# Should we fear death?

Those who believe and do righteous deeds have no reason to fear death. Although it appears to us as decomposition and the extinction of life and its pleasures, in fact it is no more than a discharge from the heavy duties of worldly life, a change of residence, and a transferal of the body. It is an invitation to and the beginning of everlasting life.

As the world is continually enlivened through acts of creation and predetermination, so is it continually stripped of life through other cycles of creation, determination, and wisdom. The death of plants, the simplest level of life, is a work of Divine artistry, like their life—in fact, it is more perfect and better designed. When a fruit pit dies underground, it seems to decompose and rot away. But in fact, it undergoes a perfect chemical process, passes through predetermined states of re-formation, and ultimately grows again into an elaborate, new tree. This shows clearly that death is the beginning of a new and more elaborate life.

The *“death”* of fruits, vegetables, and animal flesh in a person's stomach causes them to rise to the degree of human life. Thus, their death can be regarded as more perfect than their lives. Since the death of plants is so perfect and serves such a great purpose, our own deaths must be even more perfect and serve a still greater purpose. After all, we occupy the highest level of life. Given this, we certainly will be brought into eternal life.

Death discharges us from the hardships of worldly life. This turbulent, suffocating, and narrow dungeon, which becomes more difficult to endure with the onset of old age and illness, admit us into the Eternal, Beloved One's infinitely wide circle of the mercy. There, we will enjoy the everlasting company of our loved ones and the consolation of a happy, eternal life.

# What do we feel at the time of death?

At the time of death, believers experience the opening of windows from their places in Paradise. Prophet Muhammad stated that the souls of such people are drawn out as gently as the flowing of water from a pitcher. Better than that, martyrs do not feel death's agonies of and do not realize that they are dead. Instead, they think that they have been transferred to a better world and enjoy perfect happiness.

Prophet Muhammad told Jabir, the son of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr, who was martyred at the Battle of Uhud:

*Do you know how God welcomed your father? He welcomed him in such an indescribable manner that neither eyes have seen it, nor ears heard it, nor minds conceived of it. Your father said: “O God, return me to the world so that I can explain to those left behind how pleasant martyrdom is.” God replied: “There is no longer a return. Life is lived only once. However, I'll inform them of your circumstances you are in,” and He revealed: Never think of those slain in the way of God as dead; rather, they are alive and are provided in the Presence of their Lord (3:169).*

If you led a good, righteous life, you will have a happy death. If you led a wicked life, you will have a wicked death.

Prophet Muhammad, the most advanced in worshipping God, and 'Umar advised performing the prescribed prayers while one is dying. Khalid ibn Walid, one of the few invincible generals in world history, asked those beside his death-bed to fetch his sword and horse. Such people as 'Uthman, 'Ali, Hamza, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, and many others dedicated themselves to the cause of Islam and so died as martyrs.

# What about the Angel of death?

Since all angels were created from light, they can be present in any place and in any form simultaneously. They also can perform countless tasks at the same time. Therefore, 'Azra'il can take millions of souls simultaneously and without any confusion. Each Archangel has subordinates that resemble him and are supervised by him. When believers die, angels come to them with smiling, radiant faces. They are followed by 'Azra'il, 'Azra'il and his subordinates charged with taking these souls, or by one of his subordinates. The Qur'anic verses: By those who pluck out violently; by those who draw out gently (79:1–2) indicate that the angels who take the souls of believers differ from those who take the souls of unbelievers. The souls of the latter, who have embittered and frightened faces at death, are plucked out violently.

# What is death?

The body is an instrument of the spirit, which governs and controls it in its entirety.

When its appointed hour comes, an illness or failure of bodily functions is like an invitation to the Angel of Death, known as Archangel 'Azra'il in Islam. God is obviously the One Who causes people to die. But to save people from complaining about Him, as death appears as a disagreeable event to many people, God uses 'Azra'il as a veil between Himself and the taking of souls. He also puts illnesses or some other calamity as another veil between 'Azra'il and death so that people are saved from complaining about him.