

ALI 386: Barzakh – Tunnel to the World of Wonders

Shaykh M S Bahmanpour

Social order in Barzakh

There are ample evidence that the souls in Barzakh live in clusters, i.e. in communities

Every society whose agents have free will on one hand and differences in taste and understanding on the other is in need of a social order

This is evident in the world of angels as well, for example:

All angels have to obey Jibrail.

انَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ

This is in truth the word of an honoured messenger, Mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, (One) to be obeyed, and trustworthy; (81/19-21)

Social order in Barzakh

Usually a number of angels work under the command of a higher angel who in turn is commanded along with a number of other angels by a still higher angel

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ

There is not one of us but has his known position (37/164)

In Mi'raj the Prophet saw an angel “under whose command were seventy thousand angels each of whom were in charge of seventy thousand other angels.” (على بن ابراهيم قمي، تفسير قمي، ص 371)

This may be the meaning of wings for angels

جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ

Maker of the Angels as messengers with wings of two's, and three's, and four's (35:1)

Social order in Barzakh

Now

the question is what constitutes authority in Barzakh.

The authority in this world is always based on force

This force usually stems from military might, or from tradition, or charisma, or will of people, or political intrigue.

In the hell, authority is based on might and on intrigue

In the territory of the close ones, authority is based on love only: anyone closer to God is loved more and spontaneously obeyed.

Social order in Barzakh

In the territory of the pious ones this authority is more complicated and is based on knowledge and goodness of the soul

The more knowledgeable who have more good in them are the leaders because their decisions are more in line with the ultimate beauty and good

This is what is understood from the following hadith.

Social order in Barzakh

حملة القرآن عرفاء اهل الجنة و المجتهدون قواد اهل الجنة و الانبياء سادة اهل الجنة. (كلىنى، كافى، ج 2، ص 606 متقى هندی، كنز العمال، احاديث 2288 الى 2290).

“The bearers of the knowledge of the Quran are the chiefs in Paradise, the *mujtahidun* are the governors of the people of Paradise, and the Prophets are the leaders.”

In his commentary to *Usul al-Kafi*, Mawla Salih Mazandarani (d. 1086) mentions that apart from these three groups other people are commanders and managers according to their different degrees (vol. 11, p. 30)

So we will witness a very organized and stratified community in Paradise

That should be the case in Barzakh too

Social order in Barzakh

Here, to obey those in charge not only is not tasking but is pleasurable, elevating and enriching

The above tradition confirms Swedenborg's observations

He notifies that because the leaders there have utmost love they wish good for all, and because they excel others in knowledge and wisdom they know best how to organize the affairs according to the law established by God

Children in Barzakh

The views about what judgment will be passed on those who die at a young age differ

Most Christian theologians believe that only the children who are baptized will go to Paradise

A minority of Muslim theologians believe that the children's fate depend on their parents faith

The Shi'a theologians, however, believe that all children will go to Paradise

Compared to the grown ups, the children who die have one advantage and one disadvantage

Children in Barzakh

On the positive side, they are sinless and hence open to any concept and wisdom that the angels would teach them

On the negative side, they have not developed concepts, feelings and thoughts which are prerequisite for ultimate wisdom

Hence they can only be taught to a restricted degree, and deeper aspects of wisdom cannot be known by them

Their purity is very different from the purity of the grown ups.

For this reason the children cannot enter the paradise of Barzakh immediately after death

Children in Barzakh

They live in a very beautiful interim space under the guidance of the angels to prepare them for entering the Paradise

These teachings have two aspects

- 1- to teach them the wisdom and knowledge which is prerequisite for entering Paradise
- 2- to cleanse them from the wrong teachings given to them by their parents or their society which are hindrances for entering Paradise

Children in Barzakh

After this stage, they will join either to the close ones or the pious ones according to their inner capacities

According to Swedenborg, initially the children's appearance in Barzakh looks like the way they left this world, but later their spiritual body grows to the age of a teenager and stops there

Inhabitants of Barzakh and our world

Do the souls in Barzakh see and hear us in this world?

Are they aware of us?

Are they informed about us?

The basic principle is:

As we are ordinarily unaware of their world they are ordinarily unaware of our world

Inhabitants of Barzakh and our world

However there are exceptions

- 1) For the Close Ones there is no veil
- 2) Other souls will have awareness according to their ranks

This awareness happens:

- a) When they are given permission
- b) When they are visited
- c) When an act of charity is performed for them

Inhabitants of Barzakh and our world

The following traditions testify to the first occasion, i.e. **When they are given permission**

عن أبي عبدالله (عليه السلام) قال:

إن المؤمن ليزور أهله فيرى ما يحب ويستتر عنه ما يكره وإن الكافر ليزور أهله فيرى ما يكره ويستتر عنه ما يحب قال: ومنهم من يزور كل جمعة ومنهم من يزور على قدر عمله. (الكافي، ج 3، ص 230)

The believer visits his family and would see what delights him and is veiled from what he dislikes. The disbeliever visits his family and would see what he dislike and is veiled from what delights him. Some visit every week and others according to their acts.

Inhabitants of Barzakh and our world

أسحاق بن عمار عن أبي الحسن الاول (عليه السلام) قال: سألته عن الميت يزور أهله؟ قال: نعم فقلت: في كم يزور؟ قال: في الجمعة وفي الشهر وفي السنة على قدر منزلته، (الكافي، ج 3، ص 230)

Ishaq ibn Ammar said, I asked Imam al-Kadhim (a) if the deceased would visit his family.

“Yes,” he replied; I asked how frequently would he visit? He replied, every week or every month or every year, according to his station.

إسحاق بن عمار قال: قلت لأبي الحسن الاول (عليه السلام): يزور المؤمن أهله؟ فقال: نعم، فقلت: في كم؟ قال: على قدر فضائلهم؛ منهم من يزور في كل يوم ومنهم من يزور في كل يومين ومنهم من يزور في كل ثلاثة أيام، (الكافي، ج 3، ص 231)

Ishaq ibn Ammar said, I asked Imam al-Kadhim (a) does the deceased visit his family? He said yes. I asked how frequently? He replied, according to their merits; there are some who visit every day, and some who visit every two days, and some who visit every three days.

Inhabitants of Barzakh and our world

This relation sometimes get so strong that the souls find permission to establish contact with the living ones in dream

The following traditions testify to the second occasion, i.e. **When they are visited**

عن امير المؤمنين ع: زوروا موتاكم فانهم يفرحون بزيارتكم. (الكافي، ج 3، ص 229)

Imam Ali (a) said, “Visit your deceased ones for they rejoice from your visit.”

عن الامام الصادق ع: والله ليعلمون بكم و يفرحون بكم و يستأنسون اليكم. (شيخ حر عاملي، وسائل الشيعة، ج2، ص 878)

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “By God, they know of you and rejoice [seeing] you and feel close to you.”

Inhabitants of Barzakh and our world

The following traditions testify to the third occasion, i.e. **When an act of charity is performed for them**

عن الامام الصادق ع: انّ الميت ليفرح بالترحم عليه و الاستغفار له كما يفرح الحى بالهدية تهدي اليه. (شيخ حر عاملی، وسائل الشیعة، ج 2، ص 655)

Imam al-Sadiq said, “The deceased would rejoice when you ask mercy and forgiveness for them in the same way as the living ones rejoice from receiving a gift.”

... حتى انه يكون في ضيق فيوسع الله عليه ذلك الضيق.

“To the extent that if they are in strife God would remove that strife from them.”