

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, most Kind, most Merciful



Surat an-Nisa, 4:78

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ
وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ

Wherever you may be, death shall overtake you,
even if you were in fortified towers.

Learning Objectives

- To define death
- To analyse the reasons why people fear death
- To evaluate how we can overcome the fear of death

Key Words

مَوْتُ Mawt
death

عِزْرَائِيلَ Izra'il
name of the angel of
death

Death is certain



ACTIVITY...

Imagine that you and your family have been living by the seaside for many years. Consider the following scenarios.

- » The meteorological department issues a warning that in 10 months time there is a 10% chance that your area will be hit by a tsunami.

What, if any, action will your family take?

- » After 9 months the meteorological office issues a red alert that there is 100% certainty of a devastating tsunami hitting your area within 2 weeks.

What, if any, action will your family take?

- » Now consider the fact that, like everyone else, you will certainly die one day. The only thing you don't know is when.

What, if any, action will you take to prepare for the hereafter and when?

- » Death is absolutely certain – there is no way to escape it – yet we spend little or no time at all imagining or even planning for this most certain of events!

Allah reminds us in the Qur'an:

Surat an-Nisa, 4:78



أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ
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Wherever you may be, death shall overtake you, even if you were in fortified towers.

STORYTIME!



Izra'il, the angel of death, appeared in the form of a human being in the court of Nabi Sulayman and gazed continuously at one person present there. That person was taken aback and asked Nabi Sulayman the identity of the person staring at him. Nabi Sulayman informed him that it was the angel of death.

The man, suspecting that Izra'il had come to take his life, asked Nabi Sulayman to take him far away to India. Nabi Sulayman agreed and commanded a cloud to pick him up and take him to India.

The next day, Izra'il came to Nabi Sulayman and Nabi Sulayman asked him: 'Why were you staring at that person?'

The angel of death replied: 'I was wondering why Allah had commanded me to take the life of that person in India, whereas he was sitting here in your presence.'

What do we learn from this story?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Arabic word for death is *mawt*. Death is normally defined as the end of the life of a person. In Islam, death occurs when the soul departs from the body.



FIQH FACTS

According to Ayatullah Sistani, being pronounced brain dead is not sufficient to consider someone as dead, as long as their heart and lungs are working, even if it is with the help of a medical device. Therefore, it is not permissible for a doctor to switch off the medical device that is providing a patient with oxygen, even if he is brain dead, i.e. in a vegetative state.

Is death to be feared?

In the last lesson, we saw how our purpose in this world is to prepare for the Hereafter. Death is simply a means to reach the Hereafter, just like birth is the means of arriving in this world.

Consider, for example, our school lives. We go to school in order to prepare us for university or the world of work. Imagine on graduation day if we said we did not want to graduate and wanted to stay in school forever! Yes, we may be a little apprehensive of what the world outside school has in store for us, but if we have studied hard and prepared well, we would be excited to start this new phase of life.

Is it any wonder then why Hadhrat Qasim, when asked on the day of Ashura by his uncle Imam Husayn (a) as to how he viewed death, responded: **'Sweeter than honey!'**

So why do people normally fear death?

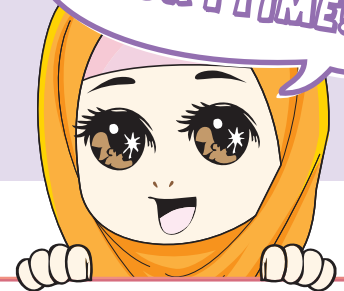
- 1 **They do not believe in the Hereafter and think death is the end of everything as they know it.**

Death appears dreadful and terrifying to many people – even the word 'death' itself creates alarm and fear. This is often because these people believe that death is the absolute end, and nothing will remain of them after they have died except rotting bones.

A strong belief in the Hereafter helps us overcome this unnecessary fear. Just as we learned in the previous

lesson, this world is temporary. True life – *hayawan* – is in the next world. Consider this story below about Nabi Ibrahim. What lesson can we learn from his conversation with Izra'il?

STORYTIME!



When it was time for Nabi Ibrahim to die, Allah sent the angel of death to him. After greeting Nabi Ibrahim, Izra'il informed him that his time to leave the world had come. Upon hearing this, Nabi Ibrahim, who was known as the friend of Allah, requested Izra'il to ask Allah: 'Does a friend want to take the soul of His friend?'

Allah sent a message back to Nabi Ibrahim: 'Does a friend not want to meet his friend?'

DID YOU KNOW?

The Kingdom of Bhutan, a landlocked country in South Asia at the eastern end of the Himalayas, is considered one of the happiest countries in the world, according to the UN World Happiness Report and is one of the only countries to actually measure happiness. Some attribute this to the fact that in Bhutanese culture, one is expected to think about death five times a day. They know that death is a part of life, and ignoring this essential truth creates an unnecessary heavy psychological fear.



2 They fear the pain that may be associated with death.

It is true that death can come to us in many ways. We should always pray to Allah to give us a good and honourable death, in His path, and an easy transition to the Hereafter.



Faith in Action

One way we can try to achieve this is by asking for forgiveness for our sins. This can be done at any time during the day and night. If at the time of our death we have no sins left unforgiven, our death will be a very pleasurable experience. This week make it a habit to ask for forgiveness each night before you go to bed.

3 They are apprehensive about the deeds they have done in this world and their consequences in the Hereafter.

Someone once asked Imam Hasan (a): 'Why are we reluctant to die? Why do we not like death?' Imam replied: 'Because you ruined your next world and developed this one. Naturally, you do not like to be transferred from [a state of] flourishing to [a state of] decline.'

This kind of fear of death arises because we have not prepared sufficiently for the Hereafter. We should always remember that death can come to us at any time, and we must make every effort to prepare for our Hereafter before it is too late.

Imam Ali (a) has said:

'Happy is the man who always kept the afterlife in his view, who remembers the Day of Reckoning through his deeds, who led a contented life, and who was happy with the lot that Allah had destined for him.'



REFLECTION

A successful ice vendor is one who sells his ice before it all melts away. How can we compare our time in this world to the ice vendor?

Rasulullah (s) has said: 'One of the qualities that purify the heart is to acquire a *kafan* (burial shroud).' Why do you think this is the case?



DID YOU KNOW?

One of the questions we will be asked in the Hereafter is how we spent our youth. Reflect on your life – what kind of answer do you think you will be able to give?



REFLECTION

It is highly recommended to prepare a will. Why do you think this is?



Once Imam al-Hadi (a) visited one of his companions who had fallen ill. He was crying fearing death. The Imam (a) said: "O servant of God! You fear death because you don't know what it is. Consider when you become dirty and filthy and are annoyed by the abundance of that dirt and filth, and in addition to that you are inflicted by wounds and mange. If you know that taking a bath would remove all those from you, would you not like to enter the bath and wash away all those sores from your body? Or would you detest entering it and leave all those to remain on your body?" He said, "Yes O son of the Prophet, I would do the former." He said, "Then death is like that bath. It is the last thing to cleanse your sins and to remove your ill acts. So, when you enter death and see its company you are saved from all sorrow, worry and agony. You will arrive at every delight and joy." [By hearing this] the man calmed down and rejoiced; he submitted and closed his eyes and passed away.



Rasulullah (s) said,

"I cannot liken death of a believer but like the birth of a baby from the dark confines of its mother's womb into the wide expanse of the world."

KEY POINTS

- 1 Death is a certainty. It comes to everyone, and there is no way to escape it.
- 2 Death is simply a means of reaching the Hereafter, just like birth is the means of arriving in this world.
- 3 Being pronounced brain dead is not sufficient to consider someone as dead, as long as their heart and lungs are working, even with the help of medical devices.
- 4 Remembering death constantly makes us focus on making sure we prepare well for the Hereafter.



Someone once asked Rasulullah (s) how they could gain the same reward as the martyrs of Uhud. Rasulullah (s) replied: 'Remember death 20 times in the day and night.'

- Waking up in the morning. There will come a time when I will no longer wake up in this world so I should make the most of this day Allah has given me.
- Eating food. O Allah, please give me good and wholesome food in the Hereafter as well, and make me be grateful for the food you have given me in this world.
- Meeting your friends. O Allah, make me long to meet You and be in the company of Your chosen ones.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal orange ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

- 1** What is the name of the angel of death?

- 2** According to Ayatullah Sistani, is a brain dead person considered to be dead?

- 3** List two reasons why people fear death and how these fears can be overcome.

- #### 4 Why is it important to remember death constantly?

