

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > The Hereafter (Ma'ad) > Barzakh (Purgatory) - The Stage Between this World and the Hereafter > Barhoot - A Sample of Hell in Barzakh

Barzakh (Purgatory) - The Stage Between this World and the Hereafter

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 the sweet and the 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. "(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 the 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. 1

The Holy Qur'an says:

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

The 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 speciality. After our death, we enter a realm, which, in comparison, is like this world vis-à-vis a mother's womb.

Similarly, out 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 some thing 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."2

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 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 Mashhad 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; "(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 honourable 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 Salawaat for the Prophet and his Progeny and love for 'Ali Ibne 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 specialities 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 Houri is unveiled, it will dazzle the eyes of the whole world. If the entire of 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. "(18:7)

Meaning: We have made whatever is in the world an adoration 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 Naraqi 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, which was 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 happen. Perhaps that voice might not have meant our death but might have any 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!" (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)

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 that a very handsome man was 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 honour 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 time 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 our face 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 up to 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 are, 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 Naraqi. 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 Mahmood Iraqi, at the end of his book Darus Salam, quotes the late Naraqi (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 the medium of the 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 much 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 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 the book 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 perpetuality 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! If a man gets entangled the torture in Barzakh and if we hear any of his terrible shrieks, all the terrible things of our world will appear nothing to us compared to that in Barzakh.

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 began 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 taking food etc."

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 solider in the army of Umar bin Saad in Karbala', 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 Karbala'. 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 Karbala', 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 Sayyid Hashimi Bahrani (r.a.) is quoted in Darus Salam3 that: There was a perfumer in Najaf al–Ashraf who used to give advice (admonition) to people at his shop daily after the mid–day prayer. Many people used to gather in his shop. A prince from India had become a resident of Najaf al–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 Mu'minin (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 advice 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 Qiran4 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 Sirat 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 stars 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 Ibne Sina says, "If you hear news or event you should imagine it as possible until its impossibility is not established logically."5

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. 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 Ma'ad?

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 Me'raj (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, behaviour or attitude towards all. So, apart from his witness and testimony, the permanent proof of Muhammad's Messengership and the everlasting miracle, Qur'an 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 BintAsad, Mother of Amirul Mu'minin (A.S.)

When Fatima BintAsad, mother of 'Ali (a.s.) breathed her last, Amirul Mu'minin (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 BintAsad. 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 BintAsad 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 Ghadir al–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 Ageel.'"

Fatima BintAsad was much Fearful about the Events after Death

Despite the fact that Fatima bintAsad was very great pious and graceful lady who had the honour of being the mother of Amirul Mu'minin (a.s.) and who had been the guest of God for three days in the House of God (Ka'ba) (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 Ibne Babawahy (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 colour of henna on his nail faded after such a long time!

The Body of Shaykh Sadooq Found Fresh

It is written in Rawzaatul Jannaat 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 colour 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 Ibne Yazid Riyahi. Muhaddith Jazaeri has mentioned it in Anwarun Nomaniya like this: Shah Ismail Safavi went to visit Karbala' 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 Karbala'.

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 Karbala'). The king built a grand tomb over his grave and appointed a caretaker over it.

A Suckling Baby 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 Moosa Kazim (a.s.) so that people may stop visiting Kazmain. His minister was a Shi'a (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 Shi'a 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 Shi'a 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 can a soul 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 body traces could be seen in the grave of the cursed Yazid.

Fire of Barzakh leaps out of a Grave

Quoting narrations of some reliable and trustworthy people, the late Shaykh Mahmood 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 Qum 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, which is 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 burn 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 have 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."6

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 or palm or pomegranate (Jareedatain) 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.

There are many narrations on this matter in Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, 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 wiling, it will not be punished even after the branches dry.

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 the good deeds done by this person. God responds: I have accepted your testimony and have forgiven all of 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 had 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 Karbala' 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 Karbala' on his shroud and they used to comply by writing: Doubtlessly he was a faithful person, and put their seal 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 the repayment of his debts and the performance of the missed prayers and fasts.

Similar to it is the performance of the 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 Ahlul Bayt on this subject.7

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 Wasa'il ush-Shi'a that Almighty God commands seventy thousand angels to proceed towards 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 lits 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 favour, be it through a dirham or bread or a cloth. God will adorn you with heavenly dress...'"(Up to the end of narration).

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 mother's 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 Qur'an:

"So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what

they did . "(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

Asbag bin Nubatah says, "I saw my master, Amirul Mu'minin (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 Mu'minin! 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 neighbourhood of Amirul Mu'minin (a.s.).

In other words, Najaf al-Ashraf is an exhibition of the higher world. Likewise, for unbelievers their abode is Wadi al-Barhoot, which is 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 Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s) Attainable through Knowledge and Virtues

Whatever you have heard about importance of nearness to Amirul Mu'minin (a.s.) is about spiritual neighbourhood, whatever one's physical distance from Najaf al-Ashraf. In fact nearness to 'Ali (a.s) is attainable through knowledge and actions. When a man commits a sin he becomes away 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 al-Ashraf. It is indeed a very big fortune. But if, God forbid, one is physically buried in Najaf al-Ashraf but his soul is under

torture in Wadi al-Barhoot, 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 al-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 Mu'minin (a.s.).

A Dead Body which was brought from Yemen to Najaf al-Ashraf

It is mentioned in Madinatul Ma'ajiz 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 Mu'minin!"

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 in his hand. Another man was walking behind.

When they came nearer, Amirul Mu'minin (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 for being buried in Najaf al-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 make intercession 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 (a.s)'s tomb Muhaddith Qummi (r.a.) has given a very appropriate example in Mafatihul Jinan. 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 neighbours 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 centres of the attention of Holy souls and the places where divine favours 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 then how is it that the punishment is meted out to the other body? There can be several answers to this guestion.

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 behaviour or deed of this facsimile body, which walks, talks etc.

Within twinkling of eye man reaches Karbala', 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 answers 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 punishment 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.

Qur'anic Description of Reward and Punishment in Barzakh

"The fire; they shall be brought before it (every) morning and evening and on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make Firon's people enter the severest chastisement. "(40:46)

It means that they will be thrown in fire in the morning and in the evening and when Qiyamat will occur (it will be ordered): Inflict the severest punishment on the followers of Firon.

This is one of those verses of Qur'an, which testify to punishment in Barzakh. The above verse refers to those people of the Pharaoh who drowned in the Nile. Ever since that day, they are regularly brought near fire every morning and every evening. This will continue till the Day of Judgement whereafter they will be given the severest chastisement.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s) says that there is no morning or evening in the Hereafter, and that the said punishment in morning and evening refers to the world of Barzakh.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "If the dead person is one of the people of hell, his place in hell is shown to him every morning and every evening in his grave (Barzakh period). If he or she is of the people of paradise, he or she is shown his or her palace in paradise and told that this will be your station in the Hereafter."

In Comfort or in Pain so long as Days and Nights endure

The Holy Qur'an says:

"So as to those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing and groaning in it:

Abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; surely your Lord is the mighty doer of what He intends.

And as to those who are made happy, they shall be in the garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please; a gift which shall never be cut off. "(11:106-108)

The Imam (a.s.) says that this verse also refers to the realm of Barzakh and the reward and punishment mentioned in it is also the consequence in Barzakh because, there is no question of earth or sky in the Qiyamat as the Holy Qur'an says:

"On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens (as well), and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Supreme. "(14:48)

Habib Najjar in the Paradise of Barzakh

Allah says:

"It was said: Enter the garden. He said: O would that my people had known; Of that on account of which my Lord has forgiven me and made me of the honored ones! "(36:26-27)

This holy verse refers to Habib Najjar who was Faithful despite belonging to the community of Firon. When he invited his people to put faith in God's messengers, people threatened him (as described at length in the explanation of Surah Yasin).8

Finally they hanged him on an impaling stake and beat him to death. After his death, when he got his reward he said: I wish my community had known that God has pardoned me and that my Lord has placed me among the respected.

Here comes the Divine Word: "He was told: Enter paradise." Imam (a.s.) says: Here paradise means the paradise of Barzakh. In another narration, it is mentioned that it means worldly heaven, which is lower

than the Paradise of the Hereafter.

In short, this verse shows that as soon as the Faithful of the people of Firon was martyred he entered paradise instantly. Since his community till then was in the world, he wished that they might know how many bounties the Most Merciful Lord had given to him (so that they too would have obeyed and repented for their misdeeds and turned towards God.

Hard Life and Punishment in the Grave

The Qur'an says:

"And whoever turns away from My reminder, his shall be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind. "(20:124)

Most commentators are of the opinion that here 'Straitened Life' means chastisement in the grave. Imam Sajjad (a.s.) also is reported to have taken this meaning.

Barzakh till everyone would be raised from the Graves on the Day of Judgement

Again the Qur'an says:

Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: Send me back, my Lord, send me back; Haply I may do good in that which I have left. By no means! it is a (mere) word that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised. "(23:99-100)

This verse shows that man indeed has a life after death and before the Day of Judgement. It is in between the two. It is known by the name of Barzakh.

Personality of Man Due to his Spirit or Soul

In short, thinking over this verse and many other verses, it is clearly understood that human soul is a reality, which is different from body. There surely is a connection between the spirit and the body. Soul governs the body through intention and intelligence and manages the latter's affairs. In fact, a man's personality belongs to his or her soul and not to the body, which ends with death. (Every movement comes to end and body turns into a heap of dust).

Following the disintegration of its parts, the body becomes dust. Man's reality and personality or individuality is his spirit which survives even after man's death and lives either in permanent happiness or eternal trouble depending on his pre-death intentions and performance, having nothing to do with the condition of his or her earthly (worldly) body. This is a universal truth.

Islamic scholars have, in order to prove that soul is something different from body and that it does not vanish due to death and that the rules governing it are different, put forth many arguments and logical evidences. But, after the presentation of the Word of God and the traditions and statements of the holy Prophet and pious Imams (a.s.) there is no need of reiterating the said scholarly statements. This issue is now brighter than sun for us.

Paradise in Barzakh for the Content Soul

One of the Barzakh-related verses in the Holy Qur'an are the last verses of Surah Al-Fajr:

O soul that art at rest!

Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (Him),

So enter among My servants,

And enter into My garden. (89:27-29)

In these verses the satisfied soul is being addressed at the moment of death: "Enter My Paradise." It has been explained as the paradise in Barzakh. Similarly it is said, "Join and enter the group of My servant" (meaning: Muhammad and his Progeny). There are other verses also hinting at heaven and hell in Barzakh but what we have said is enough.9

Rewards and Punishments of Barzakh as Mentioned in Reports and Traditions

Many traditions discuss reward and punishment in Barzakh. Here we suffice with a few.

In Biharul Anwar Vol: 3 there is a quotation from the Tafsir of 'Ali bin Ibrahim Qummi (who has quoted Imam 'Ali.) according to which the Holy Prophet said, "When the offspring of Adam (man) enters the last day of this worldly life and the first one of the Hereafter, his wealth and children and his deeds appear before him. He turns his face towards his wealth and says, 'By God! I had too must lust and greed for you and was also very stingy. Now how much of mine is with you for me?'

The wealth responds, 'Take only that much which can suffice for your shroud.' Then he looks at his children and says, 'By God. I loved you very much and was always protecting and defending you. Show me how much of my portion is now with you for me.' They reply, 'We only will take and bury you and that is all.' Finally he turns towards his deeds and says, 'By God, I was very careless with regard to you and I had disliked you. Yet am I to get any share from you?' The deed says, 'Yes. I will be your companion and friend in grave and will also remain with you in the Hereafter, until both of us would be made to stand before Almighty Lord.'"

If this person was an obedient one and so a friend of God, his deed will approach him in beautiful and handsome shape adorned in the best attire full of pleasing fragrance and say, "I give you good tidings that you will get Rowh and Raihaan (heavenly bounties) and divine graces. Welcome." He will ask, "Who are you?" He will reply, "I am your good deed. Come; let us proceed towards paradise form this world."

This body recognizes the one who gives a wash to it and asks him, giving him an oath, to carry it speedily to his destination. When this body enters grave, two angels who examine every dead, come to him in a fierce form dragging their lengthy hair on the ground and tearing the earth with their teeth. Their eyes dazzle like lightning and their voice furiously roaring.

They ask the body, "Who is your Lord? Who is your Prophet? What was your religion? (Etc)." The body says, "My Lord is only one God who has no partner and my prophet is Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) and my religion is Islam." Then the angels tell him, "May God keep you steadfast on the things, which you like." The same has been hinted in the Holy Qur'an:

"Allah confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter, and Allah causes the unjust to go astray, and Allah does what He pleases. "(14:27)

Then they widen his grave as far as eyes can see and open therein a door in the direction of paradise, telling him, "Now you sleep restfully with cool eyes just as a lucky and successful youth goes to sleep."

Similarly, God has given a hint in this verse also:

"The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding-place and a better restingplace. "(25:24)

But if the body is that of an enemy of God, his bad deed approaches him in the worst kind of dress emanating foul smell and tell him, "Take tidings of getting hot hell water as drink of entering hellfire." He also sees the one who washes him and tells on oath to the bearers of his body to leave him alone and not to take him to his grave. When they bury him, two examiner angels arrive. First they drag out his shroud and then ask him, "Who is your Lord? Who is your Prophet and what is your religion?"

He replies, "I do not know." The angels tell him, "May God not allow you to know and be guided." Then they hit him with a fire mace so harshly that it frightens everything in the world except men and animals. Then they open up a door facing hell in his grave telling him, "Now you may sleep in the worst condition." Then they squeeze his grave to such an extent that it is almost sandwiched, making his brain matter come out from his nails and flesh and God makes snakes and scorpions etc. attack him and to bite and sting painfully till the Day of Resurrection. On that Day, he will be made to rise from his grave. The torture will be so severe that he will wish Qiyamat to come soon.

Faces in Barzakh would be like People's Faces in this World

There is a narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s) in Amali of Shaykh Tusi (r.a.). At the end of it, the Imam has said, "When Almighty God recovers one's soul, He send his soul in its worldly form and shape. There they eat and drink and when a new man (spirit of another dead) arrives to them they recognize him in his worldly face, form and shape."

In another tradition the Imam has said that the spirits of the faithful meet one another and talk with one another and recognize one another so much so that if you happen to see anyone of them you will say this is so and so.

New arrivals questioned about Others

In another tradition, the Imam said, "The spirits dwell in body forms in a garden in paradise. They recognize and know one another. They ask questions and get replies from one another. When a new spirit comes to them they say, 'Leave it (as it is) because it is arriving towards us after being freed from a great calamity (that is death).'

Then they ask it, 'What about so and so and such and such person?' If he replies, 'He was alive until I came here', the spirits express their hope that (God willing, he will also come to them). But if the newly arrived soul says that he had already left the world they say, 'He has fallen down.' It means that when he has not yet come here, he surely must have gone to hell."

Spirits Meet their Worldly Relatives and Friends

There are some narrations in Biharul Anwar, Kafi and other books. Their gist is: The spirits living in Barzakh come to visit their near and dear ones. Some of them come daily, some once in two days, and some once in three days, some on every Friday, some once in a month and some once a year. This difference depends on their condition, places of dwelling and their freedom or captivity.

According to a narration, a faithful soul sees nothing except the well being and pleasing things about his or her near and dear ones. If there is anything contrary to it, that thing is not shown to him or her (soul in Barzakh). Such disturbing things are kept unknown so that it may not be come unhappy. The spirit of an unbeliever sees nothing except bad and painful things about its near and dear ones.

The Pool of Kauthar in Barzakh

Abdullah bin Sinan is quoted in several books of traditions and narrations. He asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the Pool of Kauthar (a heavenly spring). He replied, "Its length is equal to the distance between Basra and Yemen (Sana)." When he expressed his astonishment, he asked, "May I show it to you?" I said, "Yes, O my Master!" Then the Imam took him out of Medina. There he kicked the ground on one

spot and said, "See!" (Veils before his eyes were removed by the order of the Imam)

He says, "I saw a huge spring flowing, the shores of which were not visible except the spot on which we stood and which was like a small island. I saw a spring at one bank of which snow white water was flowing in waves and on the other bank whiter than snow milk flowing and in between the two, flowed wine, which had fine red colour that was more attractive than topaz both in sheen and fineness. I had never before seen such a wine of the best quality flowing between pure milk and snow white water."

I said, "O Master! May I be sacrificed on you. From where does this spring flow?" The Imam replied, "As mentioned by Almighty God in the Holy Qur'an, there is a spring of milk, a spring of water and a spring of wine in paradise. All these three springs come from there."

The narrator says, "I saw many trees on both the banks of this spring and a houri near every tree. She had such beautiful hair the like of which I had never seen before. There was a utensil in the hands of every houri. The said vessels were so beautiful that I had never seen such utensils in the world. They did not belong to this material world. He hinted to a houri to serve water. She filled that utensil from that spring and presented it to the Imam. He drank from it.

He asked her again to fill it. She complied with the command and the Imam gave that utensil to me. I drank from it and found that I had never tasted such a nice, delicious and pleasing drink ever before. It had a fragrance of musk. I said, 'May I be sacrificed on you. Whatever I observed today is such that I had not only never seen before but also never even imagined before, (that such things could ever be available in the world).'"

The Imam said, "What you have seen is only a small specimen of the bounties provided by God Almighty for our Shi'as. When somebody leaves the world his or her spirit is taken to this stream and around this garden of paradise. He eats its fruits and drinks its wines. Whenever our enemy dies, his soul is being taken to Wadi al-Barhoot. He remains in its torture forever. He is forced to eat 'Zaqqoom' (a thorny cactus tree) and drink hot hell water. So pray to God for being protected from the said Barhoot valley."

Kauthar and Hameem at the Moment of Death

Among those who were shown the paradise of Barzakh in this world are companions of the chief of the martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s.) to whom the Holy Imam had shown their places and stations in Barzakh.

In Biharul Anwar, Vol: 3, it is mentioned that Imam Baqir (a.s) said, "No believer leaves this world unless, at his last moments, angels make him drink the Kauthar water. Likewise no unbeliever dies until he is made to drink Hameem (Hell water).

Barhoot - A Sample of Hell in Barzakh

As stated earlier, 'Wadi-us-Salam' (the Valley of Peace) is the abode of the fortunate souls who gather there and Barhoot, which is a barren arid desert, is the place where dirty and evil souls are put to torture. It is a specimen of Hell of Barzakh. The following tradition makes the matter clearer:

One day a man went to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) the last messenger of God, and, expressing his restlessness and anxiety, said, "I have seen a very strange thing." The Holy Prophet asked, "What is it?" He replied, "My wife became seriously ill. People told me, 'If you bring water from a well situated in the Vale of Barhoot, her illness can be cured.' (Some skin diseases are cured by mineral waters).

So I got ready and proceeded towards that valley with a skin to fill that water and also a cup for fetching it from the said well. There I saw a very frightening forest. Despite being afraid, I gathered courage and went on in search of that well (At last I found it). Suddenly I heard the clanking of a chain from above. That chain came down. I saw a man caught in that chain requesting me to give him some water as he was dying of thirst. When I raised my head to offer him a cup of water I saw that he was fastened to that hanging chain.

Whenever I tried to give him water he was dragged up to the red-hot sun. Then I tried to fill my bag with water. That man was again lowered by the dangling chain suddenly and complained bitterly about his deadly thirst. I tried to hand over the cup to him but again he was pulled up right up to the sun. It happened for the third time too. At last I tied my water bag and could not give any water to him. I have become terribly frightened by observing all this and have come to your honour to ascertain the reason of all this." The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) replied, "That unfortunate man is Qabil, son of Adam (a.s.). He had killed his brother Habil.

"Then his mind facilitated to him the slaying of his brother so he slew him; then he became one of the losers. "(5:30)

He will remain in this condition of torture till the day of Judgement and will finally fall in the painful punishment of Hell."

- 1. Behaarul Anwaar.
- 2. Beharul Anwaar.
- 3. Vol. 1, P. 247
- 4. Unit of Currency
- 5. Burhan.
- 6. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, Book of Cleanliness, chapter 35.
- 7. Interested persons may refer to Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, Kitabut Taharat, Abwaab al al-htezaar, Baab 27, and Abwaab al-Qazaae Salaat Baab 12 wherein there are 26 traditions. They may also study Baab al-Hajj-va-Waqf in the same book.
- 8. Refer Qalbe Qur'an by Ayatullah Dastghaib, available on line at:
- http://www.al-islam.org/the-heart-of-the-quran-commentary-of-sura-yasin-... [1]
- 9. Ayatullah Dastghaib (r.a.), the Martyr of the Niche, has explained these verses in detail, which are published in Nafse

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/hereafter-maad-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi/barzakh-purgatory-st age-between-world-and#comment-0

Links

[1] http://www.al-islam.org/the-heart-of-the-quran-commentary-of-sura-yasin-ayatullah-dastaghaib