

Last Day 13 – difference between sleep and death

QUESTION: What is the difference between sleep and death according to the teachings of Islam?

ANSWER: Islam teaches that sleep and death are similar to one another, but obviously not the same.¹
In sleep, the soul departs from the body but is returned when the person wakes up. In death, the soul is not returned.

Muhammad (may perfect peace and security be upon him) said to his companions on one occasion when he slept through a prayer time:

‘Allah took our souls when He wished and returned them (to us) when He wished.’

And Bilal, one of his companions, apologised for not waking him up:
‘O Messenger of Allah, the One who took my soul is the One who took your soul.’

The Qur’an confirms this:

‘Allah takes the souls at the time of their death and those as well who have not died during their sleep. So He keeps those (souls) for whom He has decreed death and He sends the others back for a specified term.’

Soorah az Zumar (the 39th chapter) verse 42

And in a supplication which Muhammad (may perfect peace and security be upon him) used to make before going to sleep:

‘In Your Name, my Lord, I place my side (upon the bed) and with You I raise it up (after sleep).

If You keep my soul then forgive it and have mercy upon it.

And if You send it back, then protect it with that with which You protect Your righteous servants.’

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NEXT TIME: Is the soul part of the body or is something separate?

¹ Refer to *al irshaad ilaa saheeh il i'tiqaad* of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan p259 for more information