

Last Day 13 – Difference between sleep and death

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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.

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:

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

And Bilaal, one of his companions, apologised for not waking him up:

‘O Messenger of Allaah, the One who took my soul is the One who took your soul.’

The Qur’aan confirms this:

‘Allaah 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.’