does he recognize other members of the tribe who preceded him? If so, then I may continue sending salaams to my son." The Holy Prophet (slm) responded, "I swear by One in whose hand is my life, without doubt they recognize each other just as birds on branches of a tree recognize one another." Not one person of the Bani Salmah tribe passed away without a request from Bashr's mother to convey her salaam to her son.

Ibn Maja narrates from Mohammad bin Mankadar: "I went to Jabir bin Abdullah (rd) when he was on his deathbed and requested him to convey my salaam to the Holy Prophet (slm)." Bukhari, in his historical narrative records Khalida bin Abdullah bin Anis' statement that 15 days after the death of Umme Banin's father, Abu Qitada, she visited Abdullah bin Anis, who was ailing, and requested him thus: "O uncle. Convey my salaam to my father."

Ibn Abi Adduniya (rhm) recounts from Sayeed bin Jeer (rhm) that when a person dies, a son, who has died before him, is there to greet his father in the manner that one would greet a welcome person returning from a long journey.

Sabit Banani (rhm) reports that we have come to know that when a person dies, those close to him who died before him, surround him. He is pleased to meet them again and they are more happy to see him than one is to meet someone return home after a long absence.

Bazar (rhm) reports from Abu Huraira (rd) that when death descends upon a believer, he sees--whatever it is that he sees--and, on account of the joy he feels upon seeing his future, states: "I wish my soul would depart!" Allah holds dear, the meeting with him. With certainty, the soul of the believer ascends towards the heavens. The souls of other believers approach him and enquire about their people on earth. The souls are happy to hear that he has left a certain person on earth. However, when he reports that a particular person had died and the souls

/ The name of her tribe.

say, "he has not come to us," they lament. Abu Ayoob Ansari (rd) narrates that the souls cry: "He has been sent to the blazing inferno by his mother--a bad mother and a poor nurturer!"

Obaid bin Umair's (rd) recount is the same as Hazrat Abu Huraira's (rd) with the addition of "the souls even enquire about the welfare of the pet cat in their home."

The Soul's Awareness

Hazrat Ibn Abbas (rd) clearly states in his narrative that the seizure of the soul (at death); its journey through the seven heavens to the foot of God's Throne; its meeting with God; its receiving God's command to enter its name in a particular register and to return to its body; the returning of the soul to its body all happens within the time that it takes people to complete the rites and rituals of bathing and preparing the corpse for burial. However, despite the soul's involvement in its journey to God and its separation from its body, it still maintains a connection with its body. Consequently, the soul is aware of what people say about it and the treatment being met out to its body. It hears everything directly.

Ahmad, Ibn Abi Addanya, Tabrani, Marvazi, and Ibn Munda narrate from Hazrat Abu Sayyed Khazri (rd) that the Holy Prophet (slm) stated: "Undoubtedly, the corpse recognizes the persons who bathe it, enshroud it, carry it and lower it into the grave."

Abu Naeem recounts from Umro bin Deenar (rhm): "After death, every soul is in the hands of the angels. It observes how its body has been enshrouded and how it is being carried on the bier for burial. On the way, the angels say to it, 'listen to what is being said about you.'"

Ibn Abi Addanya, narrating from Umro bin Deenar (rhm): "There is no person who, upon dying, is unaware of the condition of his family after his death. Certainly, he sees them as they bathe and prepare his body for the funeral."

Bukhari and Muslim narrate from Hazrat Anas (rd) that the Holy Prophet (slm) thus addressed those slain at the battle of Badr, "O sons of your fathers! Have you found God's promise to you to be true?" Hazrat Umar (rd) enquired, "O Prophet of God! How do you converse with bodies that have no life?" The Prophet (slm) replied, "They hear what I say just as you hear what I say. The only difference is that they are not capable of answering."

Conversation by the Deceased

Abu Sayeed Khadri (rd) recounts (Bukhari and Muslim) that the Holy Prophet (slm) stated that when the bier is being carried on shoulders, if the deceased was virtuous, his soul says, "Take me forward." If he was unvirtuous, it says, "Alas! Misfortune! Where are you taking me?" His voice is heard by all creation except man; if man could hear, surely he would lose consciousness.

Imam Ahmad (rd), narrating from abu Al Darda (rd) says that undoubtedly, when the body is placed on the funeral bier, it cries out, "O my family and friends! O those who are carrying my bier! May the world never deceive you as it deceived me and may it never play tricks on you as it did on me. Not one member of my family has relieved me of any portion of my sins!"

Angels Accompanying the Funeral

The hadiths testify that angels, reciting the deeds of the deceased, accompany the funeral. Behqi, in *Shoaib-ul-Iman*, and Velmi, citing Hazrat Abu Huraira (rd) state that the Holy Prophet (slm) declared: "When a person dies, the angels speak of what he has sent forth and the people speak of what he has left behind."

The angels assist in carrying the body of a chosen servant of God. Tirmizi narrates from Hazrat Anas (rd) that when the body of Saad bin Maaz (rd) was being taken for burial, the hypocrites commented that it felt strangely light and the funeral appeared to be moving very swiftly. They attributed this to the decision he made regarding the Bani Qareeza. 1/

The Cry from the Heavens and Earth

There is evidence that when a believer dies, the heavens and the earth, the angels and his place of worship all grieve for him. They do not, however, grieve for the disbeliever. Allah, the Exalted and Blessed says, "*And the Heaven and earth did not mourn them (Pharaoh and his people).*" (Sura Baqra: search)

/ The Bani Qareeza were jews. They had a peace agreement with the Holy Prophet (slm) whilst he was living in Medina. In the fifth year of the Hijra, when the Battle of the Trenches was fought, they broke their agreement and joined the disbelievers against the Holy Prophet (slm). When the disbelievers returned to Mecca, the Holy Prophet (slm) laid siege on the Bani Qareeza and surrounded their trenches for 15 days. In frustration, they sent a message that they were ready to leave the trenches and were willing to accept any decision made by Saad bin Maaz (rd). Saad Bin Maaz's (rd) decision was that the warriors should be put to death and the younger members of the tribe should be enslaved. The Prophet (slm) said, "O Maaz. You have decreed according to Allah's wish." However, the jews and disbelievers reproached him on his decision.

The abovementioned Hadith refers to this incident.

A tradition of the Holy Prophet (slm), narrated by Hazarat Anas (rd) 1/: "There is no human who does not have two doors allotted to him. From one door ascends his deeds to the heavens and from the other descends his sustenance (provision). And when a believer dies, both doors weep for him."

Ibn Abi Addanya and Hatim narrate from ibn Abbas (rd) that without doubt, the earth mourns the loss of a believer for 40 mornings.

Ibn Jarir (rd) narrates from Zahaq (rd) that upon the death of a believer, the physical world (world of action) as well as the heavenly station (where his deeds are registered) grieve his loss.

Ibn Abi Addanya, citing Abu Obaida Sahib-e-Sulaiman bin Abdul Mulk, says, "Undoubtedly, when a believer dies, every segment of the earth laments his death and the heavens and earth cry for him. Allah, the Most Compassionate, enquires as to why they weep for His servant. They answer, 'O my Lord! He did not tread over any part of me without remembering you.'"

In *Shoaib-al-Iman*, Behaqi cites Hazrat Ali (Kvj) that when a believer dies, his place of worship on earth and the heavenly station where his deeds are registered, lament his death.

The Lamenting of the Inanimate

It is said that when Iman Hussain (elsm) was martyred, it rained blood from the skies. Behaqi and Abu Naeem state that on the morning when Hazrat Imam Hussain (elsm) was martyred, the cooking vessels were filled with blood. Behqi and Abu Naeem narrate from Zahra that on the day of Hazrat Imam Hussain's (elsm) martyrdom, every stone in Jerusalem (Bait-ul-Moqaddas) had blood under it when turned.

It appears from the above that even the mineral kingdom cries at the death of the friends of Allah.

1/ Narrated by Tirmizi, Abu Laila, Ibn Manda, Ibn Abi Addunya and Ibn Abi Hatim.

Death in a Foreign Land

Ibn Abi Addanya recounts from Hassan (rd) that when Allah ordains death on a believer in a foreign land, He decreases the anguish of death for him on account of the fact that he is a stranger in a foreign land. Allah takes further mercy on him and orders the angels to grieve for him since he has no one else to mourn his death.

Conclusion

The quintessence of the above is that shortly before his death, man becomes aware of a future existence. His vision broadens. He begins to experience things that he had not previously been unable to. He sees angels; realizes the good and bad of his actions; and becomes aware of his final destination, i.e., heaven or hell.

After death, he traverses the seven heavens, presents himself at the throne of Allah, the most Pure and returns to his body.

On this journey,

AFTER DEATH

Compression of the Grave

The very first experience that the corpse has within the confinement of the grave, is that of being squeezed by it. We have learnt from *Ahadith* that the initial pressure of the grave is felt by all--the believer and the disbeliever, the good and the bad, the youth and the child. The only difference is that the disbeliever senses being entrapped by extreme pressure whereas the believer feels the pressure of the grave as a child would feel the pressure of his mother=s embrace. And this pressure becomes an expiation for the believer=s sins - sins committed as a result of his human weaknesses.

According to a *Hadith* a highly respected and illustrious companion of the Holy Prophet (slm), Saad bin Maaz (rd) was squeezed in the grave on account of carelessness in cleansing after having urinated. However, this contraction of the grave was later withdrawn. Imam Ahmad and Behequi narrate a *Hadith* from Hazrat Ayesha (rd) that undoubtedly there is pressure of the grave and if anyone would have been spared this pressure, it would have been Saad bin Maaz (rd).

Jabir bin Abdullah narrates^{1/} that when Saad bin Maaz (rd) was buried, the Holy Prophet (slm), accompanied by the people, praised Allah at length. Then he (slm) recited words exalting God and the people followed likewise. The companions enquired of the Prophet (slm) as to why he was praising and glorifying Allah so. He (slm) responded: Athe grave had narrowed on this auspicious soul until Allah widened it (after the praise and exaltation).

Nasai and Behequi, have reported on the authority of Abdullah bin Omar (ra) that the Holy Prophet (slm) said: AFor whom the very throne of God shook, the doors of heaven were opened, and on whom descended 70,000 angels (i.e., Saad bin Maaz (ra)), he was squeezed but once and then granted release.≡ The Prophet (slm) continued, AThe heavens rejoiced at the happy news of his soul=s arrival.≡

Tabrani cites a *Hadith* narrated by Hazrat Anas (ra): Awhen the Holy Prophet=s (slm) daughter, Zainab (ra) passed away, we accompanied him (slm) at the funeral. We found the Prophet (slm) extremely sad. After sitting by the grave for a short while, he (slm) looked up towards the sky. He (slm) then stepped down into the grave. I noticed that his sorrow was increasing. Then, as he (slm) stepped

¹Compiled by Imam Ahmad, Tirmizi, Tabrani and Behaqui.

out of the grave, his grief seemed to have dissipated and he was smiling. We enquired about the matter (why this change) and he replied: Athoughts of the trails and the narrowness of the grave and the fragility of my daughter were troubling me. I prayed to Allah that the difficulties may be alleviated and He granted my prayers. The grave, however, squeezed her but once and this was heard from east to west by all creation except jinn and man.≡

Tabrani recounts on the authority of Abu Ayub Ansari (ra) that when a certain child was buried, the Prophet (slm) said that if anyone had been spared the constriction of the grave, it would have been this child.

Abu-al-Cassim Saadi states in his book, *AAI-Ruh*≡ that neither the virtuous nor the wicked is spared the contraction of the grave. The only difference between the disbeliever and the believer is that for the former, it is a constant state whilst the latter feels the compression only upon entering the grave and then the grave resumes its original width. He writes that as a result of the grave=s compression, the two sides of the body are so squeezed as to come together. Behequi, Ibn Munda, Velmi and Ibn Bukhari cite from a *Hadith* narrated by Syed bin Musaib (ra) that Hazrat Ayesha (ra) said to the Holy Prophet (slm), ASince you told me of the voices of Munkir and Nakir, and the constriction of the grave, nothing else seems to be of any consequence.≡ The Holy Prophet (slm) replied, AO Ayesha (ra), surely the voices of Munkir and Nakir are as soothing to the believer as is *Asurma*≡ (english?) to the eyes; and certainly, the pressure of the grave is like the gentle pressure of a loving mother=s hands as she massages her son=s aching forehead. However, O Ayesha (ra), woe upon those who doubt Allah for their condition will be like that of an egg which is crushed by a rock.≡

Exceptions to the Grave=s Contractions

In spite of the above mentioned general rules regarding compression of the grave, Allah, in His Infinite Mercy, grants exemptions to whomsoever He wills.

Amar bin Shaiba (ra) in his book, *Al-Madinah*, cites a Hadith narrated by Hazrat Anas (ra) that no one except Hazrat Fatima bint Asad (ra) was pardoned the compression of the grave. When asked, AO Prophet (slm), not even your son, Cassim?≡ he (slm) replied, ANo, and nor was Ibrahim (ra).≡ (Ibrahim (ra) was younger than Cassim (ra)). Fatima bint Asad (ra) was the revered mother of Hazrat Ali (Kmv). She had nurtured the Holy Prophet (slm) in his childhood and was extremely fond of him and when she passed away, he (slm) had spread his cloak on her coffin. Furthermore, he had entered her grave, and had laid down in

it, rolling from side to side. As a result of this auspicious act, Hazrat Fatima (ra) was saved from the narrowing of the grave.

Abu Naeem quotes a Hadith¹/ narrated by Abdullah bin Shakheer [verify this] that one who recites the Sura Ikhlas during an illness that eventually causes his death is spared the tribulations of the grave.

There are others who are exempt from the grave=s tribulations. These will be categorized later.

Personification of Actions

Another phenomenon that occurs in the grave is that the actions of the deceased take on a physical form and appear before him. Ata bin Yassar (rd) narrates the following Hadith. The first thing that comes to the corpse in the grave are his actions. This strikes him on his left thigh and says, AI am your deeds.≡ The deceased enquires, Awhere are my family, my children, my friends and relatives and all that Allah had bestowed upon me?≡ The personified deed replies, Ayou have left them behind--your family, your children, your near and dear ones and all the worldly goods that Allah had blessed you with. Nothing has accompanied you to your grave save me.≡ Upon hearing this, the deceased laments, AIf only I had chosen you over all else--my family and friends, and my worldly goods, for none of these has accompanied me except you.≡

Discourse with the grave

¹Qurtabi has categorized this Hadith as a AHasn Gharib.≡

The third occurrence which the corpse experiences in the grave is a dialogue with the grave. The following Hadith,^{1/} narrated by Abu Sayed (ra), compiled by Tirmizi, states that the Holy Prophet (slm) said, ARemember her frequently, who severs all pleasures, for she is death.≡ Not a day passes without the grave addressing its occupant: AI am the house of poverty! I am the house of loneliness! I am the house of clay! I am the house of critters!≡ But when a believer is buried, the grave welcomes him and says, AYou have entered a restful place and are among family. Know that of those who walked on my surface, you were dearly loved and today, you have come to me and I am yours.≡ So now, ease and comfort has been created for you and as far as you can see, a vast space is yours.≡ And the gates of heaven are opened for him.

When a sinner or a disbeliever is buried, the grave speaks to him thus: AYou are not welcome. Of those who walked on my surface, you were most despised. Now that you have come to me, you shall witness my grievous treatment.≡ Then the grave squeezes the corpse so tightly as to crush its ribs.

Abu Sayed (ra) narrates that the Holy Prophet (slm) demonstrated the severity of the crushing by tightly intertwining his fingers together. He (slm) said, ASeventy snakes are then released into the grave and if the venom of one of these were to touch the earth, it would lay it forever barren. These snakes keep biting him until the day of resurrection. The grave can either be one of the gardens of paradise or one of the fire pits of hell.

In his book, A*Shoib-al-Iman*,≡ Behequi cites the following Hadith narrated by Hazrat Uns (ra). AShall I not tell you of two such days and two such nights, the likes of which creation has not heard of? The first day is that when a harbinger shall bring you the news of God=s pleasure or wrath. The other day is the one on which you will stand face to face with God, holding your Book of Deeds either in your right hand or in your left. And of the nights, the first is that spent in the grave--a night unparalleled. The second is that which ends with the dawning of Judgement Day following which there will never be another night.≡

Munkir and Nakir

Of all the experiences encountered by the deceased in the grave, the most important one is the answering of questions put to him by Munkir and Nakir. Once the corpse is laid in the grave, and the grave has been filled, two angels,

¹This Hadith is categorized as a AHasn-e-Qarar.≡

Munkir and Nakir, come to test him. They have black, frightening faces; hair so long that it gets entangled in their feet; brilliant blue and copper eyes that shine like lightening; breath like the flame of a fire; and voices that thunder. Their protruding teeth, like buffalo=s horns, are so long that they touch the ground. With these teeth, they dig their way to the grave, carrying in their hand iron clubs so heavy that all the population gathered in *Mina* would be unable to lift them if they tried. These angels carry the clubs as if they were feather weight. In this formidable form, Munkir and Nakir present themselves to the deceased and question him on the oneness of God and the prophethood of Mohammed (slm). It is only with Divine help that the believer passes this examination.

Twenty seven reliable Companions of the Holy Prophet (slm) have narrated Hadiths regarding the questioning by Munkir and Nakir. It would be difficult to narrate all of them in this brief booklet; however, I shall cite a few on the following pages.

Abu Daud, Hakim and Behequi cite the following Hadith from Hazrat Omer (ra). A What will your condition be when you are confined to the tightness of the grave (which is only 6 feet long by 2 feet wide) and are confronted by Munkir and Nakir? I replied, O Prophet (slm), what are Munkir and Nakir? He (slm) answered, Munkir and Nakir are the terrors of the grave, who dig the grave with their teeth and drag their long hair, whose voices are as loud as thunder and eyes as bright as lightening. They will carry a baton so heavy that all those gathered at Mina would be unable to lift it should they try. And they will test you. If you fail to satisfactorily answer their questions or become frustrated, they will strike you with such force that you will crumble. I asked the Prophet (slm), When this happens, will I be in a conscious state as I am now? He (slm) replied, Yes. And I said, then I shall satisfy them.≡

The following Hadith^{1/} is on the authority of Abu Horairah (ra). The Holy Prophet (slm) said: AI swear by Him in whose Hand is my life that undoubtedly, when the corpse is laid in its grave, it definitely hears the departing footsteps of the funeral procession. If he is a believer, his prayers are by his head, his *zakaat* by his right side, his fasts by his left side, his charities, good reputation and kindness to humanity by his two feet. When the angels of torment approach him by his head, his prayers intervene with, Ayou do not have permission to enter from my side.≡ When they try to approach him from the right side, his charities stand guard and say: Ayou cannot enter from my side.≡ From his left side, his fasts deny entrance

¹Compiled by Hanaad, Ibn abi Shaiban, Ibn Jareer, Ibn Manzar, Ibn Hanaad, Tabrani, Hakim and Behequi.

to the angels. The corpse is then made to sit up and the sun, as it appears at sunset, is shown to him. The angels say to him: Answer our questions.≡ The corpse replies, Leave me alone so that I may perform my *asr* prayers.≡ The angels respond: You shall certainly do so in a while, but first answer our questions.≡ The corpse says, what is it that you wish to question me about?≡ They ask: What have you to say of the person (i.e., the Holy Prophet (slm)) who was amongst you?≡ The corpse replies: I testify that he is the messenger of God, who came to us with clear signs--signs which we affirmed and followed--from our Lord.≡ He is then told, You speak the truth. You lived and died by this and shall, God willing, be raised by this.≡ His grave is then expanded for him to the scope of his vision.≡ Allah, the Exalted says:

Sura Ibrahi, Ayat 4

An order is given: Open for him, a door facing the fire,≡ and this is done. He is told: This would have been your destination had you disobeyed God.≡ These words make him relieved and happy. Then comes an order: Open a door for him towards heaven,≡ and this is done. He is told: This is the abode that God has prepared for you.≡ He is besides himself with joy on hearing this. His body is then restored to the earth wherefrom it originated. His soul is admitted amongst the pure souls who take the form of green birds that abide in the garden of paradise.

In the case of a disbeliever, however, when the angels of torment approach him from the head, there is nothing to stop them. The corpse is awestricken and sits up terrified. He is asked, What have you to say about this person (the Holy Prophet (slm)) who was amongst you?≡ He cannot answer and is told, Mohammed (slm).≡ He replies, I had heard people say something to this effect and I am merely repeating what they said.≡ He is then told, You have spoken the truth by which you lived and died and shall be raised, God willing.≡ The grave squeezes him so tight that his ribs fall apart. The Word of Allah is:

Sura Taha, Ayat 7

The order is given: Open a door for him facing heaven,≡ and this is done. He is told: Behold the abode Allah had prepared for you had you been obedient,≡ and his regret and remorse increases on hearing this. Then comes the order: Open a door for him towards hell,≡ and this is done. He is told: This is the abode that God has prepared for you.≡ On seeing and hearing this, his regret and grief are further compounded.

Abu Omer Zareer says that he enquired of Hamad bin Salma, AWere these muslims?≅ The answer, AYes.≅ Abu Omer further explained that, AHe was testifying without true faith and was merely repeating here say.≅

Bazaar has narrated on the authority of Hazrat Ayesha (Allah be pleased with her): AI enquired of the Holy Prophet (slm), O Prophet, your entire congregation has to undergo this trail in the grave. What will be my condition for I am but a weak woman?≅ He responded:

Sura Ibrahim, Ayat 40

Tribulations of the Grave

All of the above mentioned phenomena that occur in the grave are called >tribulations of the grave.= The Arabic word *Fitnah* means test. Allah, the Exalted says about Hazrat Moosa (pbuh) [Sura Taha, Ruku 2: *Va Fattunn ka Futtuna*]:

AAnd we put you to test≅

This means: AWe have tested you extremely well.≅

The vision shown in the grave to the deceased--the setting of the sun signifying the end of Asr prayer timing--is in itself a test to distinguish the punctual worshiper from the neglectful one. The terrifying appearance of *Munkir and Nakir*, their severe reprimand and harsh interrogation is a difficult examination in which only the steadfast, with God=s grace, can be successful.

The first stage, and an extremely difficult one, in the journey after death is the grave. He who crosses this stage smoothly will find the following stages easy, and he who stumbles at this stage will face nothing but more difficulties later on.

When passing a grave, Hazrat Usman (ra) used to weep so profusely as to get his beard soaked with tears. When he was asked, Awhy is it that you cry at a gravesite, but not at the mention of heaven or hell?≅ he replied, AI have heard the Holy Prophet (slm) say that of life=s stages in the hereafter, the grave is the first stage, and if one finds deliverance here, he will cross the other stages with ease. If he is not successful in this stage, he will face greater hardship ahead. I have seen no place more difficult than this (the grave).≅ [Tirmizi]

Who is Secure from the Grave=s Tribulations

Allah, in His Infinite Mercy, has granted exemption from the grave=s trials to certain souls. This privilege is earned by some as a result of their deeds; by some for enduring severe pain at their deathbed or before dying; by some on account of dying at an auspicious hour. *Ahadith* determine that the following categories are spared the grave=s torment: (1) the truthful; (2) the martyrs; (3) [check with Afzal on meaning]; and (4) those who die at an auspicious moment.

The Truthful (Siddiq)

The dictionary defines *Siddiq* as those who are firmly established in the truth. However, according to the *Shariah*, (Islamic law) this word has a much broader scope and meaning. Shah Abdul Aziz (master of celestial secrets?), in his book, *Tafseer-e-Azizi*, defines *Siddiq* as Aone whose powers of perception and comprehension are similar to that of the prophets. Truthfulness is so deeply ingrained in him from childhood that he is averse to any falsehood and duality in speech. In religious matters, he is totally sincere and has no personal bias.≡ Shah Abdul Qader Sahib (rh), in *Muzzal Quran*, simply and eloquently defines a *Siddiq* as Aone whose heart testifies to the divine revelations received by the prophets.≡

In the eyes of God, the status of such persons is second to that of the prophets and is higher than that of the martyrs. Hence the Quran accords the truthful a preferred status over a martyr.

Allah, the Most High says:

Sura Al-Nisa, Ayat 9

The Martyrs

A martyr is one who dies in the way of God (who is killed in the way). Those people who sincerely sacrifice their lives for God=s cause earn a very high rank in closeness to Him. And Allah has forbidden calling them dead.

Sura Baqra, Ayat 19

They are alive and their sustenance is from God.

Sura Al Imran, Ayat 17

The ordinary muslim is also granted life after death. However, the Martyr=s life after death is such an honorable one that is beyond the scope of average human comprehension.

Those who believed in and followed the prophets preceding the Prophet of Islam could earn martyrdom only by being killed in the service of God. Allah has bestowed a special privilege upon the followers of the Prophet Mohammed (slm) by enabling them to earn martyrdom on account of their excellence and virtue and not only by being slain in God=s way. Given below is a list of persons believed to have earned martyrdom.

1. One who dies in the way of God
2. One who dies by drowning
3. One who dies of the plague
4. One who dies of stomach disease
5. One who is burnt to death
6. A woman who dies during childbirth
7. One who dies by being crushed under a building
8. One who dies of a consumptive disease (e.g., tuberculosis)
9. One who dies of pleurisy/pneumonia
10. One who is unfairly imprisoned and dies there
11. One who dies defending his family
12. One who dies defending his faith
13. One who dies defending his property
14. One who dies defending himself
15. One who is killed by his horse or camel
16. One who dies of a snake bite or scorpion sting
17. One who is killed by a wild animal
18. One who falls of a riding animal and dies
19. One who chokes to death
20. ????
21. One who is unjustly killed in a quarrel
22. One who dies defending his neighbor
23. One who dies whilst pursuing knowledge
24. One who dies on a journey, away from his homeland
25. One who dies of high fever
26. One who falls in a well and dies
27. The noble woman who dies defending her husband=s honor
28. One who calls to virtue and advises abstinence from vice

29. One who sincerely asks God for martyrdom
30. One who fasts three days every month and regularly performs the *Zoha* and *Vitr* prayers
31. One who regularly recites the following prayer three times in the morning and evening:

Aoozo-billah-e-Sami-ul Aleem min ash shaitan ar rajeen

followed by the last three ayats of *Sura Hashr*.

32. One who dies on horseback and willingly encounters death
33. One who during his fatal illness, keeps reciting the following prayer:

La illaha illa anta subhanaka ini kunto minaz zalimeen

34. One who gives the *azan* (call for prayer) with the intention of earning God=s pleasure
35. One who is nauseasus and vomits during a voyage
36. One who recites 25 times daily: *Allahuma barikli fil mauti wa fima baad al maut*
37. One who revives a forgotten tradition. (This person earns the reward of 200 martyrs)
38. An honest and religious trader
39. One who transports food times to a city inhabited by muslims
40. One who dies as a result of bathing in cold water in order to purify himself after sexual intercourse with his wife
41. One who invokes God=s blessings on the Holy Prophet (*darood sharif*) a hundred times a day
42. One who dies from being stricken by lightning

The Holy Prophet (slm) once said that of his followers, those who are true believers, are martyrs. He then recited the following verse:

Al Hadid, Ayat 2

Thus every believer is a *siddiq* (truthful one) and a *shaheed* (martyr). However, the condition for earning this status is faith--a faith so strong and complete that one is willing to annihilate his ego and when the moment of sacrifice comes, he is ready to give his very life for God.

Murabit (Those engaged in the service of God)

A *murabit* is one who is formally employed in God=s service, e.g., a person who is stationed at an outpost to guard the frontiers of a Muslim country against enemies.

The Holy Prophet (slm) referred to those who are ready and waiting for the next prayer as *murabit*. Such persons are as those who are in the service of God.

Death on an auspicious day

Those who die on the following blessed days are also ranked amongst the martyrs.

- X On the night preceding Friday and on Friday
- X In the month of Ramadan
- X During the first ten days of the month of Zil Haj
- X On Eid-ul-Fitr or Eid-ul-Adha
- X On the day of Ashur (10th day of the month of Muharram)

Pre-adolescents

The scholars differ regarding the issue of minor children being questioned in the grave.

Conclusion

To summarize this chapter: after burial, the deceased encounters the tribulations of the grave; his personified deeds present themselves to him; *Munkir and Nakir*, the angels of torment appear to test him; and lastly, God, in His Infinite Mercy exempts whomsoever He wills from this test. Finally, the virtuous souls form a link with heaven and the wicked souls do so with hell.

Burzukh

The literal meaning of *Burzukh* is a veil or an isthmus. In its full context, the term applies to the period of time between the physical death of a person and his resurrection on the Day of Judgement.

Al Bakrah, Ayat No. 3

The above ayat divides man=s existence into three stages.

The first stage is that which precedes his birth in the physical world, i.e., *AYou were without life.*≡ The second is the one from birth until death, i.e., *AHe bestowed life upon you. Again, he will make you lifeless.*≡ And finally, the third stage is that which follows mortal death, i.e., *AHe will grant you another life; then you shall return to him.*≡

Before being born into the material world, man lives in his mother=s womb for a period of time. This period is a veil between two phases of his existence. Yet again, there is a period of time, a veil, between his physical death and his resurrection on the day the trumpet sounds and he finds himself before the tribunal of his Lord. The veil that exists between these two stages is called *Burzukh*.

Sura Momimun, Ayat 6

Like the link that a baby establishes with the corporeal world, whilst in the mother=s womb, man makes a connection with the Hereafter whilst in the grave. In extent and proportion, the comparison between the mother=s womb and the physical world is like that of the physical world and the world of *Burzukh*. Scholars and scientists, by applying their experiences and knowledge of the natural laws applicable to this material world, have failed in their attempt to understand the realm of *Burzukh*. Since *Burzukh* is a completely different world from the physical one, it is impossible to fully comprehend the working of the former whilst being immersed in the latter. Those who through their efforts and with divine grace have gained some knowledge of *Burzukh* during their mortal lives, have found themselves quite powerless to communicate their understandings, either verbally or in writing.

Hence, to acquire a comprehension of *Burzukh*, one must rely solely on information provided by the Holy Prophet (slm), his companions and spiritual successors, the friends of God, and the pious and virtuous.

Companions in Burzukh

A believer is not alone in Burzukh. His actions acquire beautiful forms and afford him companionship.