148285 - The life of the Prophets, siddeeqs, martyrs and righteous people in the grave is the life of al-barzakh

the question

Some people quoted as evidence the verse of the Qur'an which says that the martyr is not dead, and that he has a life, and they say that the Prophet was a martyr, because his death was the result of his ingesting poison. Hence we can seek to draw close to Allah by calling upon his name, and if you say that we need evidence for that, they will quote as evidence what is mentioned about the virtue of some dhikr [sending blessings upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)]. And they say: how can a person be dead when, if we send blessings upon him, he responds to us in like manner, and similarly we are required to send greetings of salaam to him in the form of the tashahhud in the prayer. So how can we send greetings of salaam to someone who is dead? I may argue against that by asking why did the Sahaabah not adopt such an idea when they were alive? Please give me a detailed response to all of that, and explain to me what is meant by the verse that they quoted as evidence that the martyr is alive. As-salaamu 'alaykum.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The martyrs are alive with their Lord, receiving provision – as Allah, may He be exalted, tells us – and that is more appropriate in the case of the prophets.

That is the life of al-barzakh, which cannot be compared to the life of this world, and no one knows its true nature except Allah.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says in His holy Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, ‘They are dead.’ Rather, they are alive, but you perceive [it] not”

[al-Baqarah 2:154]

“And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:169].

Muslim narrated in his Saheeh (1887) that Masrooq said: We asked ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood about this verse, and he said: We also asked about that, and he (the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) said: “Their souls are in the crops of green birds, which have lamps hanging from the Throne, and they roam freely wherever they want in Paradise, then they return to those lamps. Their Lord looked down upon them and said: ‘Do you desire anything?’ They said: ‘What could we desire, when we can roam freely wherever we want in Paradise?’ He did that with them three times, and when they saw that they would not be left without being asked, they said: ‘O Lord, we want You to restore our souls to our bodies so that we may be killed for Your sake again.’ When He saw that they had no need, they were left alone.”

Imam Ahmad (15351) narrated: Muhammad ibn Idrees (i.e., ash-Shaafa‘i) told us, from Maalik, from Ibn Shihaab, from ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Ka‘b ibn Maalik, that he told him that his father, Ka‘b ibn Maalik, used to narrate that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The soul of the believer is a bird that perches in the trees of Paradise until Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, restores it to its body on the Day He resurrects him.”

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a great and significant saheeh isnaad, which includes three of the four imams, the founders of the major madhhabs. End quote.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (2/164).

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the souls of the martyrs, they are in the crops of green birds, and they are like stars in comparison to the souls of the ordinary believers, for they fly by themselves. End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (2/164).

Imaam Ahmad (2386) narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The martyrs are on the banks of a river at the gate of Paradise in a green tent, and their provision comes out to them from Paradise morning and evening.”

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Its isnaad is jayyid. The martyrs may be divided into different categories: in some cases, their souls are allowed to wander freely in Paradise, and some of them are on the banks of this river at the gate of Paradise. It may be the case that all of them come to this river and they gather there, and their provision is brought to them morning and evening. End quote.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (2/164)).

The words in the [first] hadith, “O Lord, we want You to restore our souls to our bodies so that we may be killed for Your sake again”, and the words in the second hadith, “until Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, restores it to its body on the Day He resurrects him”, indicate that this bliss is bliss that is experienced by the souls, and that the life referred to is the life of the souls. This is the life of al-barzkh, which does not resemble the life of this world in any way. The souls are not in the bodies that they had in this world, hence they ask Allah to return them to their bodies so that they can be killed again [in His cause].

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The dwellings, houses and palaces of the martyrs that Allah has prepared for them are definitely not those lanterns to which their souls return in al-barzakh. They will see their dwellings and abodes in Paradise, but (for the time being) they will be settled in those lanterns that are

suspended from the Throne. Admittance [to Paradise] in the perfect and complete sense will only happen on the Day of Resurrection. And the souls' entering Paradise in al-barzakh is something less than that. End quote.

ar-Rooh (p. 97).

The scholars of the Permanent Committee said:

The life of the prophets, martyrs and other close friends of Allah is the life of al-barzakh, the reality of which no one knows but Allah. It is not like the life that they had in this world. End quote.

Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa'imah (1/173-174).

Among the evidence that the life of these people [in al-barzakh] is not like the life of this world is the fact that the property of the martyrs is inherited, and their wives are allowed to remarry after they die. Thus the same rulings are applied to them as are applied to all other people who die.

Moreover, the Prophets are succeeded by the imams [leading scholars] and caliphs, and they run the people's affairs, lead them in prayer, issue fatwas to them, judge between them, and so on.

When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died, his daughter Faatimah asked for her inheritance. If he were alive in the usual sense of being alive, she would not have asked for her inheritance; in fact, he would not have left behind anything to be inherited.

Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) responded to her on the basis of what he knew from the Sunnah of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), which is that the Prophets are not inherited from, and that what they leave behind is charity. If they were alive in the sense referred to by this questioner, he would have said to her: How can you inherit from him when he is alive and has not died?

Ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The texts which speak of his death (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in the Qur'an and Sunnah are well known. This is a matter on which there is consensus among the scholars. But that

does not rule out his living the life of al-barzakh, just as the death of the martyrs does not rule out their living the life of al-barzakh, as mentioned in the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:169].

End quote from Majmoo‘ Fataawa Ibn Baaz (16/107). See also: Duroos wa Fataawa al-Haram al-Madani by Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (1/52-53).

Secondly:

With regard to the idea that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died as a martyr because of the effects of the poison that he ingested in the poisoned lamb on the day of Khaybar, it may be said that Allah indeed honoured him with Prophethood and martyrdom.

Imam Ahmad (3606) narrated that ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said: To swear by Allah nine times that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was killed is dearer to me than swearing once, because Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, chose him as a Prophet and made him a martyr. Shaykh Ahmad Shaakir said: Its isnaad is saheeh.

It was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah: During his final sickness, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “O ‘Aa’ishah, I still feel the pain of the food that I ate in Khaybar, and this time I feel that my aorta is being cut because of that poison.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari in a mu‘allaq report. It was narrated in a mawsool report by al-Haakim (4393) and others. It was classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami‘ (7929). See: Seerat Ibn Hishaam (2/337); Zaad al-Ma‘aad (3/337, 4/122).

However the life of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in his grave is not because of what Allah decreed for him of martyrdom as a result of what he ate in Khaybar; rather all the Prophets are also alive in their graves.

Al-Bazzaar narrated in his Musnad (6888) from Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The Prophets are alive in their graves, praying.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (621).

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It should be understood that the life of the Prophets (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them) that is affirmed in this hadith is the life of al-barzakh, which is nothing like the life of this world. Hence we must believe in it, without trying to give likenesses for it, imagine how it is, or liken it to what we know in the life of this world. This is how the believer should understand such issues: believing in what is mentioned in the hadith, without resorting to analogies and personal opinions, as the innovators do who, in some cases, go as far as claiming that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is alive in his grave in a real sense, meaning that he eats, drinks and is intimate with his wives! Rather it is the life of al-barzakh, the true nature of which no one knows except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. End quote.

Thirdly:

With regard to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) returning the salaam of the one who sends greetings of salaam upon him, the same hadith which refers to that also refers to the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Ahmad (10434) and Abu Daawood (2041) narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no one who sends salaam upon me, but Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will restore my soul to me so that I may return his greeting of salaam.” Classed as hasan by al-Albaani.

Imam Ibn ‘Abd al-Haadi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The idea that the soul may be restored to the dead person in al-barzakh and that he may return the greeting of salaam to the one who sent salaam upon him does not necessarily refer to the kind of life imagined by some of those who erred; rather it is a kind of life of al-barzakh. The view of

those who claimed that it is akin to the usual life [of this world] is contrary to the religious texts and reason, because it implies that the soul leaves those on high and goes beneath the ground century after century, and that the body is alive and can understand, see and hear beneath layers of earth and stone. The full implications of this are quite obvious to anyone who is possessed of reason.

End quote from as-Saarim al-Munki (225)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The texts that we have quoted indicate that he can hear the salaam of one who is nearby, and that the salaah [blessings] and salaam of one who is far away are conveyed to him; they do not indicate that he hears that from the one who sends salaah and salaam. If he cannot hear the salaah and salaams of one who is far away except through an intermediary, then it is more apt to note that he cannot hear the supplication and plea for help from one who is absent. Rather the text indicates that the angels convey the salaah and salaam to him; it does not indicate that anything other than that reaches him. With regard to the hadith in which it says “There is no one who sends salaam upon me, but Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will restore my soul to me so that I may return his greeting of salaam”, the scholars understood it as referring specifically to sending salaam upon him at his grave; it does not refer to one who is far away. The Sunnah is when a man visits graves in general, he should greet their occupants with salaam and pray for them. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to go out to the people of al-Baqee‘ [the graveyard in Madinah] and greet them with salaam.

End quote from ar-Radd ‘ala al-Bakri (1/107).

Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] also said:

With regard to the one who says when visiting the grave of a deceased Prophet or righteous person, “O Allah, I ask You by virtue of so-and-so,” or
“by virtue of the status of So-and-so,” or “by virtue of the sanctity of so-and-so,” no such thing was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or from the Sahaabah or

Taabi‘een. More than one of the scholars stated that this is not permissible.… How can anyone say to a dead person: “I seek your help,” or “I seek your protection,” or “I am under your care,” or “Ask Allah for me,” and so on.

Thus it becomes clear that these are not prescribed means, even if it seems that they have some impact, so how about if they do not have any positive impact, and their negative outcomes outweigh their positive outcomes, as in similar cases when people call upon something other than Allah, may He be exalted?

Then he said:

Undoubtedly the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and even those who are of lower status than him, are alive and can hear what people say, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no man who passes by the grave of a man whom he used to know in this world, and he greets him with salaam, but Allah will restore that person’s soul so that he may return the greeting.” Narrated and classed as saheeh by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr.

But in their asking of the dead, there are several types of negative outcomes, such as: by annoying the dead by that asking, and the fact that this leads to shirk. These negative effects happen after death, not in life, because none of the Prophets and righteous people is worshipped when alive, as he forbids people to do that, but after he dies, he cannot forbid that, so that leads to his grave being taken as an idol (i.e., object of worship) …

End quote from Talkhees al-Istighaathah (1/452-454).

Thus it is clear that the idea that the prophets are alive [in al-barzakh] does not imply that they hear everything, and the fact that they hear one who is nearby does not imply that they hear one who is far away. The fact that they can hear in the grave does not mean that this is something that applies only to them, because it is narrated that people other than them also hear [in the grave], just as the dead person can hear the salaam of his relative in this world. In fact al-Bukhaari (3976) and Muslim (2875) narrated that Qataadah said: Anas ibn Maalik told us, from Abu Talhah, that on the day of Badr, the Prophet of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) issued

orders that twenty-four of the leaders of Quraysh be thrown into one of the dirty dry wells of Badr where anything that was thrown into it would become rotten. Whenever he defeated a people, he would stay in the battlefield for three days. When he was in Badr, on the third day he ordered that his mount be brought and saddled, then he set out, followed by his companions. They said: We think he is only going out for a reason. Then he halted at the edge of the well and started to call them by their names and their fathers' names, "O So-and-so Son of so-and-so, O So-and-so son of So-and-so, would it not have been better for you to have obeyed Allah and His Messenger? We have found what our Lord promised us to be true. Did you find what your Lord promised you to be true?" 'Umar said: O Messenger of Allah, are you speaking to bodies in which there are no souls? The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, you do not hear what I say any better than they do, but they are not able to respond to me!"

Al-Bukhaari (1374) and Muslim (2870) narrated from Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "When a person is placed in his grave and his companions turn to leave, he hears the sound of their footsteps. Then two angels come to him and sit him up…"

From this text, it is proven that the idea of the dead hearing in the grave is not something that is exclusive to the Prophets or martyrs. Moreover, it is not like hearing in this world; rather it is a certain kind of hearing, with its own nature and reality of which Allah knows best. Similarly, the life of the Prophets and the martyrs [in the grave] is not like life in this world; rather it is a certain kind of life, which does not imply that one may call upon them, seek their help or try to draw close to Allah by virtue of them at all. Rather such things are not prescribed in their case. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"That is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs sovereignty. And those who you invoke other than Him do not possess [as much as] the membrane of a date seed.

If you invoke them, they do not hear your supplication; and if they heard, they would not respond to you. And on the Day of Resurrection, they will deny your association [of them with Allah or your

worship of them]. And none can inform you like [one] acquainted [with all matters]”

[Faatir 35:13-14].

See also the answer to question no. 21524.

And Allah knows best.