

Different Types of Death from the Viewpoint of Quran and Forensic Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: The word death has been brought in several verses of Quran. The purpose of this study is to discuss and compare similarities and differences between Quran's and forensics' perspective in terms of death.

Methods: The present study is carried out by library studies on multiple interpretations of Quran, interpretation of juridical references and comparing them with current forensics knowledge.

Results: Holy Quran has mentioned different types of death: 1- certain death: death is inevitable; 2- Suspended death: occurrence of death is conditioned; 3- Optional death: optionally giving up on deeds, properties and void thoughts; 4- Ambiguous death. On the other hand, different types of death from the perspective of forensics include: 1- Apparent death: a state in which breathing and functions of the heart are slowed down; 2- Cellular death: certain and imminent death; 3- Somatic death: irreparable loss of cognitive potency which is in fact the same as Brain death; 4- Instant death: roughly instantaneous deterioration of the entire cells. From the view of forensics, manners of death are divided into two groups including natural death and unnatural death. The latter includes committing suicide, killing and accidents.

Conclusion: Quran is the equivalent of Natural death in forensics. In addition, the equivalent of Suspended death in forensics is death resulted by illnesses, accidents and incidents which may appear as certain death or brain death.

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1. Introduction:

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The lexical meaning of death includes void of animalistic strengths, termination of life and termination of instincts. In addition death is interpreted as decease and demise (1).

There are different synonyms for death in Arabic language, including Mout, Ajal, Maniye, Vafat, Sho'oub, Mavat and Hatf (2).

In Holy Quran, death is considered as a part of the life cycle. In terms of Quran's sense, death is not the equivalent of termination life; rather it's a link towards immortality. The point which Quran tries to express is that death is not an act of inexistence, rather it's an existential act or in other words a transition from our world to another (3). In several instances, In Quran the word death is either brought singly or is accompanied by the word Life. The following two verses are examples of this:

"الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ"

The one who created death and life to test you in terms of goodness; and he is the venerable forgiver (Malek Surah, Verse 2).

"وَلَيُنْزِلُنَّكُمْ أَوْ قَتَلْتُمْ لِيَالِي اللَّهِ تُخْشَرُونَ"

If you die or get killed you will return to God (Al-Omran Surah, Verse 158).

In several instances, Quran has talked about death of soul and for referring to it, the word Tavafa (Death) is used. This word means to take something completely (4).

"قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ"

Say that the angel of death will take your life and then you will be returned to your God (Sojde Surah, Verse 11).

There are two definitions of death in medical practices: 1- irreversible cessation of breathing and blood cycle; 2- Full and irreversible cessation of vital signs.

In queries carried out regarding the nature of death from the perspective of Quran, it was turned out that most previous researches have only been dedicated to study of the nature of brain death from Quran's view. With respect to complexity of the concept of death and lack of previous comprehensive researches regarding this concept (5), we felt the urge to conduct a study regarding a comparison between different types of death from Quran and forensic perspectives. The purpose of this study is to compare the differences and similarities between Quran's and forensics views about death.

2. Materials and Methods:

This review study is carried out via collection of data by library method on religious books such as Holy Quran translated by Elahi Ghomshei, Majmah al Bayan Tabbari, Wasail-al-Shia and medicine books, also search in taddabor site with key words: Mout, Ajal, Vafat in spring and summer of 2015.

3. Results:

A) Different types of death from Quran's view:

Different types of death have been discussed in Quran:

1- Certain death: it refers to certain life length, which means that even if we perform every required healthcare, still life ends. Therefore, by certain death it is referred to natural death and natural death is defined as follows: for a human to die how his or her nature requires.

"هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمُرُّونَ"

He is the one who made you out of clay. After that he considered a death for you, a death that is determined (which related to eternity and is not to be changed in this world). Do you have any doubts? (Anam Surah, Verse 2)

"فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ"

And when their death arrives, they will neither be delayed nor surpassed for a second. (Nahl Surah, Verse 61).

2- Suspended death: the occurrence of this type of death is conditioned. In this case death is only possible if that very condition is realized. This type of death is also possible to be delayed by prayers and other actions. It's like a torch with full tank exposed to hurricane (6).

"لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ"

A certain rule is established for every time, God will vanish whatever he wants and will prove whatever he wants because the main book is with him (Rad Surah, Verses 38&39).

3- Optional death: it is defined as optional forfeiting of deeds, properties and void thoughts and entering higher levels.

"أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ
كَمَنُ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا"

How can the one who was dead but was brought back to life and was given a light to walk among people be similar with the one who is supposed to remain in darkness and is not ought to leave it. (Anam Surah, Verse 122).

Also in some verses there are hints of ambiguous deaths which define an ambiguous state between life and death. For example, Imam Sadeq has been quoted: Burial of five groups of people should be delayed. They include people who have drowned, people who have been struck by thunder, and people who suffer from cramp, people who have been trapped under debris and people who have choked on smoke or gas. On the other hand, Ali-Ibn Hamza says: one year a large number of residents of Mecca deceased as a result of being struck by thunder. I went to see Imam Kazem and before even I ask my questions, Imam said: people who have been drowned and people who have been hit by thunder should not be buried before three days unless a scent rises from their bodies which signifies their death. Then I said it seems like you are trying to say that many people have been buried alive. He replied: yes, many were buried alive who died in their graves (7).

These narratives and others, such as Sheikh Hor Ameli in his book of Vasayel-Alshia, which is gathered regarding the necessity of delaying the burial of the deceased for three days in case of ambiguity of death are all aimed at prevention of burying people who are not in a normal living conditions and them being dead or alive is ambiguous (6).

Also in some other verses different types of death, according to individual's behaviors and beliefs have been stated and there are also certain characteristics considered for each group as follows: Dying as an infidel

"إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَ مَاتُوا وَ هُمْ كَفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ
مِلءُ الأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَ لَوْ أَفْتَدَى بِهِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَ مَا
لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ"

People who have been an infidel and have died as an infidel will not be forgiven even if they offer us as much gold as it could be

found on earth. A painful torment awaits them and they will have no friends (Al-Omran Surah, Verse 91).

Natural death of God

"وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ
رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ"

People who have died or been killed while in migration for God will benefit from God's rewards because God is the best provider (Hajj Surah, Verse 58).

Being killed for God

And if you get killed for god, certainly God's forgiveness and mercy are better than what they try to gather (Al-Omran, Verse 157).

Death with fear

"أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَ هُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ
المَوْتِ"

Have you not seen the crowd who ran from their houses for their fear of death? (Baqarah Surah, Verse 243).

Death with difficulties

"وَ لَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ المَوْتِ وَ المَلَائِكَةُ بَاسِطُوا
أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرَجُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ اليَوْمَ تُجْرُونَ عَذَابَ اليَوْمِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ
تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الحَقِّ وَ كُنتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ"

Only if you could see when the cruel are drowning in vortexes of death while angels have spread their arms and say either end your life or free your life from our hands. Today you will be punished by humiliating torments and you will taste the result of what you wrongly used to say about God. (Anam Surah, Verse 93).

Death while sinning

"وَ لَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّى إِذَا حَضَرَ
أَحَدَهُمُ المَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الآنَ وَ لَآ الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَ هُمْ
كُفَّارٌ أُولَئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا"

Some people are always committing sins and if their death arrives while they are sinning (when they are certain about their death or have realized the signs of purgatory with their senses) then they will say: I repent now. But for people who die as an infidel there will be no acceptance of repentance and a painful torment awaits them (Nesa Surah, Verse 18).

From the Quran's perspective, death is a stage in human's life and verses like 28th verse of Baghare shows the same idea:

"كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَ كُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ"

How do you deny God while you were dead and he revived you? He kills you and revives you again and takes you back to himself.

The first death in the above verse means beginning life from the embryonic stage and the second death is the human's normal death and the second life is his hereafter life.

B) Different types of death from Forensics point of view

As it was mentioned, from the medical point death is the complete and unreturning cease of the vital actions.

1-The apparent Death: apparent death is a state between life and death in which the breathing actions and heart movements are diminished strongly and seem to stop. In this condition by performing revival actions of artificial breathing and delivering oxygen and stimulating the heart by Defibrillation Cardioversion Shock, the person may come back to life like the deep coma which is caused by sleep aids or strong paregorics and causes severe weakness in breathing actions and lack of heartbeat and coldness of the extremities and especially causes to show the weaker sensory reactions as real death.

2- Cell Death (imminent death): in this condition all of the cells and tissues are dead and do not have operation, metabolic action and aerobic breathing and cardiopulmonary arrest happens subsequently (7).

In other words death is imminent when the cardiovascular, sensory and motion actions stop completely and there is no chance for them to revive.

3-Somatic Death: It is the time when the person loses his cognitive abilities irreversibly and become unconscious and is not able to communicate with the environment and perceiving the sensory motives autonomic motion, but the reflexive nervous actions may remain and the respiration system and blood flow may continue to operate (automatically or artificially) and in this condition the cells of the body's tissues (except the neurons) survive and continue to operate.

From the clinical point, somatic death is the same as brain death (8).

Brain death should not be mistaken with imminent death. Brain death includes the irreversible cease of all of the brain actions. It should be noted that just the inexistence of the higher acts which are related to the cortical destruction is not enough to justify death and the complete death of the brain is the death of brain's cortex and stem. Brain death is considered to be equal as death from the perspective of medical law.

4- Immediate death versus final death: Except the rare cases in which all of the person's cells are destroyed immediately caused by atomic explosion or immersing in a container of lava, death is not a simultaneous event and it is a process. The different tissues of the body face death with different speeds; the brain's cortex is sensitive to some minutes of anoxia (lack of oxygen) while the connective tissues and muscles can resist against the cease of blood flow.

Also from the forensic perspective the manner of death is important and it is divided into two categories: 1- natural 2-unnatural.

Which unnatural includes suicide, killing others or accidents (9).

4. Discussion:

In the performed researches, no articles or researches were found about comparing different types of death from Quran's and forensics' points of view and only some studies were done about brain death in Quran's point of view (6, 8), different types of deaths from the Quran's and psychology's perspectives (12), euthanasia (10) and topics like these. What we have gained in this research includes the following points:

By comparing different types of deaths in Quran and forensics, it seems that what has been referred to as called death in the Holy Quran is equal to natural death in forensics and it is the same as the time when the person's natural life is terminated and he dies naturally.

What has been referred to as suspended or rapport death in the Holy Quran, which happens because of sickness or accidents or events like earthquake and flood and its equivalent in forensics is a death which is

caused by different kinds of sickness, accidents and incidents which can lead to imminent or brain death.

Also, what has been referred to as the dubious life in some narratives, is equal to apparent death on forensics. Considering the various narratives about the dubious death, which was mentioned before, the urgency of the medical examinations before issuing the death certificate becomes clear.

Comparing death and sleep in Quran and Islamic narratives shows that what happens completely and identically in deep sleep and death is the disorder in the informed behavior system and the soul which is charge of this behavior, is disconnected completely and subsequently the sleeping person's connection with the physical environment and the natural world is disrupted completely.

"اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا
فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ"

God takes back the people's souls completely when they die and the soul which is not dead in sleep is receipted. Then he keeps the soul which should die and gives back the other souls until the certain time (to the earthly life).

Zomar Surah, Verse 42

Considering verses like these, some researchers have concluded that recapturing the soul happens completely in the same way in death and sleep, except that it is temporal and incomplete in sleep and eternal and complete in the other one. Although solid death has not happened in sleep and the unconscious behavior's system is completely healthy and continues to operate, it is the same with brain death in which the unconscious behavior's system may not be disordered severe and may be completely healthy sometimes.

Therefore, by citing these articles and above Verses, it can be said that brain death was mentioned in Quran in this holy book's perspective, death is imminent.

Also, Quran has talked about the stage between death and entering the other world (9, 10).

The person's soul is not allowed to pass to the remained knowledge until the certain time as he is not allowed to enter this world.

5. Conclusion:

In the Holy Quran some aspects of death have been talking about (like life after death) that the contemporary medical knowledge does not have a clear and exact explanation for that. The truth of death, like the truth of life is one of the existence's secrets, in a way that its truth has not been become clear for anybody and what we know about it is only its effects. What is clear from this study is that our holy book, Quran, is very inclusive and exact about death.

6. Conflict of Interest:

The authors of the present work declare no conflict of interest.

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