

Summary of 4.7 "Death Continued"

On the question of suicide we indicated that this is a sin according to Islam. The reason being is that life is a trust from God and we are not supposed to dispose of it according to our whims. We have to respect that trust and fulfill our mission on earth using that life.

On the question of euthanasia we said that it is regarded as one form of killing and there is no mercy in killing. If the person is desperately ill all he has to do is pray for God's relief and he should be aided with medications. But to inject the person with something fatal or give him an overdose just to destroy his life is not permissible.

We also talked about the care for the terminally ill and the dying and we indicated that one of the crucial things is to remind the person of his destiny and to allow him to make peace with God and to repent before it is too late. We also described the various processes of a speedy burial after the actual death and the funeral prayer and so on.

Then we touched briefly on what happens to the person in the grave. We said that according to various sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and according to the Quran. The crucial verse we sighted was in (40:46) that describes the punishment day and night of the Pharaoh and his people who persecuted Moses and his followers even before The Day of Judgment has come. So the punishment and reward is there and I tried to explain it by making a remote analogy with nightmares. In a nightmare a person feels enjoyment or suffering without the body actually being affected and this does also happen after death.

Finally, the last point was that the soul even after it departs from the body can still be aware of some of the things that go on in our physical world.

4.8 After Death

Host: Is it possible for the souls of the dead to contact the souls of the living? What of séance?

Jamal Badawi:

The possibility is there but not through séance, this is an area that I am quite skeptical about because it gives the impression that someone has these souls under his or her disposal. Many times this is partly superstitious partly exploitation of others people and I don't think that this claim is true. There are so many people who have been involved in this kind of experience who had reported there being some kind of fraud.

However the whole notion of contact between the dead and living could happen. There is one reference in the Quran in (39:42) to this and I have to take it carefully. This is a very interesting verse in a sense of defining the nature of this contact without going through all the gimmicks. The translation is that “It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed verily in this are Signs for those who reflect.” When it says that Allah takes the soul of those who did not die it has two meanings as to people who did not die in their sleep or that during our sleep our souls are taken. They are not totally taken from the body or else the body would die but that the soul would be connected with the body during sleep in a different way than during the waking hours or during death.

The clear indication from this verse is that during the sleep for example if one has a dream and one sees someone who died in the past is a process of meeting between the souls of the living and the dead for the period of the dream. Before we wake up the souls of those who died are kept away from returning to life and our soul comes back to us in the fullest sense. In a way this reminds me of one aspect that most people don't pay attention to. Everyday we seem to have a rehearsal of coming to life and dying and resurrection. When one wakes up in the morning after sleeping it is almost like a rehearsal of resurrection for The Day of Judgment. When one goes to bed at night it is like a minor death or like someone once put it sleeping is the twin of death. So everyday we repeat something that will eventually really happen to us. In this sense contact between the dead and living souls could be acceptable but not in the commercialized sense.

Host: Is it possible for the souls of the dead to contact one another?

Jamal Badawi:

There is a very clear indication of that actually in the Quran which have been confirmed and explained in some of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). For example in (3:170) it talks about the souls of the martyrs and it uses the term “*wa yastabshiroona bi alathina lam yalhaku bihim*” and the words in Arabic actually means the souls of the martyrs who dyed for the cause of God carry to each other the good news of other pious people who were left behind. This means that these souls communicate among themselves in regards to what is going on in the physical world that they have left.

Some evidence that may be regarded as indirect but is still on the same line is in the Quran in (4:69) and it describes the reward of those who are obedient to God and his messenger “All who obey Allah and the apostle are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,- of the prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of Truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the Righteous (who do good): Ah! what a beautiful fellowship!” So here it talks about people who are obedient being in the company Prophets, martyrs and lovers of truth. This could apply to both the company during the interim period between death and resurrection and ultimately on The Day of Judgment. In this sense there could be contact between souls and like I said before there are various sayings of Prophet Muhammad which give the impression that this kind of contact exists.

Host: Is there a particular place where the soul resides in the interim period between the time of death and resurrection?

Jamal Badawi:

Before answering that question we have to be clear that the biggest problem when people try to

conceive something about the soul is to try to materialize it, even though it is something beyond our normal understanding of the physical material world. That is why in the previous program we indicated that the soul doesn't reside in any particular part of the body like the heart, brain or blood. Because if it does reside in the blood and someone's leg is amputated then where does that part of the soul go? In case a person bleeds and they need a transfusion does it mean that some of his soul has gone out and he is getting the soul of many people who donated blood. This is the problem of wrong analogy by imagining the soul in a very limited physical sense.

However we find indications in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the narration of Hadith by Ahmad and it is indicated there that the soul is returned immediately after death to face the accountability and initial questioning in the grave. What happens immediately after burial was explained in the previous program but in that sense we can say that the soul may unite in some way that we don't understand with the body immediately after burial. On the other hand we find other narrations like in Muslim for example that the souls of believers will be in paradise. Actually some of the descriptions indicate that they will be in the bellies of green birds in paradise. But again let's not put it in the physical sense. This could also give us an allegory that these souls could be as free as birds would be in paradise but we don't know the exact nature.

There is mention of the souls of wicked people or the unbelievers in some sayings of the Prophet that they are suffering in hell fire. In others it says they would be imprisoned in the lowest layers of earth. Again exactly physically how we can't understand it. But again it shows the notion of suffering or punishment. On the other hand in the previous program we also indicated that when the person passes by a grave yard and greets the people who are dead that God causes the believers among them to respond. Does that mean that the souls are only on earth? If we look at it in a very literal sense it would appear that there is some confusion there. Where are the souls? Are they on earth so that when we pass by the grave yards they reply? Are the souls of wicked people under the earth in hell fire? Are the souls of martyrs and good people in paradise? Does this show any inconsistency? The answer is no, they are not contradictory if we approach the soul as a different thing from material objects that we think about. Ibn Alkim explains it in a very nice way. He says there is no contradiction between all of this. It is just like the sun and its rays. Physically the sun may be located in the heavens to us meanwhile we can talk about the rays of the sun here on earth as sun and sun shine. In the

same way the soul could also be in the heavens or paradise but it still has some type of contact with the burial place and meet with people in dreams without contradiction. Let alone the fact that the soul doesn't need jet airplanes to travel but can travel in a split second between the earth and the heavens.

In that sense we can conclude that the main notion in this totality of sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) is that the souls of believers will be enjoying themselves and would be in paradise in some form or other and the souls of wicked or unbelievers would be suffering.

Host: Do Muslims believe in the reincarnation of the soul?

Jamal Badawi:

No, my understanding is that reincarnation is part of the Hindu faith and has nothing to do with Islam. I can't pretend to have any authority on that but my understanding on that is basically that the Hindus believe that the soul reincarnates in cycles. So when one dies their soul will reappear in another body of a human or animal. If one's life here was good their soul would be reincarnated into a better life. If a person is wicked then his soul would be reincarnated into another human or animal who suffers. I would like to emphasize again that this has nothing to do whatsoever with the belief of the Muslim. A Muslim doesn't believe in any reincarnation whether it is of God in some form or that of the soul after death in any shape or form.

Actually sometimes the question arises in the mind that if the souls are just reincarnating it may give the impression that the number of souls has been constant throughout history. Whereas we know that the population is increasing so where did these new souls come from? The Muslim belief is quite different in that the number of souls actually increases rather than just coming in cycles. As we indicated in the first program about the soul that according to the saying of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which is based on revelation also that the soul first comes into being when the fetus begins its fifth month gestation. This is an interesting point that has not been researched and some people say that this is the same time that the brain starts developing but we don't know as it is a mystery why the Hadith mentioned specifically the beginning of the fifth month. As we indicated before also that the soul is indestructible and that it lives with the body then it departs from the body but still lives on after death, then it unites with the body again. So the notion of reincarnation is totally alien thinking.

Host: Some Muslim writers and indeed some Muslims refer to the three states of the soul can you clarify what is meant by this?

Jamal Badawi:

They are actually referring to three terms used in the Quran to describe the soul. The three words mean the soul that prompts us to do evil, *amarah*, secondly the soul that is self reproaching and aware of its sin and regret, *lawamah*, and thirdly the soul which is at peace and tranquility, *mutmainah*. This is based on the Quran as each term has been used in the Quran to describe one state of the existence of our soul.

For example in the chapter in the Quran dealing with the story of Prophet Joseph (PBUH) in (12:53) “Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful.” This shows that one state of the soul is *amarah* which pushes us to do evil which is the bad part in our existence or the animal physical part of us that pulls us to earth away from the path of God and is part of our creation.

The second term is used in the Quran in chapter (75:2) “And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (Eschew Evil).” The self-reproaching soul has two meanings actually. It could mean the soul of both unbelievers and believers. The word, *lawamah*, could also mean a soul that doesn’t stay in one state as we are always changing moods, attitude, goodness or evil.

Some interpreters understand

lawamah

or self-reproaching as a soul who is more aware of its mistakes and sins and tries to correct itself. In psychology they talk about the super ego and what is ideal or appropriate.

The third and ultimate stage of the soul is the peaceful soul. This is also mentioned in the Quran in verse (89:27-30) “(To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! "Come back thou to thy Lord,- well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him! . "Enter thou, then, among My devotees! Yea, enter thou My Heaven!" So this is the ultimate and most perfect state of the three states of the soul.

Host: What is the meaning of The Day of Judgment and what importance does it have to the Muslim?

Jamal Badawi:

The physical world as we know it will come to an end sometime. Life on earth will not just continue perpetually. Someday there will be upheavals in nature and the whole world as we know it today will be destroyed and all who are alive in that time will eventually die. Then all of those who died from the beginning of creation till The Day of Judgment will be resurrected again and they will face the accountability before God, then they will be rewarded with paradise or hell-fire depending on their belief. Of course the grace of God is given to those who strove in terms of their belief and good deeds to earn it.

The Day of Judgment is very important and any person who claims to be a Muslim who denies or rejects the notion of life after death and the hereafter can't be regarded as a Muslim. This is one of the fundamental pillars of faith. The reason behind it is related to the role of the human on earth. We are created here on earth as responsible beings and the Quran makes it clear that we are not created with no purpose or just for sport. More particularly in the Quran in (23:115-116) "Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)? Therefore exalted be Allah, the King, the Reality: there is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honour!" The whole notion of our mission on earth hinges on this whole notion of punishment and reward.

In fact the Quran, just to complete the answer in a way of indicating what the Muslim understands by the term The Day of Judgment. There are alternatives in the Quran for the term The Day of Judgment such as The Day of Resurrection in (30:56), The Hour in (22:1), The Hereafter (87:17), The Day of Reckoning (17:34), The Day of Accountability (40:27), The Day of Meeting (40:15), The Day of Gathering (64:9), The Day of Coming Out (50:42), The Overwhelming (79:34-35) because it overwhelms everybody because of the horror and fear. It is also called The Deafener in (80:33) because of the blowing of the trumpet, it is called The Revealer because the truth would be revealed on that day, and in (50:34) it is called The Day of Eternity as it is the beginning of eternal life.

Host: Will the resurrection be just of the soul or of the body alone or a combination?

Jamal Badawi:

According to the Quran it is both body and soul. This has been emphasized a great deal. In fact the main confusion that arises in the minds of many people is that they presume that when the Quran talks about the body it is the same body that we had here on earth. In fact we find evidence in the Quran that this may not necessarily be the case as it is a physical existence but it may not be the same type of physical existence. For example in this short citation in (56:60) “We have decreed Death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your Forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not.” In other words God is able to recreate us in different physical form than the one that we had here on earth. It is however both physical and spiritual.