

Anas ibn Mālik narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 When a man is laid in his grave, and his friends turn away, he hears the noise of their shoes.
- 2 Two angels come to him and sit him up. They ask him: 'What did you say about this man, Muhammad?'
- 3 He said: "As for the believer, he will say: I bear witness that he is God's servant and Messenger". He will be told: "Look at your place in Hell. God has replaced it for you with a seat in Heaven". The Prophet said: "He will see both".
- 4 As for the unbeliever, or the hypocrite, he will say: I do not know. I said what other people said.
- 5 He will be told: May you have never known or said.
- 6 He will then be hit by an iron hammer in between his ears. He shall send out a cry which will be heard by those close to him, but not by humans or jinn. ⁽¹⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1338; Muslim, 2870.

From the Qur'an

- ﴿As for him who, after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, puts himself in contention with God's Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers – him shall We leave to that which he himself has chosen, and shall cause him to endure Hell. How evil a journey's end.﴾ (4: 115)
- ﴿Before the Fire they are brought, morning and evening, and then on the Day when the Last Hour comes, it will be said: 'Cast Pharaoh's people into the worst suffering'.﴾ (40: 46)

The Narrator

Abu Ḥamzah Anas ibn Mālik ibn al-Naḍr of the Anṣār was a distinguished scholar, mufti, excellent reciter of the Qur'an and a leading scholar of Hadith. He was the chronicler of Islam. He was the servant of God's Messenger for ten years. The Prophet prayed to God to bless his life, and God gave him plenty of wealth and children and he attained to a very old age. Anas was one of the last of the Prophet's companions to die. He took part in several military expeditions with the Prophet, as also the pledge to the Prophet (peace be upon him) known as 'the pledge under the tree'. He died in Year 93 AH 712 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions the interrogation by two angels when a person is buried. Everyone is asked about the Prophet (peace be upon him). If he is a believer, he will be made to see his seat in Heaven, and his grave is made wider for him. If he is an unbeliever, he will see his seat in Hell and will suffer torment in the grave until the Day of Judgement.



Message and Meaning

1

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) tells his companions about something of the realm beyond our human perception. He tells them about the interrogation that is carried out when a deceased person is buried in the grave, and about the comfort or torment faced in the grave. He mentions that when the deceased is stowed in the grave and relatives and family begin to leave, his soul is returned so that he is in a stage of a special type of life which is called the *barzakh* life, or life of the intervening stage. The Prophet mentions that this happens a very short time after burial, so that the deceased will have heard the steps of his relatives who followed his funeral procession to the graveyard as they depart.

2

Then two angels attend him, whose names are said to be Munkar and Nakīr. They sit him up and ask him about God's Messenger (peace be upon him) and what he thinks about him. Did he believe in him and follow his faith, or disbelieve in him and discard his religion?

Authentic hadiths mention that the deceased is questioned about God, his religion and the Prophet. In this hadith, however, only the question about the Prophet is mentioned. Believing in Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) necessarily means believing in God, and accepting Islam as one's faith.

3

If the deceased is a believer, he will answer that Muhammad was God's Messenger and that he believes in him and follows his religion. The two angels will then give him the happy news that he will be in Heaven. They show him the place he would have occupied in Hell had he disbelieved, then they show him his place in Heaven which God has prepared for him for being a good believer. He will be delighted with the news and his grave will be given extra space.

4

If the deceased is an unbeliever or a hypocrite, he will say: 'I do not know. I said what other people said'. An unbeliever used to say what other unbelievers said about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), describing him as a sorcerer, poet, liar, madman, etc. A hypocrite used to say what believers said, but he merely repeated it without being convinced of its truth. He did not believe in the Prophet as God's Messenger.

5

The two angels respond by a supplication that he may never have known or followed anyone who knew, and may never have benefited by the Qur'an when it was read or heard. This because he never tried to find out or know the truth.



He will then be hit powerfully on the head with an iron hammer. He will send out a very loud cry heard by all animals, but not by humans or jinn. These two are excepted by an act of God's grace. Were they to hear it, it would spoil their lives. Zayd ibn Thābit narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'This community is tested in its graves. Were it not that you may stop burying your dead, I would have prayed to God to enable you to hear what I hear of the torment in the grave'.⁽¹⁾

Were they to hear such cries, they would have been compelled to believe and refrain from sin. This is contrary to the purpose of making this life a test for mankind.

The fact of the torment in the grave and the interrogation by the two angels are confirmed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Every Muslim must believe in this even though we cannot perceive it. Being spared such torment in the grave serves as a good tiding that a person will be safe on the Day of Judgement. Whoever is spared torment at this stage will find the next stage easier.



1 Related by Muslim, 2867.

Implementation

1

Try to review some admonition and circulate it to others. Seek such admonition in God's Book and in the Prophet's statements. Such admonition is now easy to find in published books, audio recordings and videos. We would all do well to remind ourselves time and again of the life to come, starting with the grave, so that we prepare ourselves to what will inevitably come.

2

When you hear some information given by God or His Messenger, you should reflect on what measures you need to take. When you believe in the torment in the grave and the interrogation by the two angels, you need to prepare for this and have your answers ready. You should also hasten to do good deeds and commit yourself to obedience of God, so that such matters will intercede on your behalf and confirm you in your answers.

3

When in the grave, a person will give the answers that he was convinced of in his life. A hypocrite used to declare his belief in Muhammad (peace be upon him) as God's Messenger, but he will not give this answer when he is in his grave, because his heart was full of falsehood and hypocrisy. It is necessary, therefore, that we should confirm our belief in God and be absolutely convinced that 'there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger'.





The person who deprives himself of entry into Heaven which is so vast that its width is the same measure as the heavens and earth, and exposes himself instead to torment in the grave and abiding in Hell forever is certainly not wise. What he gains in return is nothing more than enjoying a few days or even years, or perhaps a few hours or minutes, in this present life.



A believer sees his place in both Heaven and Hell while he is in his grave. This serves as clear evidence that both are in existence now. We should remind ourselves that this is what will certainly happen in the life to come. Are we prepared for it?



Preparation for interrogation in the grave and praying for shelter from its torment are aspects of our faith. This is extremely serious. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to add a supplication for protection from it in every prayer, just before he finished a prayer with *salām*.



