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Chapter 2

In written form, something, which is placed between two things is called “Barzakh” [i.e. Purgatory] and interpreted in the Holy Qur'an as the world and the state of “living” between the world and the Great Judgment Day.

By referring to the verses of the Holy Qur'an and other Religious Sources, we can understand that:

1. No one enters into the realm of the Hereafter, immediately after death.
2. Human Beings will not enter a particular state of “numbness” and total “silence”, but instead will enter another stage of life, until the Judgment day. This intermediate stage is known as the “Purgatory” [or Barzakh].

The Holy Qur'an and purgatorial life

In some cases, the Holy Qur'an has spoken directly or indirectly, about life after death. Some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an are the evidences of what we just discussed, regarding the subject of “the nature of death”. However, the Holy Qur'an has spoken about this particular subject in other ways as well. Such as:

“Nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not”

A number of verses in the Holy Qur'an clearly announce the existence of Life after Death, such as:

“And say not of those, who are slain in God's cause, “They are dead: nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not.” – 2:154

and,

“But do not think of those that have been slain in God's cause as dead. Nay, they are alive! With their Sustainer have they their sustenance. Exulting in that [i.e. Martyrdom], which God has

bestowed upon them out of His bounty. And they rejoice in the glad tiding given to those [of their brethren,] who have been left behind and have not yet joined them that no fear need, they have, and neither shall they grieve.” – 3:169–170

The supplication of the damned to return

A number of verses in the Holy Qur'an have spoken about the supplications of certain people on their deathbed, to return once again, to the world where they lived; it also reports about their first encounter with the new realm, which will last until the arrival of Judgment Day.

“Until, when Death comes to one of them [i.e. those who join partners with Allah], he says. “My lord! Send me back, so that I may do well in that which I have left behind!” No! It is but a word that he speaks; and behind them¹ is Barzakh [i.e. a barrier] until the Day when they will be resurrected”. – 23:99–100

What have you been doing?

A number of verses in the Holy Qur'an speak about the conversation between angels and dead people, shortly after they face death. For instance, the verse below speaks of the conversation between angels and a number of miserable beings, doomed to be damned:

“Verily, as for those, whom the Angles take [in Death] while they are wronging themselves [as they stayed among the disbelievers even though emigration was obligatory for them, they [i.e. Angels] say to them, “In what [condition] were you?” They reply, “We were weak and oppressed on the earth.” They [i.e. Angels] say, “Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to emigrate therein?” Such men will find their abode in Hell. What an evil destination!” – 4:97

On the contrary, the angels salute and greet warmly the righteous and pious individuals and take their souls smoothly and peacefully.

“[Namely] those, whose lives the Angels take in a state of purity, saying [to them], “Peace be on you...! Enter ye the Garden, because of [the good], which ye did [in the world]!” – 16:32

The world, purgatory, and resurrection

A number of verses in the Holy Qur'an speak of the condition, where human beings are held in eternal suffering and torment or on the contrary, in a perpetual state of bliss and beatitude.

It is announced in the surah [*Al-Waqiah*],

“Then why do you not [intervene], when the soul of a dying person reaches the throat, and you, at the moment are looking on, but we [i.e. our Angels, who take the soul] are nearer to him than

you, but you see not. Then why do you not – if you are exempt from the reckoning and recompense punishment–bring back the soul [to its body], if you are truthful; then, if he [i.e. the dying person] be of the "Mūqarrabin" [i.e. those brought near to Allah], there is for him rest and provision, and a Garden of Delights [i.e. Paradise]. And if he [i.e. the dying person] be of those on the Right Hand, then there is safety and peace [from the Punishment of Allah] for those on the right Hand. Then there is safety and peace [from the Punishment of Allah] for those on the right Hand. But if he [i.e. the dying person] be of the denying [of the Resurrection], the erring [i.e. away from the Right Path of Islamic Monotheism], Then for him is an entertainment with boiling water, and Burning in Hell-fire.” – 56:83–94

These verses show that between death and resurrection, there is life, bliss, and agony. Surely, it is not that after death, the existence of Man is to be destroyed or that between death and Resurrection, he is to be placed in a state of numbness and apathy, while his life will be taken away from him, only to be returned to him in the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, the life of Man has three stages: the world, Purgatory, and Resurrection.

Two deaths, two lives

The Holy Qur'an speaks of the people of the Day of Resurrection,

“They will say, “Our Lord! You have made us to die twice [i.e. we were dead in the loins of our fathers and dead after our life in this the world], and You have given us life twice [i.e. life when we were born and life, when we are Resurrected]! Now we confess our sins, then is there any way to get out [of the Fire]?” – 40:11

This particular verse of the Holy Qur'an shows that after death, life still continues on, until the day of resurrection, because if it were otherwise, there would have been only one life and one death; that is, to die in this the world and to be resurrected on the day of resurrection. However, two deaths and two lives show that after the earthly and physical death there will be a purgatorial life. And that eventually after the Purgatorial death, and only then, would life in the Hereafter begin.²

Eternity, until heaven and earth shall subsist

A number of the verses in the Holy Qur'an inform us of the eternal quality in heaven and hell, and until the heavens and earth are still existing; as an example, let us see what this verse announces,

“On the Day, when it comes, no person shall speak, except by His [i.e. Allah's] Leave. Some among them will be wretched and [others] blessed. As for those, who are wretched, they will be in the Fire, sighing in a high and low tone. They will dwell, therein, for all the time that the Heavens and the earth endure, except as your lord wills. Verily, your Lord is the Doer of whatsoever he intends [or wills]. And those, who are blessed, they will be in Paradise, abiding

therein, for all the time that the Heavens and the earth endure, except as our Lord wills: a gift without an end. – 11:105–107

In the book, entitled "*Tafsir*" [i.e. Exegesis], written by the late erudite scholar Homayi³, which is a critical interpretation, there is an explanation from the lord of the believers Imam Ali [as], which refers to the verses, mentioned above; it is thus explained:

“By mentioning Heavens and Earth, these verses mean the time before the Day of Resurrection; and when this Day [i.e. Day of Resurrection] comes, the Heavens and Earth shall change.” ⁴

Therefore, the purposes of these noble verses are to inform us of the human misery [or damnation] and happiness [or beatitude]; it also inform us about Heaven and Hell.

Fire, each morning and each evening

Among the noble verses, which the lord of the believers, Imam Ali [as] refers to, as the evidence for the existence of Purgatorial Life there is a particular verse. It is indeed, a clear proof of the divine torment inflicted upon the damned, each morning and each evening,

“In front of the Fire will they be brought, morning and evening; and [the Sentence will be] on the Day that Judgment will be established, “Cast ye the People pf Pharaoh into the severest Penalty!”
– 40:46

The lord of the believers Imam Ali [as] had also declared in this regard. *“On Judgment Day, there shall be no morning or evening. For, morning and evening are created from the continual movement of day and night in the world; and this fact exists only in a Paradise, which comes before Judgment Day [i.e. Barzakh]; while on Resurrection Day, there shall be no trace of any morning or evening. This is because Allah Almighty has announced,*

“Reclining in the [Garden], on raised thrones, they will see there, neither the excessive heat of the sun, nor the excessive bitter cold, [as in Paradise there is no sun and no moon].” – 76:13

*meaning that no sun exists, therefore, neither shall be any morning nor evening.*⁵

The state of purgatory

The realm of the forms

The hereafter is the realm of forms, with an infinite number of various colors and sounds, beauties and abominations, with pleasant and unpleasant odors, which will be revealed for all those who have been stripped down of their earthly clothes to enter the new spiritual Realm.

Some people can actually be endowed with superior inner perceptions in this very world of ours, before entering the other Realm; as the late Sheikh Abbas Qummi [God rest his soul] was prone to hear the cries of the deceased, while others who were close by, could not..[6](#)

The grave's questioning

One of the most significant events in the Realm of the Purgatory is the phase in which the angels question the faith of men. As it has been reported in a hadith, which says, *“Inside the individual's grave, he shall be questioned about his belief [i.e. faith] or his disbelief, and no other question shall be asked from him”*[7](#)

The pressure of the grave

It has been reported in a hadith that, *“The grave is either a Garden of Paradise, or a Pit, filled with Hell-Fire...”* [8](#)

Of the Purgatorial torments, one is indeed the pressure of the grave. The causes for the pressure of the grave include: the fact that the deceased, while living had gossiped, or not kept his promise to keep and safeguard a secret, told to him in absolute confidence; and the fact of having abandoned and left their families and kinsmen.[9](#) Other reasons have also been mentioned in various religious sources as well. [10](#)

To account for one's deeds and misdeeds

One of the characteristics of the Purgatorial life is the companionship and the existence of man's deeds alongside with him. Good deeds will be his saviors and liberators from the terrible difficulties and miseries, which he shall have to face, while wicked misdeeds will be a continual source of torment and punishment for him.

On one occasion, Imam Sadiq [as] had declared, *“The moment when a believer enters his grave, his prayers will be placed on his right side, and his zakat on his left side. In like manner, his good deeds will be placed above his head, while his patience is placed somewhere near him. Then the angels will arrive to question his patience, his prayers, his zakat, and his good deeds; and if they are not able to answer, the believer would then announce that he will answer the angels' Questions himself.”* [11](#)

Companionship of the souls of the believers

A number of religious accounts exist, which state that in purgatory, the souls of the pious believers gather[12](#) in a place called, “Wadi As-Salam” [or the Valley of Peace]; by recognizing and identifying each other, they start talking and conversing with each other. It has been reported in a hadith from the lord of the believers, Imam Ali [as], *“To any faithful person, who is deceased wherever in the world, it will be told that his soul has to head into the “Wadi As-Salam”, where there is a proper dwelling-place [for him/her] inside the everlasting Paradise...”* [13](#)

There are also some other accounts concerning the disbelievers; they speak of a lugubrious wasteland, where the disbelievers will be placed and tormented eternally and perpetually... [14](#)

The connection between the world and purgatory

Essentially, there is an intense connection between the world and purgatory, which will be discussed in later chapters. There are also various forms of connection and relation between the universe and purgatory, which differ from Judgment day in many ways such as:

The opening of one's book of deeds

In purgatory, the "book" of one's deeds and actions is somewhat open and some of the events, which had happened in this world, along with some of one's actions, such as benevolence, good deeds, and philanthropy towards the others are shown in this book. At the same time, the consequences of the efforts of the others concerning their goodness and benevolence are very much effective and efficient in this heavenly Book.

In a beautiful hadith, the holy prophet of Islam (S) has been reported to say. *"The moment a person dies, the book of his deeds and actions is closed. Except for three things: charity and alms [that is a good deed, which will continue even after his/her death], a [written] page, [which will teach] Knowledge and from which, the others can benefit [greatly]; and to have a virtuous child."* [15](#)

One's inner perception of the purgatory

There are numerous solid religious texts [i.e. *Nusus*], endowed with an indisputable and irrefutable characteristic, along with the ecstatic visions of those, who were/are endowed with divine vision and Clairvoyance. They tell us that those, whose inner perceptions of the purgatory were/are strong and clear in this world [with some differences in their grades and positions, of course...] were/are finely able to perceive that other realm [i.e. purgatory]. In some of the Ahadith, the holy Prophet (S) himself had seen the visions of past Prophets, such as Hazrat Adam [as] and Hazrat Nuh [i.e. Noah as]. [16](#)

In some other instances, there are also examples of the conversation of the lord of the believers, Hazrat Ali [as] with the souls of the virtuous believers. [17](#) Then again, we are witness to the manifestation and apparition of the souls of virtuous and pious believers of the past, such as Sarah [i.e. Prophet Abraham's wife], Assiah [i.e. the Pharaoh's wife], Mary [i.e. Hazrat Maryam, Prophet Jesus' Mother sa 2], and Kulsum [i.e. Prophet Moses' sister] which had appeared before the very astonished eyes of Hazrat Khadijah [sa]. [18](#)

The possibility of returning to earth

The possibility of "returning" to this earthly plane could be interpreted, in other words, as the Return [i.e. Rid'at] to the world, from the realm of purgatory; this is also one of the most significant issues, which

have been discussed in the Holy Qur'an and numerous ahadith. It concerns the possibility of such extraordinary event to happen. It should be noted that with regards to this question, there are various accounts. [19](#)

- [1.](#) The word "behind" means both "being behind something or someone" and "being ahead of something or someone"; but here, it is used, as the indication for the phrase "The Day when they will be resurrected". Please, refer to the work of Professor Mutahhari, entitled "The Hereafter", page 74
- [2.](#) From Professor Mutahhari's book, entitled "The Hereafter", page 51–52
- [3.](#) He was a great Persian scholar.
- [4.](#) From Professor Mutahhari's book, entitled "The Hereafter", page 64
- [5.](#) Please, refer to Professor Mutahhari's book, entitled "The Hereafter", page 64–65
- [6.](#) Volume 7, page 122
- [7.](#) The other translation of this hadith is, "Indeed, inside the grave, the question is made to he, who is either endowed with the purest faith or on the contrary, afflicted with absolute disbelief and blasphemy; therefore, the others are not faced with the questioning." According to this meaning, Allamah Al-Majlisi has given an ample explanation in this regard; however, in this case, Professor Mutahhari had preferred the other version of the meaning. Please to refer to pages 124–125.
- [8.](#) Nah'djul Balaghah, volume 6, page 69
- [9.](#) Elal ul-Sharaye, page 309
- [10.](#) "Understanding the Holy Qur'an", volume 3, page 120
- [11.](#) Or, volume 7, page 123
- [12.](#) Idem, page 123
- [13.](#) Al-Kafi, volume 3, page 243
- [14.](#) Or, volume 7, page 124
- [15.](#) The interpretation of the Holy Qur'an [the noble surah of Al-Qiyamah] page 72
- [16.](#) Muhamamd Baqir Al-Majlisi, Beharul-Anwar, volume 6, pages 23–32
- [17.](#) Al-Kafi volume 3, page 246
- [18.](#) Volume 7, page 123
- [19.](#) This subject has been thoroughly discussed in another collection, known as "Shia Studies": which is a compilation of Islamic books that have been published in the same collection, known as "Chiragh –e– Hikmat" or the "Splendid Light of Wisdom"

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