

Barzakh

Thus human life from the time of death till Judgment Day is:

“...and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised.” (Surah Mominoon 23: 100)

Man should be certain that there is no solution without death. Human death is separation between soul and body and it is complete separation of body from soul. After the separation of soul from the body, the human body will mix up in dust and become dust. After separation from the material body, this soul is joined to a subtle body, which is known as facsimile and which is not visible because of its being of extremely thin matter.

And it should be believed that after death there would be interrogation about deeds. We should keep their replies ready. Certainty of this matter is also necessary that there is reward and punishment in Barzakh as well.

That is man would be recompensed according to his character and deeds till Judgment Day would be established and he gets permanent reward or punishment. Many believers possessing inappropriate character will have their accounts completed in this world of Barzakh.

In such a way that on Judgment Day they would not have to face any difficulty. Detailed circumstances of Barzakh are mentioned in the Book of Resurrection by the same author, which might be referred to. It is necessary to have faith in these issues, and one should be so certain of these fundamentals that his heart should absolutely aware of them and at the time of interrogation, he should not be bewildered.

Also for fulfillment of every obligatory and recommended act, one should not sit idle even for a moment, because time is less and result is near.

Because the distance between man and the consequences of his deeds is nothing, except death and that also continues to warn man every moment.

Certainty on Qiyamat: that is when all the past and future people would be raised and gathered in one place. That day: when the light of the sun and moon would be no more and the day when mountains

would break up and become like soft particles; when the heavens and the earth would be transformed; the day when people of a particular group would be holding the scroll of their deeds in their right hands.

Another group would be in extreme distress and grief and would be holding the scroll of their deeds in their left hands. That is the day, which the Almighty Allah has referred to as 'the great day'. In such a way that elders of faith are shocked by its remembrance and they weep and wail in its terror.

Indeed if every awakened heart reads the descriptions of that day in Quran and ponders over it, he would be deprived of his comfort and peace and would become disinterested in the world and its pleasures and seek the refuge of the Almighty Allah for that day.

It is not necessary to have information about the time of Qiyamat. In the same way, it is neither necessary to have detailed knowledge about the circumstances of that day neither is it of any use. On the contrary, it is inappropriate to ask questions about it.

It is so, because this knowledge is restricted to Almighty Allah. Although it is necessary to have knowledge and faith on some stages, which are clarified in the Holy Quran: like Balance of deeds, Siraat Bridge, Accounting of deeds, Intercession, Paradise and Hell, which would be explained in the coming pages. [1](#)

Barzakh

According to dictionary, it means a veil or an obstruction between two things and which does not allow the two of them to join. For example there are two seas: salty and sweet, but the Almighty Allah has made such a barrier between them that none of them can destroy the other. This is known as Barzakh. Although according to terminology, Barzakh is a barrier, which Allah, the Mighty and the High has placed between the world and the hereafter in such a way that both should retain their characteristics.

This world is between the worldly affairs and those of the hereafter. In Barzakh, there is no headache and toothache etc. All are restricted to this material world. However they are abstract things. But they also do not resemble the circumstances of the hereafter. That is chastisement is not absolute for the disobedient and pleasures are also not absolute for the righteous.

Imam (a.s.) was asked: What is the duration of Barzakh? He replied: From the time of death till they would be raised up from the graves. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran that:

"...and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised." (Surah Mominoon 23: 100)

Facsimile world and the facsimile body

Barzakh is also known as the 'facsimile world', because it is like this world from the aspect of form and appearance, but it is different in material and characteristics, but after a period of time, they will enter

another world in such way that this world would be like the womb for them. Your body in Barzakh is also the facsimile body.

That is in form it is exactly like this body, but it is not body or matter. On the contrary, the body is subtle and thinner than air. Nothing would obstruct it. A wall cannot obstruct its view.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) says: This facsimile body seems to be the same worldly body. If you see your parents in the dream, you will see them in the same worldly body, but their material body is in the grave. This form and body is facsimile body.

The body of Barzakh possesses eyes exactly like our eyes. But those eyes do not experience any pain. They continue to see till the establishment of Judgment Day and they see perfectly.

They do not weaken like these eyes, which make them needful of glasses.

Intellectuals and scholars compare it to be an image seen in the mirror, but subject to the condition that two characteristics are found in it. One is that it stands independently, without the support of the mirror.

Secondly, it has perception and feelings as well. The facsimile body exists independently and also possesses perception. Its examples are dreams, which traverse long distances in the blink of the eye. A person reached to Holy Mecca or Mashad Muqaddas in a moment.

The foods and drinks of that world, beautiful forms and faces and pleasing songs are such that no one from this world is capable to produce them. All these are present and the souls of the facsimile body take advantage from them and gain nourishment from them;² although foods and drinks of this world and other things are subtle and they are not related to matter.

On the basis of this, as mentioned in traditional reports, it is possible that a thing would transform into different kinds according to the desire of the believer. For example a fig may turn into an apple.

It is narrated from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that he said: I saw my uncle,

His Eminence, Hamza after martyrdom. A tray of pomegranates of Paradise was placed before him and he was eating from it. Suddenly they transformed into grapes and then the grapes turned into fresh dates. That is one thing changes into different things as it is not matter, it is subtle substance.

The literal meaning of 'Barzakh' is a veil or a barrier that stands between two things and which does not allow the two to meet. For example, that part or region of the ocean in which waves of both: sweet and salty waters bounce and yet God has provided between them an invisible barrier whereby one cannot overcome another.

“He has made the two seas to flow freely (so that) they meet together: Between them is a barrier, which they cannot pass.” (Surah Rahman 55: 19–20)

It is called Barzakh, but technically Barzakh is a realm kept by the Lord of the Universe between this world of ours and the forthcoming Hereafter in such a way that both might maintain their individual limits. Barzakh is a state between these worldly and otherworldly affairs.

Halfway between Reward and Punishment

After entering the world of Barzakh, one does not experience physical pains like headache, toothache and such other troubles. Such suffering forms a part of the essentials of the material world. But there, in Barzakh, it is the realm of abstracts or of incorporeal beings. Of course, it can also not be called the Hereafter, which may mean that there will be only darkness for the sinners and only light for the obedient ones.

Some people asked Imam (a.s.) about the duration of Barzakh. He replied, “It is from the moment of death up to the time when all will rise from their graves regaining life.”³

The Holy Quran says:

“... and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised.” (Surah Mominoon 23:100)

Facsimile World and the Facsimile Body

Barzakh is called Facsimile World also, because it is just like this world; but is so in shape and form yet different and distinct from the viewpoint of its substance and specialty. After our death, we enter a realm, which, in comparison, is like this world vis-à-vis a mother's womb.

Similarly, our bodies also will be facsimile bodies in Barzakh. This is to say that they will appear quite like our worldly material bodies but, factually, they will not be this body (containing skin and flesh). It will be an elegant, fine and exquisite body. It will be finer than air. There will be no barriers for it, which our bodies face in this material world. It (the Barzakh body) can see anything and everything from everywhere every time. There will be no difference for observation whether something is on this side of a wall or on the other.

Imam Ja'far (a.s.) says, “If you see that facsimile body you will say: Lo, it is the same worldly body.”⁴

For example, if you happen to see your father in your dream, you will observe him only in his worldly material body whereas his body (and matter) is in the grave and this form, which you see in the dream, is his facsimile form. The Barzakh body also has eyes, but there is no fat or liquid in them.

Those eyes do not suffer any pain till the Day of Resurrection. Those eyes can see things and can see well, but they never become weak nor do they require spectacles. Here is an example for more explanation:

Picture in the Mirror, with Two Stipulations

Scholars and experts of scholastic theology have compared the Barzakh body with what one sees in a mirror. Of course there are two differences. First, the said picture is actual (not a mere reflection) and second, it achieves senses. The facsimile body is real and it also senses and understands things.

An incomparable example is dream. Therein we travel immeasurable distances in a split second. In no time we reach Holy Mecca, Holy Mashad and all other places. We also see and hear people over there and also talk there. But all these things are not performed by physical organs.

Not only this, better, higher and finer things like various kinds of tasty food, good-looking faces and pleasing fragrance as well as melodious songs etc. are instantly available to the facsimile body, things which are unimaginable here. All these things are found in Barzakh and the souls can benefit from all these things in their facsimile bodies.

“And reckon not those who are killed in Allah’s way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord...” (Surah Aale Imran 3: 169)

All Food Articles and Fruits Combined in Only One Thing

Since the foods, drinks, fruits and all such things in Barzakh are fine and have nothing to do with matter; it is quite possible for them, as mentioned in narrations, to combine in one thing according to the desires and wish of the faithful. For example, there is date fruit, but you wish to eat (taste) an apple. The former instantly turns into the latter or in any other form of your liking. All of it depends on your wish.

It is mentioned in a report that the Holy Prophet once said, “I saw my respectable uncle Hamza after his martyrdom. A plateful of heavenly pomegranate was in front of him. He was eating from that plate. All of a sudden, I saw that the pomegranate at once changed into date fruit.” (Summary of the rest of the narration is that the Holy Prophet said, “I asked my honorable uncle what kinds of deeds are most beneficial there (in the Hereafter)?”

He replied, “Three things count here the most, Giving water to the thirsty, reciting Salawat for the Prophet and his Progeny and love for Ali Ibn Abi Talib.” In short, the things of that realm are subtle (fine) and are not made up of matter; one thing turns into another and into many other forms and shapes instantly at the will of the faithful.

The Degree of Effects

Compared with this world, one of the specialties of the realm of Barzakh is effectiveness. In the science of medicine, there is a theory, the description whereof is of no use for the common masses. So we will proceed after only hinting towards it. It is that there are two things, one that affects something and the

other that is affected. According to the aforesaid theory, the more these two things are subtle, the more profound will be the effect.

Fruits, sweets and the pleasure, which we derive in this world, are like a drop in the ocean in comparison with those in the realm of Barzakh. The tastefulness there is immeasurably more than it is here. If only a part of the face of a heavenly Hourie is unveiled, it will dazzle the eyes of the whole world. If the entire beauty of that fairy opens, it will outshine the sun. Indeed, absolute beauty is available only there.

God says:

“Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in works.” (Surah Kahf 18:7)

Meaning: We have made whatever is in the world an adornment, but it is a beauty, which is a test or trial. The intention is to differentiate between child and a major person whereby it may be known as to who becomes mad after this toy (this material world) and who does not pay any attention to this plaything. The real pleasure lies in the real beauty and in trying to attain it.

A Man in the Grave Who Hosted Others

The power of effect is so much in the realm of Barzakh that it cannot even be imagined in this world. Sometimes we come across events, which can guide the people living in this world. One such effective event has been quoted by the late Naraqī in his book Khazain: During my youth, I was busy, along with my father and other relatives, in visiting people on the occasion of Navroz holiday.

It was Tuesday and we had gone to a friend’s house situated near a graveyard in Isfahan. We were told that he (my friend) was not present in his house. As we were somewhat tired we turned towards the graveyard with a view to take some rest and also to visit the graves of the faithful. There we sat down at a spot.

One of our companions, pointing his finger towards a nearby grave, said jokingly, “O resident of the grave! These are holidays. Will you not host us?” We heard a voice from that grave, “On next Tuesday you will be my guests here.”

All of us became spellbound and also frightened thinking that perhaps, all of us would be dead by next Tuesday. So we engaged in performing as many good deeds as possible and also began to write our wills. Then arrived the following Tuesday and yet all of us were safe and alive. We gathered at a place and after consultations decided to go to that grave and see what happens. Perhaps that voice might not have meant our death, but had some other aim behind it.

So when we approached that grave, someone from us said, “O occupier of this grave! Fulfil your promise.” Suddenly we heard a voice from that grave, “Welcome!”⁵ At once, we saw that it is a very big

green garden. Pure water streams are flowing in it. Trees therein are full of various kinds of fruits available in every season.

Colourful birds of innumerable kinds are busy singing melodious sweet songs. In the midst of that garden, there stood a spacious grand mansion, which was fully decorated. All of its windows opened towards the garden. When we entered that building we saw a very handsome man sitting there. When he saw us, he stood up in respect. Then he put before us various kinds of foods, drinks and sweets the like of which we had never seen before, nor even imagined. We fully enjoyed this feast.

More significant was his statement, “We had never seen so much tasteful things before and that our desire was never satiated even after taking it and that the more we ate the desire increased. Then many other kinds of eatables were also brought and we went on enjoying them. Thereafter when we got up, the gentleman accompanied us until we got out of that garden.”

Reward of Fair dealing and Offering Prayers in Time

Before leaving, my father asked that gentleman, “Who are you? For what did the Almighty God grant you so much honor and position that you are able to host even the whole world if you so desire? What is this place of residence?”

The gentleman replied, “I belong to your native place and was selling meat in such and such street.” People asked, “How did you get this high position and lofty rank?” He said, “It is all due to only two things. During my entire lifetime, I never gave less to buyers and I also never failed to offer prayer at the earliest hour.

If I heard the call for prayer (Adhan) while weighting meat, I used to leave my shop at once and rush to the Mosque. So the Lord of the worlds granted me this place after my death. Last week you had asked me to host you. At that time I did not have permission to accede to your wish. I have obtained it this week.”

Thereafter, one of us asked him about the duration of his age. He told the questioner, “You will live for ninety years”, and that man is still alive. Then he told me, “You will live for so many years”, according to which there are yet ten to fifteen years to go. All of us bade him goodbye. He saw us off. As we turned around we found ourselves sitting by his grave as before.”

Lasting Pleasure in the Realm of Barzakh

Another specialty of the realm of Barzakh is its eternity or everlasting nature. Here (in this material world) nothing is everlasting. Beauty fades out soon. Food remains tasty only upto the time it is in the mouth, that is, only for a few moments. Same is the case with marriage and marital joy.

These foods and fruits are also not long lasting. After sometime they rot and become useless distasteful

and foul. Nothing here is everlasting. But nothing gets deteriorated or corrupted in the realm of Barzakh, because that world (in the Hereafter) does not depend on matter. Everything is everlasting there. As a testimony to what I have mentioned here, I would like to mention a case involving the great scholar and religious jurisprudent Allamah Shaykh Mahdi Naraqhi.

By the way, let me also say that presenting some truths while narrating an event in a nice way makes it easily comprehensible. That is why actual events and true happenings are also presented during the discussion of religious beliefs and doctrines.

A Cloak Full of Rice in the Valley of Peace

Shaykh Mahmud Iraqi, at the end of his book Darus Salam, quotes the late Naraqhi (r.a.). He said, “When I was a caretaker of the Holy Najaf, there fell a severe famine. One day, I came out of my house. My children were hungry and crying for food. I went to the Valley of Peace with a view to seek the removal of our sorrow and gloom through a visit to the dead among the faithful.

There I saw that some people brought a dead body and also told me, “You may also accompany us. We have come here for making this body join with pious souls of this Holy place.”

Then they took that corpse to a wide big garden and placed it in one of the palaces situated in that garden. All means of comfort were available in those palaces. When I saw all this, I also followed them and entered that palace along with them. There I saw a young man dressed in resplendent clothes sitting on a golden throne.

When he saw me, he called me by my name and made me sit by his side very respectfully. Then he told me, “You do not recognize me. I am the same body, which has been just brought here. My name is so and so. I was a resident of such and such city.

The group, which you saw in my funeral procession, was that of the angels who brought me from my city up to this garden. This is one of the heavenly gardens.” Hearing these things my gloom disappeared and I desired to see that garden thoroughly. When I got out of that palace, I saw a number of such palaces. When I looked into them I found my parents and many other near and near ones. They made me their guest. I thoroughly enjoyed the eatables served by them.

In the midst of these comfortable and luxurious moments, I suddenly remembered my family members and imagined how hungry they were. This thought made me gloomy once again. My father asked, “What happened to you all of a sudden?” I replied, “My family members are restless due to hunger.”

My father said, “Here is a heap of rice, take it.” I took off my cloak and filled it with that heavenly rice. My father told me to take it for my family. When I lifted up the cloak, I found myself in the Valley of Peace. My cloak was, of course, full of that rice. I took it to my house. My wife asked, “From where have you brought this?” I replied, “What have you to do with it?”

Briefly speaking, we ate that rice for quite a long time, but it never depleted. At last my wife forced me to tell her the true story. Thereafter when we went to take out that rice we found nothing.”

A similar event is recorded in Darus Salam. Interested readers may refer to it.

Animals Hear the Voice of the Dead

The aim of this discussion is to throw light on the perpetuity of the other world (Barzakh), be it regarding bounties or about their tastefulness or joy. On the other hand, the calamities of that world are also very hard and everlasting. May God protect us! If a man gets entangled in torture in Barzakh and if we hear his terrible shrieks, all the terrible things of our world will appear nothing to us compared to it.

It is mentioned in Biharul Anwar, Vol. 3, that the Holy Prophet said, “I was grazing sheep before I was made His messenger by Almighty God. During those days, I used to observe (as you might have also) that goats and sheep were becoming still all of a sudden as if shocked deeply by something. You might have also observed that sometimes poultry birds like hen jump off and stop picking their food even when no danger (like animal) is seen anywhere near them.

After I started getting revelations, I asked for the reason of such unusual happenings and Jibraeel told me that in the realm of Barzakh, sinners get divine punishments. Their cries are heard by all, except men and jinns. Such voices shock animals and they stop feeding.”

Cries Raised by a Hashimi Murderer in his Dream

It is mentioned in Darus Salam of Allamah Noori that, as per a narration in the book of Sawabul Aamaal of Shaykh Sadooq (r.a.), an exceptionally handsome and good-looking youth, who was a soldier in the army of Umar bin Saad in Kerbala, was also the killer of one of the brothers of Imam Husain (a.s.).

The narrator says, “I could see that the face of that fellow had become very black after the event of Kerbala. He had also become very thin and extremely weak. I inquired about his conditions from his neighbours. They said that ever since he returned from Kerbala, every night, he shrieks and cries loudly in his dreams awaking us also. I went to him and asked about the matter.

He replied, ‘At night time the Hashimi youth who was killed by me, comes in front of me and pushes me towards fire. It makes me cry loudly and I cannot sleep.’”

Advice of a Perfumer and Demand by a Jew of His Trust

There are many events in this world to prove the existence of Barzakh. Their description will become unduly lengthy, so we suffice with only one such happening. The famous pious scholar, Syed Hashimi Bahraini (r.a.) is quoted in Darus Salam⁶ that: There was a perfumer in Najaf Ashraf who gave advice

(admonition) to people at his shop daily after mid-day prayer.

Many people used to gather in his shop. A prince from India had become a resident of Najaf Ashraf. Once he had to undertake a journey. So he went to the said perfumer and gave him, as his trust, a bag containing precious stones and pearls etc. Then he went on his journey. Upon his return, when he came to the perfumer to take back his trust, the latter denied saying: I do not know about any such trust.

The prince became very uneasy and finally went to the Holy tomb of Ali (a.s.) and said, "O Ali! I left my comfortable residence just to live near your Holy Shrine for some time. I had left my precious property as a trust with such and such perfumer in Najaf. Now he is denying of any such trust. I have no wealth except that, nor have I any proof of depositing my property with that perfumer. Now there is none, except you who can help me with justice."

During that night, he saw Ali (a.s.) in his dream saying, "Next morning, when the gate of the city opens, you go out and demand your trust from the very first person you see. He will make your trust return to you." Accordingly that man went out of the city gate and saw a weak and aged pious man carrying firewood on his shoulders. He wanted to sell it for fulfilling the needs of his family.

The Indian felt ashamed of asking anything from such a poor gentleman. So he did not say anything and returned to the Holy Shrine of Amirul Momineen (a.s.). The following night also he saw the same dream and got the same order from Ali (a.s.). The next morning also he saw the same poor old man and did not tell him anything. During the third night too, he saw Ali (a.s.) in his dream and heard the same words. The following morning, he told the wood seller his need explaining to him what had happen. After thinking for a while, the old man said, "Come to the perfumer's shop tomorrow after Zuhr prayer. I will arrange for the return of your trust."

Next day when people gathered at the perfumer's shop, the old man said to the perfumer, "Today let me share in the duty of giving advice to people." That man agreed. The pious man began his talk, "O dear listeners! I am so and so and son of so and so. I am very fearful in the matter of observing rights of others. By the grace of God, I have no greed for money at all. I am a contented man and have taken to a corner for worship.

Yet, I have come into a difficult situation. I want to make you aware of it. I advise you all also to fear God's anger and the fire of Hell. Once I had to take a loan due to urgent need. I took a loan of ten Qiran⁷ from a Jew and gave him a word that I would return it within twenty days paying him half Qiran daily. I did accordingly for five days. But thereafter I could not find that Jew.

On making inquiries, I was told that he had left for Baghdad. After a few days, I saw in my dream that it is Resurrection and I and many other people have been made to stand in a counter for giving replies in the Divine Court. By the Grace of God, I got relief soon and then, joining the successful people, went towards Paradise.

When I reached the Siraat Bridge I heard the roar of Hell. Then I saw that the creditor Jew leapt like a flame of fire from Hell, came across my path and said, “Pay me back my five Qiran and proceed further only after doing so.” I implored him humbly and earnestly saying, “I was in search of you for paying up the debt, but you could not be found.” But he said, “I will not allow you to go further unless you pay up my money.”

I said, “I have nothing here just now.” He said, “Okay then allow me just to put my finger on your body.” I agreed. When he touched my chest with his finger, it burnt my body so severely that I woke up crying loudly. I saw that my chest had a burn and it is still painful. I undertook many treatments, but to no avail.”

Then he showed his chest to the gathering at the perfumer’s shop. Seeing it, people began to weep fearing their own Hereafter. The perfumer also became very fearful of God’s anger. He took that Indian to his house, returned his trust to him and begged for his pardon.

Can Such Things be Denied Absolutely

Reason says that if we come across a thing, which is difficult to comprehend, it should not be instantly and outrightly rejected or denied. Logic says that it can be possible. For example, if an astronomer says that there are some satellites around Mars and that they too revolve around Mars just as the moon revolves round the earth.

Should this claim be rejected at once? No. It may be true. The great scientist Ibn Sina says, “If you hear news or event, you should imagine it as possible until its impossibility is not established logically.”⁸

Suppose you hear that a baby is born with two heads. As this is not logically impossible, say that it may be so.

Three Kinds of News

First: News for the inadmissibility of which there is no logical proof should not be rejected or denied.

Second: News, which has some proofs thinking over which intellect may decide that it should be accepted.

Third: If the one who brought news has, with him, some testimony from the Lord of the universe, which is called a miracle. In this case, intellect decides that it should not be rejected in comparison to the second stage it should be definitely accepted and one must remain satisfied.

There is no Logical Argument against Resurrection

Just think over it. Is there any argument of any of the kinds mentioned above to reject the news of life after death? Can anyone argue and give any logical proof to show that there cannot be any questioning

after death and that the grave cannot squeeze or there is no realm of Barzakh or the other world called Qiyamat or Resurrection or Maad?

O you owners of intelligence! Just decide whether there is any difference in the news given by an astronomer that Mars and Jupiter have four thousand stars or planets and the news given by the Prophet of God (s.a.w.s.) that there are ninety-nine pythons in the grave to punish the unbeliever of God?

Is there any difference so far as the giving of news is concerned? Perhaps somebody may say that the claim of the astronomer is based on perception or that it is after seeing. Then we will say that, doubtlessly, the messenger has also said everything after observing and feeling. During the night of Meraj (ascension), he had seen and felt all things with his physical organs.

Rather, his holy soul covers the knowledge of all worlds and realms. The sight or faculty of seeing can make a mistake, but the sight of the soul of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) can never err. There can be a defect in the eyesight of an astrologer or an astronomer, but there is no question of any error in the feeling, observation and intelligence of the Messenger of God.

Before Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) declared his Prophethood, the people of Mecca used to call him, 'As Sadiq Al Amin' meaning: The most truthful and trustworthy person. There was not even a single person, who had ever found any untruth in what he had said or done nor had anyone found any dishonesty in his dealing, behavior or attitude towards all.

So, apart from his witness and testimony, the permanent proof of Muhammad's Messengership and the everlasting miracle, Quran also tells us about Resurrection, punishment in grave and rising bare-bodied on the Day of Judgement, is it reasonable not to believe it?

Burial of Fatima Bint Asad, Mother of Amirul Momineen (a.s.)

When Fatima Bint Asad, mother of Ali (a.s.) breathed her last, Amirul Momineen (a.s.) went weeping to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and said, "My respected mother has expired." The Holy Prophet said, "It is my mother who has expired." There was a wonderful affection in the relation between the Holy Prophet and Fatima Bint Asad.

The latter had looked after the former just like a caring and loving mother for quite a long time. At the time of her burial, the Holy Prophet took off his shirt and told people to dress the late Fatima in it. People did so.

Then first the Holy Prophet himself lay in that grave for a few moments and prayed for her forgiveness. After the grave was filled up, he stood near it and, after a while, said loudly, "Your son, your son, but not Ja'far and Aqeel." People asked about the reason of doing so.

The Holy Prophet replied, “Once I was talking about the rising of the bare-bodied dead on the Day of Resurrection. Fatima Bint Asad came to me weeping and said, ‘I wish that you might cloth me in your shirt after I die.’

She was very fearful also about the squeeze of the grave. So, before she was buried, I myself slept in her grave for some time and prayed, ‘O God! Protect her from the squeeze of the grave.’

But the reason of my uttering the words ‘Your son..’ was that, when the angels asked her about God, she replied, ‘Allah’, when they asked about the Prophet, she replied, ‘Muhammad’ but as for Imam, she could not give any reply (because this event was much prior to Ghadeer Khum when Ali (a.s.) was announced as the Chief of the believers). So I advised Fatima to say, ‘Your son (Ali) not Ja’far or Aqeel.’”

Fatima Bint Asad was much Fearful about the Events after Death

Despite the fact that Fatima bint Asad was very great pious and graceful lady, who had the honor of being the mother of Amirul Momineen (a.s.) and who had been the guest of God for three days in the House of God (Kaaba) (on the occasion of Ali’s birth) and who was the second woman to put faith in the Messengership of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) and who was a very great and humble worshipper of only one God was so much afraid of the events to take place after her death and the Holy Prophet did to her as mentioned above. Then who and what are we in comparison?

Let us all seriously think and worry about our own future.

Well, let us go back to the main issue. The truthful announcer of everything, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says that there will be questioning and squeeze of the grave and rising bare-bodied on the Day of Judgement.

Effectiveness of Soul in Physical Body

Though it will be the soul, which will be rewarded or punished, it is also possible that the body may also feel it. Sometimes it does so happen that, owing to the soundness of the soul, the body also does not disintegrate in the grave. It remains fresh even for a thousand years. There are many testimonies to this fact.

For instance, the body of Ibn Babawayh (r.a.), around one hundred fifty years after his death in the time of Fateh Ali Shah, was found fresh. Not only this but, more astonishingly, even his shroud was not worn out nor the color of henna on his nail faded after such a long time!

The Body of Shaykh Sadooq Found Fresh

It is written in Rauzatul Jannat that a hole had developed in the grave of Shaykh Sadooq (r.a.) due to heavy rain around the year 1238 H.E. People thought of filling it up. So they entered the tomb and found that his body was safe and sound though his physique was rather bulky.

The color of henna was also traceable on his nails. This news spread in Tehran. When Fateh Ali Shah heard it, he, along with some government officials as well as religious scholars, went to the tomb to enquire. They all saw what they had heard. The king ordered to close the hole and to rebuild the tomb over the grave with decorations.

The Fresh Body of Hurr and the Handkerchief on his Head

Similar is the event of Hurr Ibn Yazid Riyahi. Muhaddith Jazaeri has mentioned it in Anwarun Nomaniya like this: Shah Ismail Safavi went to visit Kerbala and when he came to know that some people have no good opinion about Hurr, he ordered the excavation of his grave. So when the grave was opened people saw that the martyr's body was exactly in the same condition as it was on the day of his martyrdom in Kerbala.

There had been no change at all in it. So much so that even his handkerchief also was intact on his head. Since it was historically known to all that the chief of all martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s.) himself had tied his own handkerchief on the wounded head of Hurr Shah Ismail ordered that the kerchief may be untied so that he may take it to put it in his own shroud as a good luck sign.

As soon as the kerchief was removed, people saw blood gushing out of his wound. So it was replaced immediately and the blood stopped flowing. Thus people knew that Hurr's condition was good (that God was pleased with him and had given him a good reward due to his assistance to Imam Husain (a.s.) in Kerbala). The king built a grand tomb over his grave and appointed a caretaker over it.

A Suckling Babe in the Grave of Abu Ja'far Kulaini (r.a.)

The tomb of Shaykh Kulaini (r.a.), author of Kafi, is situated near the bridge in Baghdad. A fellow from the oppressor rulers thought of destroying the Holy shrine of Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) so that people may stop visiting Kazmain. His minister was a Shia (in heart). He became restless to find out a way to stop that fellow from his evil intention was unable to say anything openly, because any doubt of his being a Shia was enough to put his life in danger.

Anyway, they proceeded to Kazmain with the aforesaid evil intention. As soon as they approached the Baghdad Bridge, the minister said, "Here is the grave of a big Shia scholar, who was one of the delegates of Imam Kazim (a.s.), and people say that his body is still fresh and that it will always remain fresh and safe.

If the king agrees this may be checked. If it is found that what people say is correct, then it would not be wise to touch the tomb of Imam Kazim (a.s.).” The ruler agreed and, as per the king’s command, the grave of Kulaini (r.a.) was opened.

They saw that his body was quite fresh and not only that; more surprising was the existence of the fresh and safe body of a little child by Kulaini’s side. It could not be known whether the child was related to Kulaini (r.a.) or not. What is worth noting is what a soul can do. If any other person also comes close to a pious soul it is also affected thereby.

No doubt the Holy Progeny of the Messenger are the fountainhead of good and so their corpses are also alive and people can see occasional miracles from their graves.

Contrary to it, if somebody is a person of Hell, the chastisement to his or her soul also affects the body. Accordingly, when Bani Abbas overpowered Bani Umayyah and destroyed them totally and even dug out their graves, it was observed that nothing, except some traces could be seen in the grave of the accursed Yazid.

Fire of Barzakh Leaps out of a Grave

Quoting narrations of some reliable and trustworthy people, the late Shaykh Mahmud Iraqi has mentioned in Darus Salam that once we went to the graveyard of Imamzada Hasan (Tehran). Sun had not yet set. One of our companions sat down on the stone of a grave. Suddenly he shouted, “Please lift me up.” When we lifted him, we saw that the stone was almost red hot.

Just think. How great is the chastisement meted out to the soul that even the gravestone becomes so hot? He says, “I recognized the owner of that grave, but I would not disclose his name so that he may not be defamed among people.”

Also it is said about another man who was buried in Qom that flames of fire leaping out of his grave had burnt down carpets over there.

Fire Hotter than the Fire of this World

Shaykh Shustari (r.a.) mentioned in his admonitions that the Lord of the worlds has said: ‘Hot fire’. Is there, then, any cold fire also? Yes. If it is possible to make comparison, the fire in our world is cold compared to the fire of Barzakh. Nature speaks of two types of fires in this world itself, which if compared can tell us which one is really hot.

Lightning is the Biggest Fire in the World

Shaykh Shustari (r.a.) says that if a comparison is made between the fire of wood and charcoal and

lightning in the sky it will be known that lightning is a thin (fine) fire, created by the bouncing and hissing of clouds. It is so hot that it burns out everything it touches and then slips away instantly. It neither returns nor stays anywhere. Nothing can cool it. If it falls on a tree, it turns it into coal at once.

If it falls on an ocean it burns it up to its bottom and fries even the fish in the bottom of the sea. Only lightning is the real fire. The embers in a hearth also is fire, but that fire can be put off by pouring a little water or some dust on it. Its heat and burning has some limitations.

Now you will have understood that the fire of Barzakh cannot be compared with the fire of this world, not even with lightning. If someone's facsimile body and soul are under torture in Barzakh, it is possible (though not always necessarily) that his or her material body may also get affected.

What is contrary to it is also observed. Pleasing and sweet fragrance spread in the absence of any scent, or flowers or burning of aloes wood from the graves of some dear servants of God have also been witnessed.

Those Who do not Experience Fear

In the news and traditions of Holy Imams, there are tidings showing that some good servants of God are protected by God from the fear and punishment in the grave during the period of Barzakh. Some of them are those to whom reminder (Talqeen) was recited. Here we mean the third Talqeen, which is recited after the burial.

Yahya Bin Abdullah says, "I heard from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that: What prevents you from reciting the words, which protects your dead from seeing Munkar and Nakeer in their graves? I asked: Master! What should we do? He said: When the dead has been buried, its legal heir should sit near the grave and taking his mouth nearer to the head of the dead, recite loudly:

O so and so son of so and so. Are you on the same covenant on which you were when you parted from us? That covenant is the testimony of the fact that there is no God but Allah, Who is only One and Who has no partner. And the testimony of the fact that undoubtedly Muhammad, may the Peace of Allah be on him and his progeny, is the slave and prophet of Allah and is the lord of all the prophets and is the last of them.

And that Ali is the chief of the believers and the leader of all the successors. And indeed whatever is brought by Muhammad is truth and the death is truth and the rising is truth and Allah would raise those who are in the graves.

Then he said: Munkar and Nakeer tell one another to return, as the proof has been taught to this dead."⁹

The first Talqeen should be recited at the last moments and the second at the time of lowering the body in the grave.

It is likely that someone may say: What can a dead person understand? But, as we have described earlier, the soul (spirit) of the dead remains near its body and hears better than we can. Some may also ask: How can an admonition (Talqeen) recited in the Arabic language be understood by a non-Arab body?

The reply is that, when one goes away from this material world of water and earth all languages are equally comprehensible for him or her. Linguistic limitations belong only to the material world.

Death at a Time of the Descent of Mercy

Another group of people who are protected from the squeeze of the grave, fear and Barzakh torture are those who die between time of Zuhr on Thursday and Friday, as these are the hours when divine mercy rains allowing such persons its full benefit. God covers them in His kindness. This is also a kind of divine kindness that God showers on His servants.

Two Green Branches and Testimony of Forty Persons

The burying of two green branches of date tree, palm or pomegranate (Jareedat) along with the dead body is one of the things about which it is promised that these things come in the way of the chastisement in grave. Of course date branches are the best and they must be green.

Another protecting thing is the testimony of fourteen or more persons about the true belief of the dead and their prayer for the forgiveness of the dead. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted in Anwarun Nomaniya that he said, "If forty persons gather near a dead person and say: O God! We know nothing, except good deeds done by this person. God responds: I have accepted your testimony and have forgiven all his sins not known to you."

Prophet Dawood did not Offer Burial Prayer for a Worshipper

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is also reported to have said that there was a worshipper among Bani Israel about whom God revealed to Dawood (a.s.) that he (said worshipper) was a hypocrite. When he died, Dawood (a.s.) did not offer prayer on his body. Others went and forty persons prayed for the salvation of the dead, saying: O Lord! We know nothing about this man, except that he was doing good deeds and You know better.

So kindly forgive him. When that body was given a wash another group of forty persons arrived and also uttered the same words, as they did not know about the hidden matters of that deceased. Then it was asked through revelation to Dawood (a.s.), "Why did you not pray for him?"

Dawood (a.s.) replied, "O Lord! I did not pray, as You informed me that he was a hypocrite." A voice came from heaven, "Though it is true, a group of people has testified that he was a good man, so I also

confirmed it, accepted their testimony and forgave him.” It also is a very great kindness of the Almighty that He pardons His servants and does not punish them even though they were not eligible for such salvation.

Testimony of Believers by Dust of Kerbala on the Shroud of Allamah Majlisi (r.a.)

It was because of this that pious people, especially earlier religious scholars used to keep their shrouds ready beforehand and to request their friends and the faithful people to write their testimonies on it. Muhaddith Jazaeri (r.a.) writes that his teacher Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) used to request his believing friends to write their testimonies with the earth of Kerbala on his shroud and they used to comply by writing: Doubtlessly he was a faithful person, and put their seals under it.

Among all such things done for protection from the chastisement in grave effectively is to place the Holy earth of the grave of Imam Husain (a.s.) in one’s grave and also to anoint the forehead and both palms of the dead with it.

The Good Deeds which Reach the Dead after Death

Among the beneficences of good deeds, which benefit one in the grave, are the good deeds, which are being performed in this world by proxy or the reward of such good deeds, which is being given to the dead as a gift.

The foremost among them is repayment of his debts and performance of missed prayers and fasts. Similar to it is performance of Hajj, which the dead could not or did not undertake, and also to give charity in the way of God and to pray and seek pardon for the dead.

There are many narrations by Ahle Bayt on this subject. (Interested persons may refer to Wasailush Shia, Kitabut Taharat, Abwaab-e-Ehtezaar, Baab 27, and Abwaab-e-Qazaae Salaat Baab 12 wherein there are 26 traditions. They may also study Baab-e-Hajj-va-Waqf in the same book).

The summary of these narrations is that if someone performs good deeds like Prayers, Fast, Hajj and alms-giving etc for a deceased person, the Lord of the Universe makes its reward reach the dead and also grants a manifold reward to the performer of such good deeds.

Numerous Gifts as Reward of Charity on behalf of the Dead

Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) says, “It also happens that a body is under squeeze in grave and then he is given ease and comfort. Angels tell him or her that this is the result of such and such good deed sent to you by your such and such well-wisher in the world. Such rewards are very big in proportion to the good deeds performed for them.”

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has been quoted in Wasailush Shia that Almighty God commands seventy thousand angels to proceed to the grave of that fortunate person. Every angel has, in his hand, a plate full of heavenly bounties of Paradise. They tell the dead, "Be you in peace and safety, O servant of God! O friend of God! This gift has been sent to you by such and such friend."

Then his grave lit up brightly and God the merciful grants him a thousand cities, a thousand Houries and a thousand precious robes and fulfils one thousand of his wishes.

Request of the Dead to the Living

It is mentioned in Maniul Akhbar that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "Go on sending gifts to your dead." The companions asked, "O Messenger of God! What can be a gift for the dead?" The Prophet said, "Supplications and alms."

Then he added, "Every Friday eve, the spirits of the dead come to the nearest sky and, standing in front of their homes, cry out weeping sorrowfully, 'O my family members! O my children! O my parents and O my near and dear ones! Be kind to us. God will be kind to you. We have to account here for what wealth and property we had in the world and by which others benefit there. Please do us some favor, be it through a dirham or bread or a cloth. God will adorn you with heavenly dress...'"

Barzakh is Veiled in this World

Some may think as to where such a vast world of Barzakh is situated? Our intellect is unable to comprehend it. We will only say that the realm of Barzakh is in a veil and hence invisible to the physical eye. There are many narrations to make us understand this matter.

For example: This world of ours, along with its vast lands and skies, if compared with the realm of Barzakh, is like a tiny spot in an endlessly big forest. So long as a man lives in this world, he is like a silk worm or like an unborn child in womb. When he dies, he becomes free. Of course, he remains in this very world and does not go away and out of it, but now he has no limitations like time and space, because these things are limited only to this material world.

The Realm of Barzakh Encircles this World

If it is said to a baby in the womb that there is a very vast world beyond your present station, which is nothing in comparison with that one, he would be unable to comprehend it. Similarly, we, who are able now to see only through the physical eyes, cannot comprehend the other world, which is hidden from our eyes.

Almighty God says in the Holy Quran:

“So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did.” (Surah Sajdah 32:17)

That is, nobody knows what things have been provided for him or her that can cool their eyes. This is the reward of the good deeds done by them in the world. We only know that as the Trust Informer (Prophet) has informed us of it and we testify to it. The realm of Barzakh has encircled and covered our present physical and material world just as this world has covered the world in womb. No other example is more explanatory.

Souls are Friendly with One Another and Please One Another

Asbagh bin Nubatah says, “I saw my master, Amirul Momineen (a.s.) standing at the gate of Kufa looking towards the desert. It appeared that he was busy talking with someone, but there was no one. I also stood up. After a long time, I felt tired. So I sat down and got up again after a while.

But Ali (a.s.) was still busy talking. I went a step forward and asked, ‘O Amirul Momineen! Who is it you are talking to?’ He said, ‘This talk of mine was to please the spirits of the faithful.’ I asked, ‘Which faithful? No one from those who have passed away is present here.’ He said, ‘Yes, they are present here.’ I again asked, ‘Are they present here physically or in spirit?’

He replied, ‘Their spirits. Had you been able to do so, you could have seen how they gather at a place, talk mutually and please one another remembering the gifts and bounties of God.’”

The Valley of Peace is the Station of the Spirits of the Faithful

It is mentioned in other traditions that any faithful person who passes away either from the east or the west of this world finds that his spirit or soul which remains in his facsimile body has its place in the Valley of Peace in the neighborhood of Amirul Momineen (a.s.).

In other words, Najaf Ashraf is an expression of the higher world. Likewise, for unbelievers their abode is Wadi Barhut situated in Yemen in a fearful and barren land where even birds do not venture. This is a place for the appearance of mean souls.

Nearness to Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) Attainable through Knowledge and Virtues

Whatever you have heard about importance of nearness to Amirul Momineen (a.s.) is about spiritual neighbourhood, whatever one’s physical distance from Najaf Ashraf. In fact nearness to Ali (a.s.) is attainable through knowledge and actions. When a man commits a sin, he becomes distant from Ali (a.s.) in proportion to the seriousness of his sin.

Very nice if the soul is with Ali (a.s.) and body also gets buried near him in Najaf Ashraf. It is indeed a very big fortune. But if, God forbid, one is physically buried in Najaf Ashraf, but his soul is under torture in Wadi Barhut, it is a terribly bad luck. So all of us should try our best to make our spiritual relation with Ali (a.s.) more and more strong and close.

Doubtlessly, physical burial in Najaf Ashraf also is not without benefits and has perfect effectiveness, because being buried there, is in a way, a means to nearness to the Amirul Momineen (a.s.).

A Dead Body brought from Yemen to Najaf Ashraf

It is mentioned in Madinatul Majiz that, one day, Ali (a.s.) was sitting with his companions at the back of the gate of Jufa. Looking up, he said, "Do you also see what I am seeing?" People said, "No, O Amirul Momineen!" He said, "I can see two persons who are bringing a dead body on a camel to bury it here. It will take three more days for them to reach here." On the third day thereafter Ali (a.s.) went again with the companions to see who comes.

First people could see that a camel was coming towards them with a body on its back. A man was holding the rein of that camel. Another man was walking behind. When they came nearer, Amirul Momineen (a.s.) asked, "Whose body is it? Who are you and from where do you come?"

They replied, "We are from Yemen and this is the body of our father who had willed that his body should be carried to Iraq to be buried in Najaf Ashraf." Ali (a.s.) asked, "Did you ask him the reason for it?" They replied, "Yes, our father was saying that a man will be buried there who will be able, if he likes, to intercede for the entire gathering on the Day of Resurrection." Ali (a.s.) said, "By God. I am indeed that man."

One Who gave Shelter to Locusts Around His Tent

In connection with benefits for those who are buried near Ali's (a.s.) tomb Muhaddith Qummi (r.a.) has given a very appropriate example in Mafatihul Jinaan. There is an Arabic proverb meaning: Such and such person is superior than the one who gives shelter to locusts. The story is as follows: A man named Madlaj bin Suwaid, who belonged to the tribe of Tai was, one day, sitting in his tent. He saw that a group belonging to the Tai tribe was approaching his tent holding huge bags and many utensils. He asked their condition.

They said: Many locusts have descended around your tent. We want to catch them. Hearing this, Madlaj got up, took a spear in his hand and ascending his horse declared, "By God, I will kill anyone who even touches these locusts. These grasshoppers are my neighbors and they have come in my shelter.

How can you catch them? It will never be allowed." Then he defended his locusts till the sun rose and it became hot and the locusts flew away. Then he said, "Lo. Now the locusts have left my neighbourhood.

Now it is your look out to deal with them.”

In short, it is obvious that if someone comes in the neighbourhood of Ali (a.s.), thereby taking his shelter will surely benefit by his support.

Close Relation between the Soul and the Grave

Muhaddith Jazaeri (r.a.) mentions at the end of Anwarun Nomaniya: If you ask when souls live in facsimile bodies in the Valley of Peace, why we have been asked to visit graves (for reciting Fatiha and prayers)? And how do the souls understand that a visitor has arrived when they are not present in the graves?

The reply is that it has been narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that though the souls live in the Valley of Peace, their relations with graves remain intact and they know about the visitors and recognize them. The Holy Imam has said that souls are like sun. The sun remains in the sky, but its rays cover the whole earth.

Likewise, the souls' covering or encirclement is concerned with knowledge and comprehension.

Reflection of Sunrays in a Mirror

Just as the appearance and reflection is relatively much more at a mirror, the attention of souls and their covering is more at their graves. It is so because the soul had lived in those bodies for several years and gained much favours due to them. That is why they will focus their attention there.

This also provides an answer to the one who asks as to why we should go to the grave when the Imam is present at every place and thus, there is no difference in one place and the other. Doubtlessly, the graves of Holy Imams and religious leaders are the centers of the attention of Holy souls and the places where divine favors keep raining. Angels come and go there.

So, if anybody wants to get full benefit from those Holy personalities, he should never give up visiting the Holy shrines and must try their best to go there.

Why no Reward or Punishment is Given to this Earthly Body?

Some people raise here a weak doubt and say: The soul after one's death gets connected with a fine body called facsimile body, which is just like this earthen body, as described earlier, and also sees (tastes) reward or torture with the same facsimile body. Now here arises a question:

When man had worshipped God in this earthen body, how reward is given to the other body? Or man had committed sins in the material body, which has been disintegrated now after death, how is it that the punishment is meted out to the other body? There can be several answers to this question.

Every Soul has Two Kinds of Bodies

As Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) has written, the facsimile body is not any outward thing, which may be brought near the grave after one's death and then, for example, it may be said to it: O soul! Now live in this body.

Rather, a facsimile body is a fine body, which lives even now in this world with man's earthly body. Every soul has two bodies: A fine (subtle) body and a thick (dense) body. Man has prayed and sinned in both these bodies. This matter must be well understood. So we are giving the example of a dream.

During a dream, these two bodies get separated. What a man sees in his dream is the behavior or deed of this facsimile body, which walks, talks etc. Within twinkling of eye man reaches Kerbala, Holy Mashad, tours from east to west.

This shows that the facsimile body remains with man always. But after death, it separates from the material body. This statement of Majlisi (r.a.) is a very studied one. There also are many more testimonies.

The Soul is either Punished or Rewarded

Another answer is that after death, human soul turns into the same earthen form of body. It does not get connected with any outside body. Rather the soul takes up the form of material body. Now, you may call it a facsimile body, Barzakh body or spirit.

But, as it is fine, elemental or material eyes cannot see it. Summarily speaking, it was only the spirit, which had committed sins in the world and hence it is only the spirit that is being punished after death.

Now, it may be chastised either by getting it connected with the facsimile body or it may be getting punishment absolutely by itself, constantly. Of course, on the Day of Judgement, all will rise and gather only in this worldly and material body.

[1.](#) Qalbe Saleem, Pg. 247

[2.](#) Aale Imran 3: 179

[3.](#) Biharul Anwar

[4.](#) Biharul Anwar

[5.](#) Here it should be understood sometimes, Lord Almighty removes that veil in front of eyes which prevents us from observing the things belonging to the realm of Barzakh so that people may take lessons of admonition.

[6.](#) Vol. 1, P. 247

[7.](#) Unit of Currency

[8.](#) Tafsir Burhan

[9.](#) Wasailush Shia, Book of Cleanliness, chapter 35. There are many narrations on this matter in Wasailush Shia, Book of Purification, Chapter 13. One by Imam Baqir (a.s.) is as follows: The Imam (a.s.) says: The body is not punished, until the said branches remain green and God willing, it will not be punished even after the branches dry up.

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