

Purgatory (Barzakh)

It is learnt from a large number of verses of Quran and traditions that death is not the end of the life of man, on the contrary, after death he is transferred to another world called Barzakh and he continues his life there. The world of Barzakh is between the perceptive world of this life and the world of the hereafter and complete gathering.

The world of Barzakh begins from the grave and it continues till the complete gathering and the establishment of Judgment Day. But it is not transmigration in which the soul of man enters the body of another man or animal. And after his death, he enters another body...and in this way he continues his life so that he may be cleaned of filths and become fully eligible for the gathering of Judgment Day. Belief in transmigration of souls is absurd and incompatible with principles of Islam.

In the beginning we would present some verses of Quran with regard to Barzakh as examples:

The Holy Quran says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

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)

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ * فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they

shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. (3: 169–170)

In these verses, it is clearly mentioned that martyrs are alive after death and it cannot be interpreted as immortality of their name and cause, although life after death is different from the life of the world. If we accept life after death for the martyrs, we would have to accept life for all the other people as well. The difference of martyrs to other people is that the martyrs are sustained by their Lord in that elevated stage. They receive sustenance from the Almighty Allah.

Therefore, it must be said: All the people are also alive after death and they are transferred to a world called Barzakh and they continue their life there. Numerous traditions also imply this point; for example:

Abu Walad says: I asked Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as): "May I be your ransom, it is narrated that after death the souls of the believers will be placed in the gizzard of green colored birds. And they will circulate around the throne of Almighty."

He replied:

"No, it is not so. The believer is more exalted that his soul should be placed in the gizzard of fowls. On the contrary, the souls of believers will be in bodies like the bodies of this world."1

Yunus says: I was with Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as) when he asked:

"What do people say about the souls of believers?"

I said: "They say that they would be placed in crops of green birds, in the lanterns hanging below the Arsh."

He said:

"Glory be to Allah! A believer is more respectable than that his soul should be placed in crop of birds. O Yunus, when the death of a believer approaches, the Holy Prophet (S), Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain (as) and the proximate angels of the Almighty Allah appear to him and when the Almighty Allah captures his soul, He places it in a body, which is like the worldly body. Thus he eats and drinks. When the fresh soul enters it, they recognize him in the same form as he was having in the world."2

Abu Basir has narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as) that he said:

"Souls of believers live in form of bodies between the trees of Paradise. They introduce and speak to each other. When a new soul enters, they remark to each other: Leave him/her; he just escaped a great terror. After that they ask him: How is so-and-so person? If he replies: He is alive. They hope for his salvation and if he says that he is dead, they say: He has gone into perdition."3

Such traditions and some traditions we mentioned in the discussion of grave show that that the souls of man after death are transferred to a world called Barzakh. And in that world they possess a physical

body, which is exactly like the body of this world, in such a way that those who know him would recognize him and speak to him.

Therefore the soul of man in Barzakh has a body, but it is not the body of the world, since if it had been worldly, it would not have been of the Barzakh and the hereafter.

Barzakhi Body

Now the question arises that where is the body of Barzakh located and how it comes into being till the soul of the dead after separating from the worldly body, is placed in it? Do previously created bodies exist in the world of Barzakh without any owners so that the soul may choose one for itself? Or that the soul has a Barzakhi body in the world, and after death it is taken along with it?

The first possibility is untenable, because on the basis of this supposition, the Barzakhi body is not a worldly body, through which man performs good deeds and commits evil deeds, in order to become eligible for good rewards or bad consequences. Additionally, what need does the soul of man have –along with perfect abstractness and after leaving the worldly body– that it should be placed in a pre-fabricated Barzakhi body, which is also not his worldly body?

Thus on the basis of this and traditions mentioned above, it can be said that the soul of man in this world itself has a Barzakhi body, which he takes away with itself to the world of Barzakh. The greatest philosophers of Islam, like Mulla Sadra, have this belief and they have defended it. But imagining and testifying it is very difficult. In my view, it is best to leave the decision of this important matter to Mulla Sadra, who is among the most senior scholars on this topic and directly refer to his statement. This great philosopher has investigated all the dimensions of this problem at various places in his *Asfar* and has expressed his view about it. To mention all of them in this brief writing is impossible. Here we shall mention two of his statements:

The first occurrence or priority of the self:

Some say: Souls of human beings were created before their bodies and they are infinitely pre-existent and non-material. Whenever a matter from the world becomes capable to accept the soul, a soul is placed in it and benefits from it in gaining perfections, like a sailor who guides the ship and conveys it to its destination. And when he does not need it or the ship becomes useless and old, he abandons it. But researchers from Islamic philosophers, for example Sadruddin Shirazi considers this view absurd. He refutes this theory as follows:

If the soul of man had been pre-existing infinitely, it should have been perfect and defect-less in the stage of being and free from materiality and if it was perfect, it would not have been in need of association with the body, and use of vegetative and animal instruments and capacities. Moreover, if the abstract was perfect and infinitely pre-existing, the human form would have been limited to one person,

since multiplicity is a sign of matter.[4](#)

He considers the soul of man to be a thing created by the body; that when the matter of the body of man by substantial motion (Harkat Jauhari) and bodily changes reaches to a limit where it is able to accept the human soul; its last form of physical matter changes into the human soul. In this regard he writes:

From the aspect of being created and control of body, the human soul is physical and from the aspect of survival and intellect, it is spiritual.[5](#)

In the same way, he writes about the connection of the soul to the body:

The connection of the soul to the body is accidental from the aspect of being and identification of the occurrence, but it is not so from the aspect of survival. The soul of man in the beginning of creation was having the quality of material natures as it was in need of vague matter. The soul, in the beginning of creation, is also in need of vague bodily matter, since the body of man throughout his life, is under constant change and variable quantum. Therefore the person of man, although it is a single individual from the aspect of spirituality and not more; but from the aspect of physicality in the sense of substance and not in the sense of kind or sort – is a not a single person.[6](#)

On another occasion, he writes:

The soul of man is having ranks and personal and existential signs, some of which are from the world of command and destiny. Thus the Holy Quran says:

قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي

Say: The soul is one of the commands of my Lord... (17:85)

Some of it is from the world of creation and forms; hence it is mentioned in Quran:

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى

From it We created you and into it We shall send you back and from it will We raise you a second time. (20:55)

Thus incidentality and invention is among the signs of some ranks of the soul. Therefore we say: Since the soul of man itself has progressed from the first creation to another creation on the path of development as the Quran has mentioned:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

And certainly We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: Make obeisance to Adam. (7:11)

Thus when he progressed from the world of creation and arose to the world of command its being became the being of a separate intellectuality which had no need of the body and its actions and capacities. Therefore with regard to the soul, it must be said: From the aspect of incidentality, it is physical but from the aspect of survival it is spiritual.⁷

The following important points can be concluded from these statements:

1. The human soul is not created as an infinitely pre-existing and an abstract thing; on the contrary it is a newly created phenomenon from the physical phenomenon. In the sense that when the matter of the body of man, through substantial motion reached to a stage of perfection where it became capable to accept the human soul, the last physical form changed into the abstract human soul. However, the soul at this time is still having potentiality related to the perception of sciences. It can become further perfect along with the body and could actively change the capacity to perceive sciences and generalities.

Thus man consists of a physical body and an abstract celestial soul and the two are integrated and possess a single existence and identity.

2. The human soul from the aspect of incidentality and development of the being is having ranks of existence. Its lowest stage is that which has a connection with a material and physical body and is considered to be from the world of creation, as mentioned in Quran; and its highest stage is abstract and celestial and it is considered to be from the world of command.

3. It is correct that human soul is in need of a physical body in its incidentality, continuation of its existence and its development, is in need of a physical body, but the body with regard to its need is not permanent and unchangeable, on the contrary, it is a fluid body, which is situated between two limits: in the beginning of which is childhood and in the end is the end of worldly life. Even though the fluids of the human body due to the effect of nutrition are under constant and continuous change, but this matter does not damage the individuality of the soul and the physical body.

Barzakhi Body in Different Opinions

Mulla Sadra is of the view that the Barzakhi body is an advanced stage of this same worldly body, which after death is transferred to the world of Barzakh along with the soul of man. With regard to this, he writes:

We should know that man is a compound of the soul and body, and these two, in spite of differences from the aspect of status and position are present in a single existence. In such a way that it can be said that they are a single, which has two stages and two-sided existence. One of its stages is having change, it becomes old and it perishes, but this stage is a secondary dimension of man and not his

primary aspect. Another stage of the body, which is also his reality; is permanent and everlasting.

As much the human soul becomes more perfect in its being the body which is connected to it also becomes finer and lighter and its contact with the soul becomes stronger and union of the two becomes more intense; in such a way that when it rises to the stage of the intellectual existence, the soul and the body become a single reality in every sense. Some philosophers are of the view that worldly change and existence of the soul in spite of its supernatural existence is that the worldly body is taken up by it.

In the same way, as man comes out of his garments and becomes naked. But this belief is not correct. Their misunderstanding is due to the fact that they think that the natural body of man, which is directly under the control and will of the soul, is the same material body which is separated and released from it. But this belief is incorrect.

This material body is not directly under the control of the soul, on the contrary it ranks as refuse and staying under the filths and dirt of human body or by the rank of sheep wool and the horn and hooves of cow, sheep and camels that are not part of their actual body and according to another view, the created body of man is also same. The material body can be considered to be in the rank of a house that a man constructs in order to protect himself from summer and winter and to fulfill his other needs. He lives in it, but it is not a part of his body.

The actual human body is same that within it runs the effulgence of perception and innate life, and not a body with supposed feeling and life. The relation of the actual body to the soul is like the relation of light to the sun, which was always with it and had never been separated from it. If life of this cut-off body had been a part of its being, it would not have decomposed and abandoned after death.

Summarily, the soul in the stages of abstraction is an external phenomenon, which in the beginning can be perceived through apparent senses. After that it is stored in memory and in the end it assumes the form of a rational thing. According to philosophers:

Every perception having a kind of abstraction with itself and its stages of perceptions are according to the stages of abstraction; is also in the same meaning; and that it is said: Abstraction of a perceptive thing is not in this meaning; that in abstraction of some qualities of the perceptive thing are cut off and some of them remain.

On the contrary, abstraction means: transformation of insignificant and defective into a loftier and nobler existence. In the same way, the being of man and his transfer from the world to the hereafter is nothing other than that his worldly constitution is changed into the life of the hereafter. In the same way, the perfection of the human soul and the actualization of his intellect is not that some of his capacities like feelings etc, should be taken from him and his intellect remains intact, on the contrary as much he is perfected and his being scales higher stages, his capacities also become perfect and exalted. Since as much the being of a thing is exalted, as much its multiplicity and separation decreased and weakens and its unity and cohesion becomes stronger.[8](#)

Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini

Imam Khomeini writes in this regard:

Beings slowly progress with the motion of perfection till they reach natural perfection in the bodily stage, which is the most moderate natural body. If it is observed that with regard to this gradual motion, insight and the eyes are opened to the world of Barzakh also. The last stage of the natural world and the first stage of the world of Barzakh and they don't consider the abstraction of Barzakh to be distinct, on the contrary he considers it to be the weakest stage and the other one as the stronger stage.

This same natural body (from the brain to the bones) day by day through the journey of perfection and by a motion from defectiveness to perfection reaches to a limit that it changes into a Barzakhi body. Although usually we are oblivious to the inner motion of our existence, therefore we imagine the world after death to be something distinct from the life of the world, oblivious of the fact that presently all the factors and capacities of divine power appointed as herders to take our capacity, body and natural life into the direction of the world and life of Barzakh and till now also remove us from the natural world.

It is this same reasoning that you see throughout the life and gradually the flesh goes on decreasing, the eyes weaken day by day and the natural capacities continue to lose strength and the meaning of weakness and defect in nature is the changing of the natural body into the Barzakhi body. And it is the perfect stage of it.

Our utmost is not aware of this change and transformation and in fact change and transformation of the proprietary into celestial is in the form of a force, and now all of our body in the condition that it is changed into a Barzakhi body – which is without matter. Like you see in dream that you are walking or eating or holding someone's hand; it is not only the amplitude of soul; on the contrary the body and hand that you see in the dream is the Barzakhi body and hand. It is mentioned in traditions that since some people deny Barzakh and the hereafter, the Almighty Allah gave them dreams so that it be a proof of that world.

The conclusion is that it is this same body, which is changed without its personality being deranged. It is not that after death, we are taken out from the worldly body and entered into a replica body, which was placed there. No, in reality in all the worlds, it is raised as one body and one fact and one personality.

That is: when the excursion of its natural perfection is over and when all its natural capacities are changed into Barzakhi qualities, the natural body changes into a separate Barzakhi body. As if it has disposed of its skin and come out from the previous cover and since that previous covering was his own body at one time, it is necessary that his attachment to it should endure.⁹

Banu Ameen Isfahani writes in this regard:

The body of man is having two aspects: one is internal or hidden and the other is external or apparent.

The external aspect is the same which has feelings and which is visible. And it is considered as a part of created things and events and is a specialty of this worldly constitution and it is worthy of enduring and permanent, because since the parts of this world continue forever to exist, spoil, change and transform, they do not remain in one condition forever, the apparent elemental body of man also (as mentioned in the third essay) continue forever to exist, spoil, change and transform, they do not remain in one condition forever and are always changing. It is that if we were not changing we would die and would be scattered from each other. This matter is evident and does not need reasoning.

However his internal aspect, which in fact is the reality of this same body, and is considered to be part of man and his identity and without that the role and identity of man cannot be imagined. That is why a person perceives him by realization and not through his eyes and in no condition is he separated from it. So much so that even in sleep, he is not unaware of it.

It is correct that to scale the heights of perfection, our real soul in the beginning is needful of this elemental worldly body and beastly soul and for our satiation and formation in this world, which is one of the stages of perfection of man, on the contrary, our best excursion of perfection is a necessity in this world and we don't have any other causes.

We cannot but make use of them, and according to the necessity, we should maintain them as pure and healthy. And due to this we do not have the right to erase it, but we should know that our soul and reality, on the contrary the body with which our soul is associated, is other than this apparent body, which is visible and an instrument of the soul; because as we stated in the third essay – our knowledge develops connection with dimensions and apparent aspects of the things and not their reality and beings.

And the reality of the body is that it is having the rank of the soul and the position of inner capacities of man. And anyone who refers to his own realization will nicely understand that he is a body whose soul is related to it even though in absence of eyes or other observational aspects, he may not know this physical constitution and apparent dimensions of his body as in the dream, when the eyes, ears all apparent senses of man are closed and the person understands himself through his inner realization; that he sees with the eyes and hears through the ears and in the same way all the parts of the body perform their functions, whereas others are unaware of his condition and they observe a motionless body and have no knowledge of his inner aspect. But in his dream, a man sees and feels everything as clearly as he sees in the waking world.

Compare the world of Barzakh to the world of dreams and know that the Almighty Allah has made the dreams and whatever is seen in dreams as examples of Barzakh, so that the imagination of the world of Barzakh becomes possible for us, even though the world of Barzakh with regard to this world is like awakening is to sleep.

In other words, the human body has two aspects: One is changeable, destructible and renewable and

such that it never remains in the same form and cutting off its parts do not kill it. And another is permanent and everlasting; the first is the branch and the second is the root. The first is latitude and the second is essence. And as much as the soul scales the stages of perfection and becomes exalted, the real bodily aspect becomes cleaner, stronger and finer and its attachment to the soul increases and the unity between the spiritual and physical aspect becomes more intense and strong.

Like you see so-and-so person dead and after some days his soul-less body decomposes. This skin and form is his real body and is considered as an happening and event of this natural world, which is always under change and transformation and which does not remain in the same form even for an hour, because this world is the world of being, decay, change and renewal.

When the lifespan of that man comes to an end and in the vessel of time with us he is not renewed and created, therefore the body, which was in the position of his dimensions and which had the necessity of endurance in incidentality and renewal; its aged parts wither away and are replaced by new parts. And when due to death he does not get new parts, necessarily his old parts decay and do not endure for another day in this world.

But that original essence is safe and the essence of life and that which was the abode of spiritual capacities, perceptive powers and activity of man remain with him. That essence is the reality of this worldly elemental body, which is the cause of the activity and identity of the soul and the soul by the command of the Lord initially becomes attached to it than using the apparent body passes the stages of perfection; but is dependent on it for its motion till it completes its excursion; and after that by the command of the Almighty that Barzakh body is separated from this elemental body. [10](#)

Abode of Barzakh and Life in it

Barzakh implies distance between two things. The world of Barzakh is distance between this world; and the hereafter and final gathering.

Umar bin Yazid says: I asked Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as): What is Barzakh? He replied: Barzakh begins from the time of death and burial in the grave and continues till Judgment Day. [11](#)

The man in his journey through creation has to cross a number of worlds. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran that:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

O man! surely you must strive (to attain) to your Lord, a hard striving until you meet Him. (84:6)

Hence the final destination of man is God, whereas this world is the tillage for the hereafter. The second journey is that of the grave and the world of Barzakh, which is to occur immediately after death without

any time gap. The world of Barzakh is such that its inhabitants are not having a materiality, but they do have a body. They possess quantity, form, length and breadth etc. From the aspect of existence, it is a world, which is above and encompassing this world of nature.

Life in Barzakh would be in accordance to the way a person lived in this world. The world of Barzakh is a world of abstractness, whose existence is proved in the neo-platonic philosophy. Therefore it would occur after this world and before the existence of abstract intellects and that is why it is called Barzakh.

But it is necessary to note that this 'before-ness', 'after-ness' and 'middle-ness' is not of time and space; that it can be asked: Where is Barzakh? Is it located in this world or on some other planet or somewhere else? When has it come into existence or will come into existence? The reply is that time and space are signs of material things; while the fact is that Barzakh is a world, which is above the world and which encompasses it.

Human beings in the world of Barzakh have an opposite life: They enjoy some of the best bounties and spend their lives in happiness and comfort, but others are not same as far as the suffering of the punishment of Barzakh is concerned: Some are punished with the most severe punishment and some with lighter. In other words, the life of some is an example of the life of the hereafter and according to the interpretation of the traditions of the grave, it is a garden from the gardens of Paradise or it is a pit from the pits of Hell.

Aim of Punishment and Rewards of Barzakh

It is necessary to note that different bounties and punishments of Barzakh are shaped through beliefs, morals and deeds of man in the world. On the contrary, it is the good or bad deeds of man that assume the form of bounties and punishments of Barzakh as mentioned in verses of Quran and traditions:

The Holy Quran says:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحَضَّرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long duration of time... (3:30)

And Allah says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا

(As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and they shall enter burning fire. (4:10)

Amirul Momineen (as) said:

“The deeds of people in the world would become visible to them in the hereafter.”¹²

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as) said:

“When the dead body is placed in the grave, a person appears in it and says: We were three persons: your sustenance is over and the span of your life has ended. Your relatives have also abandoned you and gone away. I am your deeds and I would remain with you forever, but you considered me most unimportant in the world.”¹³

Amirul Momineen (as) said:

“On the last day of his worldly life and the first day of his entry into the world of the hereafter, man will see his wealth, children and deeds. Thus, he will address his wealth and say: ‘I put myself into great hardships for your sake and was greedy. What help can you render to me today?’ His wealth will reply: ‘Take your burial shroud from me.’ Then, he will address his children: ‘I had been fond of you and throughout my life I took good care of you. What help can you render to me today?’ They will reply: ‘We will give you a proper burial.’ Then, he will ask his deeds: ‘I was shortcoming in observing you and you were difficult for me. What will do about me?’

His deeds will reply: ‘We will be there with you in the grave and on the Judgment Day till you are presented before your Lord.’ Thus, if he is a friend of Allah (i.e. a believer), a fragrant, handsome and a well-dressed person will appear and say: ‘Glad tidings to you of ‘happiness and bounty’ (Rooh wa Raihan) and Paradise. Blessed be your arrival. You are welcome!’ The man will ask: ‘Who are you?’ He will be replied: ‘I am your good deeds. I have come with you from the world and I will accompany you till Paradise.’”¹⁴

Perpetual Charity

As long as one is alive one is able to perform good deeds and practice the best of morals in order to make them as provisions for his life after death and that he may enjoy the hereafter. But by the occurrence of his death, the file of his deeds would be closed and he would be unable to do anything in the world.

But according to traditions, if man had performed the good deeds with regularity and with the intention of seeking divine proximity, he would enjoy their rewards after death in the world of Barzakh also. Some of those deeds are mentioned in traditions.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as) said:

“There are six things whose rewards man would enjoy even after his death; a righteous son who prays

for his salvation, the copy of Quran from which he used to read, a well which he had dug for public, trees that he had planted, canals of water that he had endowed as charity and the good practice, which he had established and which people continue to follow.”[15](#)

Imam Ja’far Sadiq (as) said:

“After death man is not rewarded except for one of the following three: A charity which he had founded; the reward of this charity will reach him till Judgment Day; a good custom that he has established, which is followed by others; and that he leaves a righteous son that prays for his salvation.”[16](#)

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“When the believer dies, his deeds are over except three things: the charity left behind which continues after his death, a knowledge from which people benefit and a righteous son who prays for him.”[17](#)

He also said:

“When the believer dies leaving behind some knowledge (in writing); on Judgment Day those pages of knowledge would act as shields against the fire of Hell. And for each letter written in those pages, the Almighty Allah would bestow him a city seven times the size of this world.”[18](#)

Abu Basir says: “I heard from Imam Ja’far Sadiq (as) that he said:

One who teaches a good deed to someone would be rewarded equally as the one who is taught.

Abu Basir says: I asked the Imam: “What if the person who has learnt it, teaches it to others?”

He replied:

The person to teach him first would be rewarded with the same rewards as all those who are subsequently taught it.

Abu Basir said: “What if the first person is dead?”

He replied:

Yes, even if he is dead.[19](#)

Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) said:

“One who teaches a good deed to another would be rewarded equally as the one who is taught; without there being any decrease in the reward of the doer of the act. And one who teaches an evil deed to another, would be punished with the same punishment that the actual doer would be punished without there being any decrease in the punishment of the one he has taught.”[20](#)

Classes of Barzakh

There would be different kinds of people in Barzakh:

First group: Disbelievers and oppressors, who had no faith in the Almighty Allah, the Prophet and Resurrection during their life of the world. They considered themselves to be free and acted according to their whims and did not refrain from committing any evil. They would have a very hard life in Barzakh and they would be punished with different kinds of punishments. But they are nothing in comparison to the punishments of Hell.

Second group: Those who had faith in the Almighty Allah, the Prophet and Resurrection and who acted on their religious duties and refrained from prohibited acts. They would have a good life in Barzakh and would be bestowed with blessings, which would be a sample of the blessings reserved for them in Paradise.

Third group: Those who had faith in the Almighty Allah, the Prophet and Resurrection, and who performed their religious duties; but sometimes in carelessness they omitted an obligatory duty or committed unlawful act; but before death they repented for their sins and sought divine forgiveness; they would also not be punished in Barzakh.

Fourth group: Those who had faith in the Almighty Allah, the Prophet and Resurrection, and who performed their religious duties; but sometimes in carelessness they omitted an obligatory duty or committed unlawful act; but they died without repenting for their sins and seeking divine forgiveness. They would be punished in Barzakh in proportion to their sins and through it would be purified and on Judgment Day they would get the intercession of the Holy Prophet (S) and the Holy Imams (as) and they would be sent to Paradise after the accounting of the deeds.

Amr bin Yazid says: I asked Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as): I have heard that you said:

All our Shias would go to Paradise?

He replied:

“Yes, I said it and I am right; by Allah, all of them would enter Paradise.”

The narrator asked: “May I be your ransom, even if they have numerous great sins to their credit?”

The Imam said:

“As for the Judgment Day, all of you would enter Paradise through the intercession of the Prophet or his successor. But I am fearful about you with regard to Barzakh.”

The narrator asked: “What is Barzakh?”

He replied:

“It is there from the time of death and burial up to Judgment Day.”²¹

Punishments of Barzakh

It is certain that there are different types of chastisements in Barzakh, but their exact quality is unknown to us. Since we are aware about the punishments and pleasures of the world and are not able to comprehend the matters of Barzakh and hereafter exactly as they are.

In some traditions, the world of Barzakh and its pleasures and hardships are compared different types of happy and terrifying dreams.

Sometimes in dream man sees different animals and stinging creatures and they attack him and he is pained due to their stings; he screams for help and due to the severity of discomfort perspires in profusion, while his body is in bed and has not suffered any damage. Sometimes he also sees pleasant and sweet dreams and he enjoys seeing them although his body derives no such enjoyment. Barzakh and the pleasures of man in the world of Barzakh can be of such type.

It was inquired from Muhammad bin Ali (as): “What is death?”

He replied:

“Death is the same sleep, which comes in search of you every night; with the difference that the duration of death is longer and you would not wake up till Judgment Day. Some people see dreams during sleep, which are extremely pleasing and so enjoyable that it is impossible to describe their pleasure. Others see terrifying matters, whose pain and discomfort is beyond computation. Thus what is the condition of pleasure and dread in a dream? Death is also like that; so prepare yourself for it.”²²

In this tradition, Barzakh is compared to sleep. Although with the important difference that Barzakh is not sleep; on the contrary with regard to the life of this world, it is a sort of awakening.

Visions in the world of Barzakh are factual matters and it is from this aspect that feelings of pleasure and pain in them would also be extremely deeper and more lucid. Since in Barzakh, the connection between the soul and its material body is cut off, its memory and imagination becomes stronger. Its attention to the soul increases and it sees the good and bad qualities and its good and bad character inside its own being very clearly.

Bounties and Punishment of Barzakh

Mulla Mohsin Faiz Kashani has quoted from some scholars as follows:

One, who is attentive to his inner conscience in this world, would see that it is filled with different types of

harmful and beastly things like lust, anger, deceit, jealousy, enmity, pride and selfishness.

These same qualities continue to attack and sting. Except that most people are deprived of this vision of their inner self since they are involved in worldly matters and that which they can perceive through the senses. But when the curtain of unawareness is removed from the inner vision of man and he is placed in the grave, he would see them exactly and directly as personified in their appropriate forms.

In the same condition, he sees that he is surrounded by scorpions and snakes and they are stinging him. In such a way that they are the same vices and bad qualities that he possessed in his inner self in the world and in Barzakh they have appeared in their real forms, because the inner matters possess their appropriate forms. And this is the punishment of a sinful person in the grave. The opposite circumstances would be there for one who has faith and is righteous.[23](#)

On another occasion, Faiz Kashani writes:

Pleasures and punishments related to the grave are not imaginary and lacking in an outward existence. Anyone who has such a belief is deviated. On the contrary, the matters of the grave, from the aspect of being are more powerful than the matters of worldly perception, because worldly forms in physical material are in the lowest stage of existence, whereas the form of existence in the grave, which are established for the soul of man, and as compared to worldly life, possess a more dignified existence and cannot be compared to worldly forms and in the same way, the two cannot be said to be same from the aspect of strength and weakness.

In addition to this, both are perceptions of soul: one of them is perceived through the tools and physical strength and the other is felt through its own self; therefore it can be said: World and the hereafter are two conditions of the soul and that the make of the hereafter is in fact the exit of the soul from the filth and dust of physical form.[24](#)

An Incident by Allamah Tabatabai

He says: A gnostic named Shaykh Abud lived in a corner of a room in the courtyard of the mausoleum of Amirul Momineen (as) and he used to be occupied in his own circumstances. He rarely interacted with others and spent most of his time in worship and meditation. Sometimes he went to the Wadius Salam graveyard and spent hours there in meditation. When a dead body was brought for burial, he used to go to the grave and stare inside it.

One day as he was returning from the graveyard, a person asked: Shaykh Abud, what is the news about Wadius Salam? He replied: No matter how much I searched in the graves, I could not find any snakes or scorpions; so I asked one of the graves: They say that you have snakes, scorpions and harmful creatures, but I don't see any such thing? The grave replied: We don't have snakes and scorpions, but it is the men who bring snakes and scorpions with them from the world.

Statement of Imam Khomeini

The Imam writes:

Man in the other world would not see the punishment except that which he has prepared in this world and he would see every good deeds, nice morals and correct beliefs; in that world he would see them with his own eyes, along with another blessing that God will bestow to him through His grace.

There is an ethereal and unseen form for each deed, whether good or bad, in the celestial world and the unseen sphere.[25](#)

- [1.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 267.
- [2.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 269.
- [3.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 269.
- [4.](#) Asfar, Vol. 8, Pg. 331, Part 1 of Fourth Journey.
- [5.](#) Asfar, Vol. 8, Pg. 347, Part 1 of Fourth Journey.
- [6.](#) Asfar, Vol. 8, Pg. 326, Part 1 of Fourth Journey.
- [7.](#) Asfar, Vol. 8, Pg. 393, Part 1 of Fourth Journey.
- [8.](#) Asfar, Vol. 9, Part 2 of Fourth Journey, Part 4, Pg. 98.
- [9.](#) Maad az Deedgah Imam Khomeini, Pg. 75.
- [10.](#) Banu Ameen Isfahani, Maad Ya Aakhireen Saer-e-Bashar? Pg. 44.
- [11.](#) Al-Kafi, Vol. 3, Pg. 242.
- [12.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Saying no. 7.
- [13.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 265.
- [14.](#) Al-Kafi, Vol. 3, Pg. 231.
- [15.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 293.
- [16.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 293.
- [17.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 2, Pg. 22.
- [18.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 2, Pg. 144.
- [19.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 2, Pg. 17.
- [20.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 2, Pg. 19.
- [21.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 267.
- [22.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 6, Pg. 155.
- [23.](#) Faiz Kashani, Ilmul Yaqeen, Vol. 2, Pg. 883.
- [24.](#) Faiz Kashani, Ilmul Yaqeen, Vol. 2, Pg. 889.
- [25.](#) Maad az Deedgah Imam Khomeini, Pg. 333.

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