



[“Every Soul Shall Taste of Death” – The Passing of Sahar Taylor](#)

Allah tells us in Surah al-Baqarah:

O you who securely believe! Seek help in steadfast patience and in the salat. Truly, Allah is with the patient. And do not say that those who are slain in the way of Allah are dead; rather, they are living, but you do not know in what way. And truly, We shall try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of worldly wealth and lives and the fruit of labor, and give good news to the steadfast. And who when they are visited with misfortune say, ‘Truly, we belong to Allah, and truly to him we return,’ upon them rest the blessings of the Sustainer and mercy; it is they who are guided. (2:153-157)

Allah also says:

O My worshipers who believe! Surely My earth is spacious; therefore, worship Me alone. Everyone shall taste death, and then to Us you will be returned. (29:56-57)

Again, Surah az-Zumar, He says very clearly:

Allah receives the souls at the time of your death and those who have not yet died during your sleep. And He keeps those for whom He has decreed death, and releases the others for a set time. Surely, in that are signs for the people who reflect on the truth. (39:42)

My dear brothers and sisters, I read to you and I repeat again, Allah Swt exhorts us in the Holy Qur'an:

Every soul shall taste of death, and on the Day of Judgment shall you pay your full recompense. Only he who is saved from the fire and admitted to Paradise will have obtained the purpose of the life of this world. The life of this world is but goods and chattel and deception. (3:185)

Our Prophet (sal) said:

Live in this world as if you were a stranger passing through. All thanks and praise is only due to Almighty Allah; only benedictions, salutations, and blessings upon our prophet (peace be upon him).

As Muslims, my dear brothers and sisters, it is time to reassess our approach to dying and to death. Dying is understood to be a part of living, an important part. Sometimes we may not want to know about the process that occurs after we die, because we are afraid and we just don't like to think about it. However, it shouldn't be the attitude of the believer. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, ***"Live in this world as though you are a stranger or a traveler passing through it."*** And in the Qu'ran it has been told to us, **"The living and the dead are not alike. Allah makes whoever He wishes to hear; but you (O Muhammad) cannot make them hear, those in the graves."** (35:22) And, **Those who are slain in the way of Allah, do not call them dead. They are alive, but you do not understand.** (2:154)

Some people insist on a very literal meaning of these verses, and say they are only for those who are martyred in the wars. But they should read the history of the

Sahabah, the *imams*, the *awliya-Llāh*, and the *shuyukh* of *ihsan*, how hard all of them were trained, and trained themselves; how, with so much pain, they took care of the *at-tazkiyat an-nafs*, of themselves and their people; how they faced hardships in spreading the *sahih iman* in the world; and how they fought with their adversaries, whether humans, *jinn*, or *shayatin*, in difficult circumstances. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) described *at-tazkiyat an-nafs* as the larger *jihad*, the Jihad al Akbar, (rather than) fighting the enemy on the battlefield. It is in a Hadith that the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, ***“The prophets are alive and they pray in their graves.”*** It is in Hadith that the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, ***“Whoever recites darūd at my grave, I hear him. And whoever recites it afar, it is conveyed to me.”***

We as Muslims are on a journey. We should know about that journey, and its itinerary, not just one small part of it. We should also understand some things about the destination. We should be foremost in knowledge and understanding about death and dying, so we can organize our life accordingly. And we are enjoined to accept the Will of Allah Swt with good grace and with *sabr*, with patience, and with perseverance. But many Muslims, when they find out they are ill, going to pass are quite indignant, angry, and appalled. They protest, often, in agony and outrage. Such was not the case of our sister Sahar – may Allah reward her for her grace and dignity.

Dying is normally associated with suffering, pain, and trauma. It is normal to fear suffering, normal to react to it with anger and frustration, because we feel it oppresses us, that we have no control over it, that we are powerless. The denial of our own power is the root of our own suffering. That’s why so many of us spend so much time exerting our power, aggressively and subtly, loudly and quietly, over others and situations. We don’t even know that’s what we are doing. Quite often, suffering blocks our *iman*, and some of the questions that are asked are, “Why me?”

Why is this happening to me? Where is Allah in all of this? Why am I the one who is being punished? Look at that bad person over there, or that person who has been sick for years and years and years and still hangs onto this life.” This is the search for understanding, for meaning.

O man, while you are on this earth, be sure that We will test you with many things: fear, hunger, loss of goods, life, sickness, and death, and the fruits of your toil. But give glad tidings to those who when they are tested turn to Almighty Allah when they are afflicted, with patience and with prayer. And they will say, “O Allah, everything comes from You, and to You we will return.” (2:155-156)

Three things will then happen when we submit to Allah: *salawat*, peace and blessings; Allah’s mercy and compassion; and they will be guided by Allah. Pain and suffering is not a curse from Almighty Allah, but rather a blessing and a test to see how we will react when we are challenged and when we are tested. What is called death is not pure annihilation; it is a movement from one state of being to another, the transmigration of a soul from our form of biological life to another dimension of existence. In the prophetic tradition, this dimension is referred to as the *barzakh*. It means *isthmus*, a partition between two areas or two bodies of water. In this case, it also means between two zones, two areas of life: the physical state and the Day of Resurrection, Yawmi Qiyama.

The *rūh* / spirit is released into a new life, independent from the physical body, in this event that is called death. Allah says, **“Every soul shall taste death. Then in the end you shall return to Us.”** The person continues life with the form of a spirit body, in the same way as in this physical body. Allah says, **“And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive though you**

perceive it not.” The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, recounted by the great scholars of Islam:

The deceased who tasted death, knows those who washed his or her body, who shrouded the corps, who performed the funeral service for her, who attended the funeral procession, who descended the corpse into the grave, and who prompted (or made du’ā) over the grave.

Even in modern times, there are so many reports of people in the Hereafter. They call them near-death experiences. I remember many years ago going to a seminar by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross who lived up in Charlottesville. That’s how she dedicated her life, documenting these near-death experiences: Ray Moody and Melvin Morrison and Ralph Wilkerson and people like that. This was discovered in the 60’s, among other things that were discovered in the 60’s, like Bobby Dylan and other things.

A strange sound comes sometimes, a beautiful fragrance, a buzzing, a ringing noise, clean pure smell of misk fragrance, while having a sense of being passed, peace and painlessness comes. While people are dying, they may be in intense pain, but as soon as they leave this body, the pain vanishes and they experience peace. These out of the body experiences, sometimes are described like a *majaz*, a tunnel. It is indeed that. It is a *majaz* / a metaphor for another existence, and it is a tunnel. The word in Arabic has both these meanings – rising rapidly into the heavens. Instead of a tunnel, sometimes people report seeing the earth from above, or a celestial sphere, or a bright light... people of light. Once on the other side of this tunnel, or after having risen into the heavens, the dying meet people who glow with an inner light. And often, they find friends and relatives who have already passed are there to greet them.

The Great Being of Light, Allah Swt, the origin of all light, and the light we know created us, the Nur-i-Mohammed is present and enrapturing. After meeting people of light, those who have passed often meet this power of the light. Some call this Allah or God or angels. They reported feeling scared, but they don't sense they were in hell or that they fell into something bad. This life review, being reported in our day and age, just attests to the truth of what the Qur'an tells us 1,434 years ago... and those who came before that. The beings of light present the dying person with a panoramic review of everything they have done in this life based on a kind of non-verbal communication. In particular, they are questioned, just as they are questioned in the grave by Munkar and Nakar.

When those questions are answered correctly, all their acts of worship, all their good intentions, all their good thoughts, all their happinesses come forward, and speak for them in wordless words, and they relive their acts. They come away feeling that love is the most important thing in life. We know that those people who reported near-death experiences were forced to return. And some of them say they were reluctant to return. But we all have heard in the Qur'an that Allah says that some spent time with Him and some were forced back. Allah says,

It is Allah that takes the souls of men and women at death, and those who die not during their sleep. And those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back from returning to life, but the rest He sends (meaning their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily, in these are signs for those who reflect.

I wonder what Elizabeth Kubler-Ross would have said had she known about that *'āyat* in the Qur'an. It tells about those who have passed, and who He keeps back,

and those He sends back. Who would have thought? When you live in a community like we do, you will celebrate many things. You will celebrate happiness together on occasions like the Eid, and the Mawlid an-Nebi, on the birthdays and the births themselves. You will celebrate the successes of each other, the things that have gone right. We will celebrate the joys we have with our realizations and the work we do together. It's a big world out there, and many occasions that come into our life and our community. But in that world out there also are many things that are hidden from the physical eyes of people. The *awliya-Llāh*, our *shuyukh*, the *salihīn* are joined by their spouses and their children and their *muridīn*, followers around them in this world, and in the Hereafter. It says in Qur'an:

We shall unite the believers with those descendants of theirs who follow them in their faith, and shall not deny them any part of the reward for their good deeds.

It's important that we are among ourselves in faith/*iman*, not just we are related by blood. Almighty Allah Swt tells us, **"O you people of iman! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in the state of full surrender and submission to the will of Almighty Allah."** This is what we are taught in Islam about life and about death. Dying is normally associated with suffering and pain and trauma; yet, knowing we are powerless against it, we have to understand its meaning. We have to search for the conclusion of life. *Nafs mut'mainna*, the soul at peace: Allah says to us, **"O contented soul, O satisfied soul, return unto your Lord well pleased, and He well pleased with you. Enter you among My devotees. Yes, enter thou into My Paradise."** (89:27-30) Death is a stage that occurs when the spirit departs from the body to make it lifeless.

As Muslims and as people of Tariqah, we must understand this fundamental article of faith/*iman*: we believe in the resurrection of the body in the spirit, and we will be reunited in the Hereafter. This life is a stage for action. Every action will have a reaction in the Hereafter. The life to come after the resurrection is a stage of reward. Human beings will either be in pure happiness or in total misery. It is part of the belief that after this awakening, we will account for our deeds and we will be judged accordingly. Those upon whom Allah bestows His Mercy will be in Paradise. And those who are denied it will abide in hell, the place of absolute misery. What misery could there be, but not to be in Paradise and not to be with your beloveds for eternity? We don't have to think of hell just as hellfire. We have to think about what we don't have, instead of what you do have.

It was stated by the Prophet (sal) that the deeds of even the best person will not be enough to send them to Paradise without the mercy, the *tawfiq*, the grace of Allah Swt. Prophet Mohammed (sal) said,

A true slave of Almighty Allah, when he is afflicted with suffering or pain will turn to Him and say in prayer, "We belong to Allah and unto Him is our return. O Allah, reward me for my affliction. Give me something better in exchange for it. O Allah, cause me to live so long that life is better for me, and cause me to die when death is better for me. The road to Paradise is paved with suffering and hardship, while the road to the hellfire is paved with desire."

The Prophet (sal) also said, ***"O Muslims! You are in need of having patience in dealing with adversity as well as success."*** Everything that happens in one's life is for some purpose. We need to turn to Almighty Allah with patience and prayer. The Prophet (sal) also stated, ***"Increase the remembrance of the destroyer of all***

pleasures: death.” This is something I recite to you on Saturday nights. We pray Almighty Allah to bless this gathering today, and this *ummah*, and the *ummah* at large to create affection in the hearts of Muslims, and to reform them, to guide them to paths of true safety and security and peace, *taslim*. We ask You, Allah, to draw them out of the darkness into light, to assist them against the enemies. O Lord: grant us beneficence in this world and the next, save us from the torment of the Jahanaam.

Those who believe and do righteous good deeds, We shall soon admit to gardens with rivers flowing beneath their eternal home, and therein shall they have companions pure and holy, and We shall admit them to shades cool and ever deepening.

So it is with our sister, I am sure, and so we should be grateful to Allah Swt for enlightening us to relieve some of our pain and some of our burden, *inshā'a-Llāh*, at such a loss. Allah, we ask You for Your special blessings upon the soul of Sahar, and upon her family, and extended family, and our community as her family. We ask You, Allah, to give her the grace and the mercy she so deserves for being the servant of so many people, and a talented and wonderful woman, a person of great dignity and honor, a person of simplicity and kindness. We ask You for all who are gathered here today to give us strength on this day. And we ask You for strength for those among us who are ill, and those we know who are ill, and those in the world who are ill, and those who have passed before us to send your light and mercy on the Prophet Mohammed (sal) and upon them all. We ask You this through the heart of the believers, *inshā'a-Llāh*.

