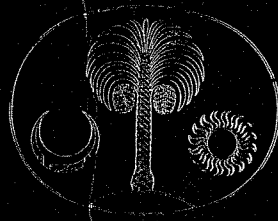


AL-GHAZĀLĪ
THE REMEMBRANCE
OF DEATH AND THE
AFTERLIFE · *Kitāb
dhikr al-mawt wa-mā
baʿdahu* · BOOK XL of
THE REVIVAL OF THE
RELIGIOUS SCIENCES
Ihyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn · translated
with an INTRODUCTION
and NOTES by T.J. WINTER



CHAPTER ONE

On the Remembrance of Death, and an Encouragement to Remember it Abundantly

KNOW THAT the heart of the man who is engrossed in this world and is given over to its vanities and harbours love for its appetites must certainly be neglectful of the remembrance of death. Thus failing to recall it, when reminded of it he finds it odious and shies away. Such are the people of whom God has said: *Say: Lo! the death from which ye shrink will surely meet you, and afterward ye will be returned unto the Knower of the Invisible and the Visible, and He will tell you what ye used to do.*⁸

Now, men may be either engrossed [in the world], penitent beginners, or arrived gnostics. The man engrossed does not remember death, or, if he does, it is with regret for his world, and he busies himself with disparaging death. The remembrance of death increases such a one in nothing but distance from God.

The penitent man recalls death frequently, so that fear and apprehension might thereby proceed from his heart, making his repentance complete. It may be that he is in fear of death lest it carry him off before his repentance is complete and before his provisions for the journey are replenished; he is excusable in his aversion to death, and is not included in the saying of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace): 'Whosoever would abhor meeting with God, God abhors meeting with him'.⁹ Such a man does not abhor death and meeting God, but only fears the meeting with God passing him by as a result of his deficiency and remissness. He is like the man who is made late for a meeting with his beloved by busying himself with preparations for the encounter in a way that will find approval: he is not deemed to be

reluctant about the meeting! The distinguishing mark of the penitent man is his constant preparation for this matter and his lack of any other concern. Were he to be otherwise he would associate with the man engrossed in the world.

As for the gnostic, he remembers death constantly, because for him it is the tryst with his Beloved, and a lover never forgets the appointed time for meeting the one he loves. Usually such a man considers death slow in coming and is happy upon its advent, that he might have done with the abode of sinners and be borne away into the presence of the Lord of the Worlds.[^] Such was the case with Hudhayfa, of whom it is related that when death came he said, 'A dear friend has come at a time of poverty. Whoever repents [at such a moment as this] shall not succeed. O Lord God! Should You know that poverty is dearer to me than wealth, and sickness more beloved to me than health, and death more dear to me than life, then make my death easy for me until I meet You.'

Thus it is that the penitent man may be excused the aversion he feels for death, while another is excusable in loving it and longing for it. And higher than either of them is the degree of he that has entrusted his affair to God (Exalted is He!) and no longer prefers death or life for himself, for the dearest of things to him is that which is more beloved in the sight of his Lord. By virtue of profound love and loyalty this man has arrived at the station of absolute surrender and contentment, which is the goal, and the utmost limit.

But whatever the situation may be, in the recollection of death there is reward and merit. For even the man engrossed in the world benefits from it by acquiring an aversion to this world, since it spoils his contentment and the fullness of his pleasure; and

[^] In the Islamic context the remembrance of death and the belief in the worthlessness of this world have traditionally been circumscribed by a prohibition on *tamannī al-mawt*, 'hoping for death'. Cf. the Prophet's statement as reported in the *ḥadīth*: 'let none of you hope for death' (Bukhārī, Marḍā, 19). Ghazālī writes elsewhere (*Ihyā'*, iv. 270; tr. Gramlich, 669) that 'knowledge (*ma'rifa*) becomes more perfect if one's life is long, through constant meditation, combatting of the lower self and divesting oneself of worldly attachments . . . and all of this calls for time.'

everything which spoils for man his pleasures and his appetites is one of the means of deliverance.

An exposition of the excellence of the remembrance of death, however done

The Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) has said, 'Remember often the Ender of Pleasures,'¹⁰ by which he meant, 'Make pleasures distasteful thereby until your inclination towards them is broken and you devote yourselves to God (Exalted is He!).' And he said also (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'Were the beasts of the field to know what the son of Adam knows of death you would not find a single plump one to eat.'¹¹

Said 'Ā'isha (may God be pleased with her), 'O Emissary of God! Shall anyone be resurrected alongside the martyrs?' 'Yes,' he replied. 'He who recalls death twenty times in one day and night.'¹²

The entire reason for this merit is that the remembrance of death must needs result in an aversion to the abode of beguilement and demand that one make preparations for the Afterlife, while heedlessness of death summons one to indulgence in worldly desires.

The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) has said, 'Death is a precious gift to the believer.'¹³ This he said because 'the world is the believer's prison,'¹⁴ in which he is incessantly in difficult circumstances due to suffering [the passions of] his soul, and because of the struggle with his desires and the repulse of his devil.[^] Death for him is a release from this torment, and for him this release is a 'precious gift'.

And the Prophet said (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'Death is an atonement for every Muslim.'¹⁵ By this he

[^] Every man having been assigned an angel and a devil, respectively the instruments of his guidance and temptation (Muslim, Tawba, 62, 63).

was referring to the true Muslim and the sincere believer, from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are secure and in whom the qualities of the faithful are realised, who has not been polluted by any but the smallest and most trivial of sins. From these he is purified by death, which atones for him following his avoidance of the major sins and his performance of the obligatory works of religion.

‘Aṭā’ al-Khurāsānī once said: ‘The Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) passed by a gathering from which laughter was ringing out. “Disturb your assembly by recalling the Spoiler of Pleasures,” he said. “And what is the Spoiler of Pleasures?” they asked. “Death,” he replied’.¹⁶

According to Anas (may God be pleased with him) the Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘Remember death abundantly, for to recall it wipes away sins and makes one abstemious in the world’.¹⁷

Also he said (may God bless him and grant him peace), ‘Sufficient is death as a divider’,¹⁸ and also, ‘Sufficient is death as a warner’.¹⁹

The Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) once went out to the mosque and noticed a group of people talking and laughing. ‘Remember death!’ he said. ‘By Him in Whose hand lies my soul, if you knew what I know you would laugh little and weep much.’²⁰

A man was once mentioned and highly praised in the presence of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace). ‘How is your companion’s remembrance of death?’ he asked. ‘We have scarcely heard him mention it,’ they replied. ‘Then your companion’, he said, ‘is not as you suggest’.²¹

Said Ibn ‘Umar (may God be pleased with him), ‘I once came to the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, in a group of ten people. A man from the Helpers [*al-Anṣār*] enquired, “Who is the most intelligent and generous of men, O Emissary of God?” And he replied, “The most diligent in recalling death, and the one who is best prepared for it. Such are the intelligent ones, who have gained the honour of this world and the dignity of the next”’.²²

Let us now turn to the Narratives.^A

Al-Hasan, may God (Exalted is He!) have mercy upon him, said, ‘Death has exposed the world’s faults, and has left no joy to any thinking man’.

Said al-Rabī ibn Khuthaym, ‘There is nothing concealed for which the believer waits that is better than death’. He also used to say, ‘Let no-one know of me, and throw me in to my Lord.’

A philosopher once wrote to one of his brethren as follows: ‘O my brother! Beware of death in this abode before you travel to an abode in which you long for death but find it not.’

When death was mentioned in the presence of Ibn Sīrīn all his limbs would become lifeless.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz used every night to gather together the doctors of the Law, and they would remind one another of death, the Arising and the Afterlife until they broke out in tears as though at a funeral.

Ibrāhīm al-Taymī said, ‘Two things have severed me from the pleasures of this world: the remembrance of death, and calling to mind the standing before God (Great and Glorious is He!)’.^B

Said Ka‘b, ‘The world’s misfortunes and²³ cares become trivial for the man who is conscious of death.’

Said Muṭarrif, ‘In a dream I once saw someone declaiming in the very centre of the mosque of Basra, “Remembering death the hearts of the Godfearing has broken. In nought save distraction, by God, is how you see them”’.

Said Abū Ash‘ath, ‘We used to call on al-Hasan, and [his conversation] was of nothing but Hell, the Afterlife, and the remembrance of death.’

Ṣafīya (may God be pleased with her) told of an old woman who once complained to ‘Ā’isha (may God be pleased with her) of the hardness of her heart. ‘Remember death frequently’, she told her, ‘and your heart will be softened’. This she did, and her heart was indeed made soft. She went to thank ‘Ā’isha (may God be pleased with her).

^A *āthār*: traditions of the early Muslims, usually distinct in Ghazālī’s writings from *akhbār*, traditions ascribed to the Prophet.

^B i.e. on the Day of Judgement.

When David (upon whom be peace) remembered death and the Resurrection he would weep and his joints would become dislocated; when he remembered the [Divine] attribute of Mercy he would become himself again.

Said al-Ḥasan: 'Never have I seen an intelligent man without finding him to be wary of death and saddened by it.'

Said 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz to one of his divines, 'Admonish me.' 'You shall not be the first caliph to die,' he replied. 'Tell me more,' he asked. 'Of your ancestors from Adam,' he said, 'not one has not tasted death; now, your turn is come.' At this, 'Umar wept.

Al-Rabī ibn Khuthaym dug a grave in his house, and used each day to sleep therein so that by this expedient he might remember death unceasingly. 'Were the remembrance of death to leave my heart for a single hour', he was wont to say, 'it would become corrupted.'

Muṭarrif ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Shikh khīr said, 'This death has indeed spoilt the pleasure of those that seek pleasure, therefore seek out that pleasure in which there is no death.'

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz once said to 'Anbasa, 'Remember death abundantly, for if your life is easy it will make it hard, while if your life is hard it will make it easy.'

Said Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī, 'I once asked Umm Hārūn whether she loved death. "I do not," she replied. "Why not?" I enquired, and she said, "Were I to disobey a human being I would not wish to meet him. So how can I wish to meet Him when I have disobeyed Him?"'

An exposition of the way to bring about the recollection of death in the heart

Know that death is a terrible and most perilous thing. The heedlessness with which the people treat it is the consequence only of their insufficient meditation upon it and remembrance thereof. Even the man who does remember it does not do so with an unoccupied heart, but rather with one that is busy with the desires of this world, so that the remembrance of death does not

have a salutary effect upon his heart. The way forward here is for the bondsman to void his heart of all things save the recollection of the demise which lies before him, in the way that the man who intends a dangerous voyage to a desert place or to set sail upon the ocean does not think of any other matter. When the remembrance of death touches his heart and comes to make some impression upon it his contentment and pleasure in the world will wane and his heart will break. The most productive method of bringing this about is for him to make frequent remembrance of those of his peers and associates who have passed away before him: he should contemplate their death and dissolution beneath the earth and recall how they appeared in their former positions and circumstances, and meditate upon the way in which the earth has now obliterated the beauty of their forms, and how their parts have been scattered in their tombs, and how they made widows of their wives and orphans of their children; how they lost their property, and how their mosques and gatherings have become voided of them, and of how their very traces have been wiped away. To the extent that a man recalls another, and pictures clearly in his mind his state and how he died, and imagines his form, and remembers his sprightliness and how he used to come and go, and the care which he devoted to living and to continuing, and his forgetfulness of death, and how he was deceived by the propitious means of his subsistence, and his trusting in his strength and his youth,²⁴ and his inclination to laughter and fun, and his heedlessness of the imminent death and the speedy destruction which lay before him; how he used to go hither and thither, and that now his feet and joints have rotted away, how he used to speak, while now the worm has devoured his tongue, how he used to laugh, while now the dust has consumed his teeth; how he used to arrange for himself that which he would not need for ten years at a time when there lay between him and death only a month, while he was in ignorance of what was planned for him, until death came at an hour he had not reckoned upon, and the Angel's form stood revealed before him, and the summons struck his ears—either to Heaven or to

Hell!—at that time he will see that he is like them, and that his heedlessness is as theirs, and that as theirs shall be his end.

Said Abu'l-Dardā' (may God be pleased with him), 'When you recall the departed count yourself as one of them.'

Said Ibn Mas'ūd (may God be pleased with him) 'The happy man is he who draws an admonition from someone else.'

Said 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, 'Do you not see that each day, by morning and night, you prepare a traveller to God (Great and Glorious is He!), setting him in a crevice in the earth, who has taken the dust for his pillow, left his loved ones behind, and put himself apart from his means of subsistence?'

Holding fast to these and other similar ideas, and also entering graveyards and seeing ill people, is the way to refresh the remembrance of death in the heart until it takes possession of it and stands before one's eyes. At this point one will almost be ready for it, and will shun the world of vanity. Otherwise, a remembrance with the superficial aspect of the heart and a sweet tongue will be of little avail in warning and informing. However contented one's heart may be with some worldly thing, one should at once recall that it must needs be parted with.

One day, Ibn Muṭī' looked at his house, and was delighted by its beauty. He then broke out in tears, saying, 'By God, were it not for death I would rejoice in you, and but for the narrowness of the graves towards which we travel we would be entranced by this world.' Then he sobbed loudly and violently.

On Lengthy Hopes, and the Merit of Brief Hopes, together with the Reason for their Prolongation and How this may be Cured

The merit of brief hopes

GOD'S EMISSARY (may God bless him and grant him peace) once said to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, 'In the morning-time, do not speak to yourself of the evening, and in the evening-time do not speak to yourself of the morning. Take from your life something for your death, and from your health something for your infirmity, for in truth, O 'Abd Allāh, you do not know what your name shall be tomorrow.'^a

'Alī (may God ennoble his countenance) related that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, 'Two things fear I for you above all else: the pursuit of desire and lengthy hopes. For the pursuit of desire bars one from the Truth, while lengthy hopes are the very love of this world.' Then he said, 'Indeed, God (Exalted is He!) bestows the world upon the man He loves and the man He abhors; and when He loves His bondsman He gives him faith. Indeed, religion has its sons, as does the world; therefore be with the sons of religion, and be not with the sons of the world. Indeed, the world has moved by and passed on, while the Afterlife has moved close and drawn near. Indeed, you are in a day in which there is action without reckoning, but

^a This is in fact Ibn 'Umar's advice to Mujāhid usually appended to the well-known *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet says, 'Be in the world as though you were a stranger or a wayfarer'. (Bukhārī, Riqāq, 3.) According to Ibn Ḥajar the somewhat curious final phrase can mean either 'whether you will be called "sorrowful" or "blessed", or whether you will be alive or dead.' (*Fath al-Bārī*, xi. 235.)

truthfulness and piety, this matter augurs well indeed, so let not your share of this news (may God have mercy upon you) be that you listen to it with one ear and expel it from the other. For he that saw Muḥammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) saw him come and go without laying a single brick or piece of straw upon another; instead, a banner was raised up over him and he rolled up his sleeves for its sake. So make haste! Make haste! Be saved! Be saved! Why do you vacillate? By the Lord of the Ka'ba, you and the Command^a have well-nigh arrived as one. May God show His mercy to that bondsman who makes his life simple and eats crusts of bread, who wears patched rags and sits upon the floor, who exerts himself in worship, weeps over his transgressions, flees from God's chastisement and quests for His mercy, until, while he is in this condition, his appointed term comes to its close".

Said 'Āṣim al-Aḥwal, 'I was once told by Fuḍayl al-Ruqāshī in answer to a question which I had put to him: "What! Do not let the people's multitude distract you from yourself, for the Command shall come to you despite them. Say not, 'Go hither, and thither,' for thereby your day would be consumed to no end. The affair is safeguarded for you; never will you see a finer purpose or a thing more rapidly realised than a new act of virtue for an old transgression".'

^ai.e. the Day of Judgement.

CHAPTER THREE

On the Agonies and Violence of Death, and the States Preferable upon its Advent

KNOW THAT were there to lie before the hapless bondsman no terror, calamity or torment save that of the death agonies alone, these would suffice to render his life miserable and to cloud his happiness, and would banish his heedlessness and his distraction. It is right that his thoughts should dwell at length upon this matter, and that he should take the greatest care in preparing himself for it, not least because he is with every breath in its vicinity. As a philosopher once remarked, 'a calamity in another's hand cannot be foretold'. And Luqmān once told his son, 'O my son! Something whose advent you cannot foresee must be prepared for before it takes you unawares.'

It is a matter for some astonishment that a man, even if he should be indulging in the finest of diversions and the most delightful gatherings of play, will, if he is anticipating the entrance (for example) of a man-at-arms who is to strike him five blows with a wooden stick, find his pleasure spoilt and his life marred; yet with every breath that he draws the Angel of Death is liable to come in upon him with the agonies of death, but he pays no heed to this. There can be no reason for such a thing save ignorance and distraction.

Know, too, that the extreme pain of the death pangs is known in its fullness only to those who have tasted it. The man who has not done so may only come to know it through comparing it to the pains which he has actually experienced, or by inference from

the violent states of other people during their death agonies, thereby drawing an analogy which bears witness to him. This is as follows.

No extremity from which the spirit is absent can feel pain. When, however, the spirit is present, then the faculty which perceives pain is the spirit: whenever the extremity suffers some injury or burn the effect makes its way to the spirit, which will feel pain in proportion to the amount which reaches it. The sensation disperses through the blood, the flesh and the remaining extremities, so that only a certain part of it reaches the spirit itself.¹

However, should any pain travel directly to the spirit and not come into contact with anything else, then how terrible will that pain be, and how intense! For the pangs of death constitute nothing but a source of pain which invades the spirit itself and diffuses itself until the fractions of the spirit which are distributed throughout the body's depths have all been afflicted by it. If one is pricked by a thorn, then the pain which one feels runs only in that fraction of the spirit which is present in the place where the thorn prick occurred. The effect of a burn is more intense simply because the fractions of the fire spread out through the other parts of the body as well, so that no inner or outer part of the extremity remains unaffected by it, and the fractions of the spirit spread out through the other parts of the body come to feel it also. A wound only afflicts the place where the blade has touched, which is why its pain is inferior to that consequent upon a burn.

The pain felt during the throes of death, however, assails the spirit directly, and engulfs every one of its fractions. The dying man feels himself pulled and jerked from every artery, nerve, part and joint, from the root of every hair and the bottom layer of his skin from head to foot. So do not ask about the suffering and pain which he endures!

¹ According to the *Ihyā'* (III.3), the seat of the spirit [*rūḥ*] is a cavity in the corporeal heart, with which it has a subtle relationship which may be understood by the saints but never disclosed. From there it spreads out [*yanshur*] along the arteries to the remainder of the body. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, 365-366; Nakamura, *Ghazālī on Prayer*, 8n.; Calverley, 'Doctrines of the Soul in Islam' *MW* 33, 254-264; Tritton, 'Man, *nafs*, *rūḥ*, 'aqī', *BSOAS* 34, 491-495.

For this reason it has been said that 'death is crueller than the stroke of a sword, or being carved up with saws, or cut with scissors,' since to cut the body with a sword only produces pain though its association with the spirit, and how much worse must the pain be when it impinges directly upon the spirit itself! The man who has been stabbed cries out only because there is some remainder of strength in his heart and tongue; while the voice and screams of the dying man are cut off due to the severity of his pain, as his suffering bears down upon him and mounts up in the heart until it reaches' his every part, breaking his every strength and enfeebling all his limbs, leaving him with no strength left to cry for relief. It overwhelms his mind and deranges it, it strikes dumb his tongue, and it enfeebles his extremities. He longs to be able to seek relief in groaning, screaming and calling for aid, but he cannot. Should there remain in him any strength at all, a lowing and rattling sound is audible from his throat at the time when his spirit is pulled and dragged forth.

His colour changes also, to an ashen grey, until it is as though the dust which is the root of his nature has made itself manifest. Each vein is drawn out individually as the pain spreads through his surface and his innards, until his eyes roll up to the top of their sockets, and his lips are drawn back, and his tongue contracts to its root, and his testicles rise up, and his fingertips turn a greenish-black. So do not ask concerning a frame from which every artery is being pulled: were one of them alone to be pulled his agony would be intense, so how must it be when the percipient spirit itself is being pulled, and not just from one artery, but from them all?

Then, one by one, his extremities begin to die. First his feet grow cold, and then his shins and thighs, each limb suffering agony after agony, and misery after misery, until his spirit reaches his throat. At this point he gazes out for the last time at the world and its people, and the gate of repentance is closed, and he is overwhelmed by sorrow and contrition.

Said the Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'A man's repentance is accepted until he gives the death rattle'.²

Said Mujāhid [interpreting] His statement (Exalted is He!), *Repentance is not for those who work evil, and then, when death comes to one of them he says: Now I repent.*³ 'When he sees the messengers'.^A

At this juncture the face of the Angel of Death appears before him. Do not ask regarding the bitter taste of death, and its miseries as its agonies mount up! It was for this reason that the Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) used to say, 'O Lord God! Lessen for Muḥammad the agonies of death!'⁴ People only ask for refuge therefrom and hold it in awe out of their ignorance of it, for things can only be known before their occurrence through the light of Prophethood and Saint-hood. This is why the Prophets (upon them be peace) and the Saints were in such great fear of death, to the extent that Jesus (upon whom be peace) said, 'O company of disciples! Pray to God (Exalted is He!) that he may lessen these agonies for me,' (by which he meant the agonies of death) 'for I have feared death in a way which has brought me to its brink'.

It is related that a company of Israelites once passed by a graveyard, and that one of their number said to the others, 'What if you were to pray to God (Exalted is He!), that He should quicken before you a corpse from this graveyard so that you could put some questions to him?' So they prayed to God (Exalted is He!) and lo and behold! there before them was a man with the sign of prostration between his eyes, who had emerged from one of the tombs. 'O people!' he said. 'What would you have of me? Fifty years ago I tasted death, yet its bitterness is not yet stilled in my heart!'

Said 'Ā'isha (may God be pleased with her), 'I feel no envy for anyone whose death is easy after having seen the rigour of the death of God's Emissary (may God bless him and grant him peace)'.

It is related that [the Prophet] used to say (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'O Lord God! Truly You draw out the spirit from the sinews, the nasal bone and the fingertips. O

^A i.e. the angels.

Lord God! Grant me Your support in death, and render it easy for me to bear.'⁵

It is related on the authority of al-Ḥasan that the Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) once made mention of death, and its choking and its pain, and said, 'It is equal to three hundred blows with a sword'.⁶

He was once asked (may God bless him and grant him peace) about death and its severity, and replied, 'The easiest death resembles the branch of a thorn-tree caught in some wool. Shall the branch be extracted from the wool without some remaining with it?'⁷

Once he came in upon a sick man, and said, 'I know what he is experiencing. There is in him not a single artery that does not individually endure the pain of death.'⁸

'Alī (may God ennoble his countenance) used to rouse the people to fight by saying, 'Should you not fight, then you shall die [a natural death]. By Him in Whose hand lies my soul, a thousand sword-strokes are easier to bear than death in one's bed'.

Said al-Awzā'ī, 'We have heard it said that the dead man continues to feel the pain of death until he is resurrected from his grave.'

Said Shaddād ibn Aws, 'Death is the most fearsome terror that the believer will encounter in this world or in the next. It is worse than being carved up with saws, or being cut with scissors, or being boiled in cauldrons. If a dead man could be brought back to life to tell this world's people of death they would find no profit in life, and take no pleasure in sleeping.'

Zayd ibn Aslam related that his father once said, 'Whenever there remain for the believer certain degrees which he had not attained in the world through his works, death is made rigorous for him so that through its agonies and woe he might attain to his degree in Heaven. Whereas, should the unbeliever have to his account some act of kindness for which he has not been rewarded, then death is made easy for him to bear until his reward becomes complete and he takes his place in Hell.'

It is related of a certain man that he would question a large number of sick people about how they found [the advent of]

death. And when he [in turn] was taken ill he was asked, 'And you, how do you find it?' 'It is as though the very heavens were being folded back against the earth,' he replied, 'and as though my soul were being drawn through the eye of a needle.'

And [the Prophet] said (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'Sudden death is relief for the believer, and grief for the profligate'.⁹

It is related on the authority of Makhūl that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, 'Were a single hair from a dead man to be laid upon the dwellers of the heavens and the earth they would die, by the leave of God (Exalted is He!), because death lies in every hair, and it never falls upon anything without slaying it.'¹⁰

It has been related that 'were one drop of the pain of death to be distributed over all the mountains of the earth they would melt away'.

It is related that when Abraham (upon whom be peace) died, God, Exalted is He, asked him, 'How did you find death, O My Friend?' and he replied, 'Like a skewer pushed into damp wool and then tugged'. 'Yet We made it easy for you to bear,' He said.

It is related of Moses (upon whom be peace) that when his spirit passed away to God (Exalted is He!) his Lord asked him, 'O Moses! How did you find death?' 'I found myself,' he said, 'to be like a sparrow being roasted alive, unable either to die and find rest, or to escape and fly away.' It is also related that he said, 'I found myself to be like a sheep being flayed alive at the hands of a butcher'.

It is related of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) that upon his death he had by him a vessel of water into which he took to dipping his hand in order to wipe his face, saying, 'O Lord God! Mitigate for me the agonies of death!'¹¹ At the same time, Fāṭima (may God be pleased with her) was saying, 'How great is my sorrow at your sorrow, father!' But he said, 'There shall be no more sorrow for your father after this day'.¹²

Said 'Umar (may God be pleased with him) to Ka'b al-Aḥbār, 'O Ka'b! Speak to us of death!' 'Certainly, O Commander of the

Faithful,' he said. 'Death is as a thorny twig made to enter the stomach of a man, so that each thorn becomes attached to an artery. Then a powerful man pulls at it, and it takes what it takes, and leaves what it leaves.'

Said the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'The bondsman shall surely undergo the misery and pangs of death, and his joints shall surely greet each other saying, "Peace be upon you; from each other we part now until the Day of Arising"'.¹³

Such were the agonies of death as they were endured by God's Saints and dear ones. What, then, shall be our state, we who are engrossed in sins?

The agonies of death shall be followed in succession by its other calamities, of which there are three.

The first is the violence of the death throes, as we have already mentioned. The second consists in the vision of the Angel of Death, and the fear and terror which he inspires in the heart. For even if the strongest of men were to see him in the aspect he assumes when taking the spirit of a sinful bondsman he would not be able to bear the sight. It is related of Abraham, the Friend of God (upon whom be peace) that he once asked the Angel of Death, 'Are you able to show me the form you assume when taking the spirit of an evildoer?' 'You could not bear it,' he replied. 'But yes, I could,' he said. 'Then turn away from me,' he commanded, and he did so. Then Abraham turned round, and there before him stood a black man with hair erect, evil-smelling and garbed in black, from whose mouth and nostrils sparks and smoke were issuing forth. At this, Abraham fainted, and when he regained his wits the Angel had resumed his former guise. 'O Angel of Death!' he said. 'Were the evildoer to confront nothing but your visage after his death it would quite suffice him!'

And Abū Hurayra reported that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, 'David (upon whom be peace) was a solicitous^a man, who would lock the doors whenever he left his house. One day, after he had locked them and gone out, his wife looked out and saw that there was a man in the house.

^a In the sense of being concerned for his wife.

“Who admitted this man?” she demanded. “He will certainly have cause for dismay when David returns!” And when David came and saw him he asked, “Who are you?” “I”, he replied, “am the one who fears no king, and who is not stopped by any chamberlain.” “Then, by God, you are the Angel of Death,” he said, upon which he died, there and then.’

It is related that Jesus (upon whom be peace) once passed by a skull. Striking it with his foot, he said, ‘Speak, by God’s leave!’ And it said, ‘O Spirit of God! I was the king in such-and-such a time. One day, when I was seated upon the royal couch in my dominion, wearing my crown and surrounded by my courtiers, the Angel of Death appeared before me, and my every limb became numb, and my soul went out [of my body] towards him. O would that those gatherings had never been! O would that that intimacy had rather been solitude!’

This is a calamity which afflicts sinners and from which the obedient are exempt. The Prophets only told of the convulsions of death, and not of the horror felt by those who behold the form of its Angel. Even if he were to be beheld during one’s sleep at night the entire remainder of one’s life would be marred; so how must it be to behold him [awake] when he has assumed such an aspect?

The obedient man, however, shall see him in the best and most beautiful of forms. ‘Ikrima has related on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās that ‘Abraham (upon whom be peace) was a solicitous man. He had a house in which he would make his devotions and which he would lock upon leaving. One day when he repaired to this house he saw that there was a man within. “Who admitted you to my house?” he asked, and was told, “I was admitted to it by its Master”. “But I am its master,” said Abraham, but was told, “I was admitted to it by One Who has mastery over it more than you or I.” “Then which of the Angels might you be?” he inquired. “I am the Angel of Death,” came the reply. “Are you able to show me the form in which you take the soul of a believer?” “Yes,” he replied. “Turn away from me.” This he did, and when he turned round again, there before him stood a young man, handsome of face, perfumed, and finely-attired. “O Angel

of Death!” he told him. “Were the believer to encounter only your form upon his death it would quite suffice him!”’

A further calamity consists in the vision of the two Recording Angels.⁴ Said Wuhayb, ‘We have heard it said that no man dies without being shown his works by the two Recording Angels. If he had been obedient, then they say, “May God reward you well! For you made us sit at many a gathering of truth, and caused us to be present at many a righteous act.” But if he had been an evildoer they say to him, “May God not reward you well! For at many a gathering of iniquity did you make us sit, and you caused us to be present at many an act of unrighteousness, and obliged us to hear many a foul discourse. So may God not reward you well!” At this, the gaze of the dying man is fixed upon them, never to behold this world again.’

The third calamity is the witnessing by the sinful of their places in Hell, and the apprehension they feel even before this vision obtains. During their death agonies their strength grows increasingly feeble as their spirits yield to their departure from their physical frames. Their spirits, however, do not depart until they have heard the voice of the Angel of Death conveying one of the Two Tidings. Either this shall be: ‘Rejoice, O enemy of God, at [the prospect of] Hell!’ or: ‘Rejoice, O friend of God, at [the prospect of] Heaven!’ It is from this that the fear of people of understanding is ever inspired.

The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘Not one of you shall leave this world before knowing his destination, and before beholding the place he is to occupy in Heaven or in Hell’.¹⁴

And he said (may God bless him and grant him peace), ‘Whosoever would love meeting with God, God loves to meet him; but whosoever would abhor meeting with God, God abhors meeting with him.’ ‘Yet all of us are averse to death,’ [his Companions] said. ‘It is not the same,’ he replied. ‘For when the

⁴ According to a Tradition ascribed to the Prophet, ‘God has entrusted His bondsman to two angels, who record his works’. (Aḥmad ibn Maṣūf, *al-Musnad*, cited in Ibn Ḥajar, *Maṭālib*, III. 56.) For this doctrine see *Escatología*, 344–5; *Khālid*, 282.

sorrow to which the believer is travelling is banished, he takes delight in the meeting with God, and God takes delight in the meeting with him.¹⁵

It is related that Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān once said to Ibn Mas'ūd early one morning, 'Arise, and see what hour it is'. Ibn Mas'ūd did so, and when he returned said, 'The sky is red.' 'I seek refuge with You,' said Ḥudhayfa, 'from a morning voyage to Hell'.

Marwān once came in upon Abū Hurayra and said, 'O Lord God! Lighten his burden!' But Abū Hurayra said, 'O Lord God! Render it yet heavier!' Then he began to weep, saying, 'By God, I do not weep out of sorrow over losing this world, neither out of grief at being separated from you; rather I am awaiting one of the Two Tidings from my Lord: either to Heaven or to Hell!'

It is related in Tradition that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, 'When God (Great and Glorious is He!) is satisfied with His bondsman He says, "O Angel of Death! Make your way to So-and-so, and bring Me his spirit that I may grant him rest. His works I find sufficient: I tested him and found him to be as I desired." And so the Angel of Death descends in the company of five thousand angels all bearing rods of sweet basil and roots of the saffron plant, until each angel tells him different good tidings from his Lord. And then, holding their rods of basil, they form two ranks in preparation for the spirit's departure. When Satan beholds them he sets his hand upon his head and screams aloud. "What is the matter, O our lord?" his legions ask. "Do you not see the honour that has been accorded this bondsman?" he cries. "Where were you with respect to him?" And they reply, "We exerted our every effort with him, but he was invulnerable".¹⁶

Said al-Ḥasan, 'There is no relief for the believer save in the encounter with God, and whosoever is given this, then for him the day of his death is a day of joy, rapture, security, glory and honour.'¹⁷

Jābir ibn Zayd was asked on his deathbed whether there was anything that he desired, and he replied, 'A glimpse of al-Ḥasan'. And he was told, when al-Ḥasan came in to see him, 'Here is al-

Ḥasan'. He raised his eyes to look at him and said, 'O my brother! In this hour, by God, shall I take my leave of you, either to Heaven or to Hell.'

Muḥammad ibn Wāsi^c said on his deathbed, 'O my brethren! Farewell! To Hell, or to the forgiveness of God!'

It was the wish of one man that he should remain forever in his death throes and never be raised to face reward or punishment.

In this wise, the fear of an evil end has torn apart the hearts of the gnostics, constituting as it does one of the terrible calamities which accompany death. We have already mentioned the significance of the 'evil end' [*sū' al-khātima*] and the intense fear which the gnostics harbour for it in the *Book of Fear and Hope*; it is relevant in this context, but we shall not commit prolixity by mentioning it again.^a

An exposition of the states preferable in the dying man

Know that it is desirable for the dying man to have an aspect of peacefulness and tranquillity. He should be uttering the Two Testimonies^b with his tongue, and should be maintaining in his heart a favourable opinion of God (Exalted is He!). For it is related that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) once said, 'Watch for three signs in the dying man. If his forehead sweats, his eyes shed tears and his lips become dry, then the mercy of God (Exalted is He!) has alighted upon him. But if he should choke like a man being strangled, and if his colour should turn to

^a The *Ihyā's* *Book of Fear and Hope* (iv, book 3) devotes a long section (pp.151-157) to the question of the *khātima*, the mental and spiritual condition prevailing at the moment of death. In particular, the author points out that even the righteous man is vulnerable to two types of 'evil end', the more dangerous one being that 'when undergoing the agonies and terrors of death his heart may be overwhelmed by either doubt or denial, so that the spirit comes to be taken away in this condition'; alternatively, 'at the moment of death, the love of some worldly thing or pleasure may prevail over it ... so that he turns his face in the direction of this world, and in proportion to one's inclination towards the world the veil [i.e. that which bars man from seeing the Kingdom], which induces the chastisement, will descend.' (iv. 151.)

^b These being the formula 'I testify that there is no deity save God, and that Muḥammad is the Emissary of God'.

red, and if he should foam at the mouth, then this is from the chastisement of God which has befallen him."¹⁸

It is a favourable sign that his tongue should be pronouncing the words of the Testimony. Said Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, 'The Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Rehearse to your dying [the words] 'There is no deity save God'.'" And in a version related by Hudhayfa [the Prophet continued as follows], 'For truly this effaces one's previous sins'.¹⁹

Said 'Uthmān, 'The Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Whoever perishes knowing that there is no deity save God shall enter into Heaven".²⁰

Said 'Ubayd Allāh [in place of 'knowing that there is no deity save God']: 'While uttering the Testimony'.

Said 'Uthmān, 'When the dying man nears death you should repeat "there is no deity save God" to him, for no bondsman shall end his life therewith without it becoming his travelling-provisions to Heaven.'

Said 'Umar (may God be pleased with him), 'Be present with your dying ones, and cause them to remember, for they see what you do not; and prompt them to say, "there is no deity save God".'

Said Abū Hurayra, 'I heard the Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) say, "The Angel of Death once came to a dying man. Having looked into his heart and found nothing therein, he parted his beard and found the tip of his tongue adhering to his palate as he said, "There is no deity save God.' For this utterance of pure single-heartedness he was forgiven his sins".²¹

It is best for the prompter to abstain from being insistent; he should rather use gentleness, for it may be that the sick man's tongue is unable to pronounce the formula and that the resultant distress leads to his finding the prompting burdensome and causes

¹⁸ This Tradition is often cited in defence of the Ash'arite doctrine of justification by faith, and is typically accompanied by a word of qualification on the part of the theologians; for example al-Nawawī (quoting the Qādī 'Iyād's commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim): 'Even if such a man is not forgiven and is punished, he must ultimately be taken out of Hell and brought into Heaven'. (Nawawī, *Sharḥ*, i. 219.) See also the last chapter of the present work.

him to dislike the formula; it is to be feared that this might result in an evil end. The significance of [repeating] the formula lies only in ensuring that a man passes away without there being anything in his heart save God. For if he harbours no longing but for the Unique, the True, then his approach to his Beloved through death will be for him the ultimate felicity. But should his heart be infatuated with the world and incline towards it, and be in a state of lamentation over the loss of its delights, then even though the formula is present on his tongue his heart may utter nothing in confirmation. In such an instance the matter falls into the hazardous province of the divine will, for a mere wagging of the tongue is of little avail unless God (Exalted is He!) should through His grace grant it acceptance.

As regards having a favourable opinion [of God], this is recommended at this time, as we have already mentioned in the *Book of [Fear and] Hope*. A number of Traditions are forthcoming concerning the virtue of maintaining a favourable opinion.

Wāthila ibn al-Asqa' once came in upon a sick man and asked him, 'Tell me, how is your opinion of God?' 'I am immersed in my sins,' said the man, 'and am on the very brink of destruction, but yet I hope for the mercy of my Lord'. At this, Wāthila cried out, 'God is Most Great!' and the people of the house did the same. 'God is Most Great!' he said. 'I once heard the Emissary of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) say, "God (Exalted is He!) says, 'I am as My bondsman thinks me to be; so let him think of Me what he will'".²²

The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) once came in upon a young man who was dying. 'How are you?' he asked, and he replied, 'I have set my hope in God, and fear my sins'. And he said (may God bless him and grant him peace), 'Never have these two things been united in the heart of a bondsman in circumstances such as these without God granting him that for which he hopes, and delivering him from what he fears'.²³

Said Thābit al-Bunānī, 'There was once a youth much given to frivolity, whose mother would frequently reproach him, saying, "O my son! Your time will come, so remember it." And when

that which God (Exalted is He!) had ordained befell him she leaned over him and said, "O my son! I warned you of this your fate, and told you that your time would come." "O mother," he said, "I have a Lord Who is greatly kind, and it is my hope that some part of His kindness might not pass me by on this day". And Thābit said, 'So God had mercy upon him because of his good opinion of his Lord'.

Said Jābir ibn Wadā'a, 'There was once a young man who was disposed towards foolishness. When he drew near death his mother said to him, "O my son! Do you have any last wishes?" "Yes," he said. "Do not take my ring from me, for upon it God (Exalted is He!) is mentioned; perhaps He will have mercy upon me." After he had been buried he was seen in a dream, saying, "Tell my mother that that utterance benefited me, and that God has granted me His forgiveness".'

A nomad once fell ill, and upon being told that he was dying, asked, 'Where shall I be taken?' 'To God,' they replied. 'I cannot dislike being taken,' he said, 'to One from Whom all that is good proceeds'.

Said al-Mu'tamir ibn Sulaymān, 'When he drew near to death, my father said, "O Mu'tamir! Speak to me of the concessions [rukhas] [in the Law], that I may meet God (Great and Glorious is He!) thinking well of Him".'

They^a preferred that the bondsman's good works be mentioned to him on his deathbed so that he would think well of his Lord.

*An exposition of the sorrow felt upon meeting
the Angel of Death, through accounts uttered on the tongue
of the Spiritual State^b*

Said Ash'ath ibn Aslam, 'Abraham (upon whom be peace) once put certain questions to the Angel of Death (whose name is

^a The early Muslims

^b Ar. *lisān al-hāl*: an utterance made during the 'hāl', a brief state given the mystic by God, usually with emotional symptoms. (Cf. e.g. Qushayrī, *Risāla*, I. 236.)

'Azrā'īl, and who has two eyes: one in his face and the other at the back of his head). "O Angel of Death!" he said. "What do you do if there is one soul [dying] in the east and another in the west, or when the land is stricken by a plague, or when two armies clash?" "I summon the spirits," he said, "by God's leave, until they lie between these two fingers of mine". [And Abraham said,] "Then the earth is flattened out and left like a dish before him, from which he partakes as he wishes".' Ash'ath said, 'It was then that He gave him the good tidings that he was the Friend [khalīl]^a of God (Great and Glorious is He!)'.

Said Solomon the son of David, to the Angel of Death (upon them be peace), 'Why do I not see you dealing justly with mankind? For you seize one man, while you leave another alone.' 'I know no more of that than you,' he replied. 'I am merely given scrolls and books containing names'.

Said Wahb ibn Munabbih, 'A certain king once conceived a wish to ride to a province. He called for a garment to wear, but it was not pleasing to him, so he demanded another until after several tries he donned one that was agreeable to him. In the same fashion he ordered a mount to be brought, but found it not to his liking when it came, so others were brought to him until he mounted the finest one amongst them. Then the devil came to him and blew into his nostril, and he puffed himself up with pride. Then he set out on his journey, never looking at anyone because of his haughtiness. But then he was approached by a man of threadbare appearance, who came up to him and greeted him. When the king failed to reply he took hold of the bridle of his horse. "Release my bridle!" cried the king, "for you have committed something most heinous!" "I have a request to make of you," he said. "Have patience", the king said, "until I dismount." "No," he replied. "At this instant!" and he pulled at the reins of his horse. "Then say what it is," said the king. "It is a secret," he replied. So he leaned his head down to him, and [the stranger] confided his secret to him, saying, "I am the Angel of Death!" At this, the king's complexion changed colour, and his tongue stammered, and he said, "Leave me, so that I may return

^a Cf. Q. IV:125: *And God did take Abraham to be His Friend.*

to my family to bid them farewell, and wind up my affairs." "No, by God," he told him. "Never will you see your family and wealth again!" Thereupon he took away his spirit, and the king fell dead, as though he were a wooden log.

Then the Angel continued on his way. Presently, he came across a believer, whom he greeted and who greeted him in return. "I have a request which I would mention in your ear," he said. "Let me hear it," said the man. And he confided in him his secret, saying, "I am the Angel of Death." "Welcome!" he said. "Welcome to the one who has long been absent from me. By God, there is no-one on earth whom I have wanted to meet more than you!" At this, the Angel of Death said to him, "Conclude the business for which you had set out." But he replied, "I have no business which is more important and beloved to me than meeting God (Exalted is He!)." And the Angel said, "Then choose the state in which you would prefer me to take your spirit." "Are you able to do that?" he asked. "Yes," he replied, "and thus have I been instructed." "Leave me awhile, so that I may perform the ablutions and pray, and then take my spirit while I am prostrating." And this he did.

Said Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Mazanī, 'A man from the tribe of Israel once amassed a large fortune. When he drew near death he gave instructions to his sons, saying, "Show me the varieties of my wealth!" And he was brought a huge quantity of horses, camels, slaves and other things. When he looked at them he began to weep out of sorrow at their loss. The Angel of Death, seeing him in this state, asked him, "What has made you weep? Truly, by Him Who blessed you with these things I shall not leave your house before cleaving your spirit from your body." "Give me some respite," he pleaded with him, "that I may distribute my wealth." "What folly!" said he. "Your period of respite has come to an end; it would have been better had you acted before you had run your course." And saying this, he took his spirit.'

It is told that a certain man once accumulated great wealth, until there remained not a single kind of property in which he had not invested. He raised up a palace to which he set two

powerful gates, and gathered around his person a guard of young men. Then he called together his family and regaled them with food, and sat back on his couch with one leg over the other, while they set to eating. And when they had finished he said to himself: 'Revel for years, for I have accumulated all that you need!' But hardly had he finished uttering these words when the Angel of Death came by in the guise of a man dressed shabbily like a pauper. He struck the gates a tremendous blow, terrifying the rich man upon his couch. The young men leaped up and said, 'What is your business here?' 'Call your master for me,' he said. 'And should our master come out', they asked, 'for the likes of you?' 'Yes indeed,' he said. And when they told their master of what had transpired he said, 'You have done well'. But then the door was knocked even more violently than before, and when the guards leaped up to speak to him [the stranger] said, 'Tell him that I am the Angel of Death'. When they heard this they were aghast, and their lord was covered in ignominy and humility. 'Speak to him politely,' he instructed them, 'and ask him whether he is to take anyone from this house'. But [the Angel] came in, and said, 'Do with your wealth as you please, for I shall not leave this place before I draw forth your spirit'. So he called for his wealth, and said, when it was laid out before his eyes, 'May God curse you! For you distracted me from the worship of my Lord, and diverted me from devoting myself to Him'. And God caused his wealth to speak, and it said, 'Why do you insult me, when it was through me that you entered into the presence of the sultan, while the Godfearing were turned away from his door? It was through me that you married women of pleasure, sat in the company of kings, and spent me in the way of evil. Yet never did I withhold myself from you. And had you spent me in the way of righteousness I would have brought you profit. You and all the sons of Adam were created from dust, then some set out with charity, and others with iniquity.' Then the Angel of Death took away his spirit, and he fell to the ground.

Said Wahb ibn Munabbih, 'The Angel of Death once took away the spirit of a great tyrant, the likes of whom had never been seen on the face of the earth before. When [the Angel] had

ascended up to heaven again, the other angels asked him, "Of all those whose spirits you have taken, to whom did you show the most mercy?" "I once was commanded", he replied, "to take the soul of a woman in a desert place. When I came to her she had just given birth to a son, and I dealt with her mercifully on account of her remoteness from her homeland, and with her son because of his young age and his presence in the desert where there was no one who might care for him." And the angels said, "The tyrant whose soul you just took away was that very same child to whom you showed mercy." And the Angel of Death declared, "Glory be to Him Who shows kindness as He will!"

Said 'Aṭā' ibn Yasār, 'On the middle night of Sha^{ʿbān}[^] the Angel of Death receives a scroll and is told, "This year you are to take the people whose names are recorded on this scroll." A man may sow crops, marry women and raise up buildings, while his name is upon that scroll and he knows it not.'

Said al-Ḥasan, 'With every passing day the Angel of Death inspects every house three times, and takes away the spirits of those whose provision has been exhausted and whose lifetimes have drawn to a close. When he has done so the inhabitants of that house take to lamentation and weeping, and the Angel of Death, holding onto the doorjambs, says, "By God, I did not eat of his provision, nor did I consume any part of his life, nor yet did I shorten his allotted span. I shall return amongst you again and again until I have left not one of you remaining!"' And al-Ḥasan said, 'By God, if they could only see him standing there and hear his words they would forget the dead man and weep for their own sakes instead!'

Said Yazīd al-Ruqāshī, 'Once, when a tyrant of the Israelites was sitting in his residence alone with one of his wives, a man entered through the door of his house. The tyrant flew into a rage, and went up to him, saying, "Who are you? Who admitted you to my house?" "As for the one who admitted me to this house," the man answered, "it was its Lord. And as for myself, I am the one who is barred by no chamberlain, who does not ask for permission even of kings when he would enter, who fears not

[^] Sha^{ʿbān}: the eighth month of the Muslim year.

the force of imperious monarchs, and who is never refused by any stubborn tyrant or rebellious devil." At this, the tyrant buried his head in his hands and began to tremble, and then fell down, hiding his face. Then he raised his head towards him imploringly and in great humility. "Then you are the Angel of Death," he said. "I am he," he replied. "Will you grant me respite so that I may mend my ways?" "What folly!" he told him. "You have run your course; your every breath is expended, and your hours are all consumed; there is no way by which you may be granted respite." "Where will you take me?" he asked. "To the works which you sent before you," he replied, "and to the house which you have prepared." "How shall it be, then," he asked, "as I have neither sent before me any righteous works nor prepared a goodly house?" And he replied, "Then to hellfire, which snatches at the edges of men's bones."²⁴ Then he took away his spirit, and he fell down dead in the midst of his family, who set to wailing and to screaming.' Remarkd Yazīd al-Ruqāshī, 'If they had only known the balefulness of their own destination they would have wept more bitterly still.'

Al-A^{ʿmash} has related on the authority of Khaythama that the Angel of Death once came in upon Solomon, the son of David (upon both of whom be peace) and took to scrutinising one of his companions at some length. When he had left again the man asked, 'Who was that?' and was told that it was the Angel of Death. And he said, 'I saw him looking at me as though he wanted me.' 'So what do you want?' asked Solomon. 'I want you to deliver me from him by ordering the wind to carry me off to the farthest part of India.'[^] And this the wind did. Then, when the Angel of Death came again, Solomon said to him, 'I saw you looking closely at one of my companions'. 'Yes indeed,' he replied. 'I was surprised to see him, because I had been instructed to take his spirit in the farthest part of India shortly afterwards; yet there he was with you, and I was astonished at this.'

[^] According to Muslim belief, Solomon had the ability to direct the winds (Q. xxii:81).