

ALI 386:Barzakh - Tunnel to the world of wonders

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The Arrival

How do they arrive?

فی ابدان کابدانهم، (بحار الانوار، ج6، ص 268، به نقل از امام صادق ع)

In bodies like their present bodies.

Entrance to a new culture and a new country

Freshness and lightness overwhelms them while they see their physical body dead

They may have become uglier or more beautiful, but they are still themselves

They are attached to their bodies and are buried with it.

Experiences upon burial

1- *Hawl al-mutalla'* هول المطلع

They can stay in the grave without being choked.

2- Squeezing of the grave *Daghtat al-qabr* or *Dammah* ضمة ضغطة القبر

انه ليس من مؤمن الا وله ضمة (بحار الانوار، ج 6، ص 221)

There is no believer unless they will have squeezing

ضغطة القبر للمؤمن كفارة لما كان منه من تضييع النعم (شيخ صدوق، ثواب الاعمال، ص 190)

Squeezing of the grave for the believer is an atonement for an atonement for what they squandered of God's bounties.

Ruman

3- The loneliness, *ghorbah* الغربة

But we are not forgotten

Because thereafter comes an angel to put us on record; he is

رومان فتان القبور

They should write

Activating the spiritual memory

That is why he is called the reminding angel الملك المنبه

Ruman

Book of the life is riveted to the soul

The whole personality which was spread over a lifetime is now compact in one place

The book will remain closed until the day of judgment

وَكُلِّإِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَائِرَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا (اسراء، 13)

We have attached to every person's neck their deeds, and We shall bring it out for him on the Day of Resurrection as an open book that he will encounter.

The Companion of the Grave

After Ruman

The companion of the grave

فتجىء صورة حسنة فيقول ما انت؟ فيقول أنا عملك الصالح. (بحار الانوار، ج 8 ص 209، به نقل از پیامبر اکرم ص)

Then comes a beautiful figure. He asks, who are you? He says, I am your good acts.

This is probably the barzakh form of their acts they did in this world.

If it is good, it delights them; and if it is bad it haunts them.

The Companion of the Grave

The Prophet (s) said to Qays ibn 'Asim

وإنه لا بد لك يا قيس من قرين يدفن معك وهو حي . وتدفن معه وأنت ميت ، فإن كان كريما أكرمك ، وإن كان لئيما أسلمك ،
ثم لا يحشر إلا معك ولا تبعث إلا معه ، ولا تسئل إلا عنه ، فلا تجعله إلا صالحا فإنه إن صلح آنتت به ، وإن فسد لا
تستوحش إلا منه ، وهو فعلك (شيخ صدوق ، خصال ، صفحه 114)

“Know that you have no choice, O Qays, except to be buried with a companion who is alive, while you are dead. If the companion is noble, then he will honour you, but if he is mean, then he will betray. He will not be resurrected but with you and you will not come forth but with him. You will not be questioned about anything other than him. Therefore do not allow your companion to be anything but good, so that you may form a close bond with him, because if he is evil, you will not be repulsed by anything more than by him... he is nothing but your acts.”

Three Different Experiences of the Grave

Surah al-Waqi'ah

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ 83 وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ 84 وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ 85 فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ 86
تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 87

So when it reaches the throat

and at that moment you are looking on

and We are nearer to him than you are, though you do not perceive

then why do you not, if you are not subject [to Divine Will]

restore it, should you be truthful

Three Different Experiences of the Grave

فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ 88 فَرَوْحٌ وَرَيْحَانٌ وَجَنَّةٌ نَعِيمٌ 89

Now, if he be of those brought close,
then ease, abundance, and a garden of bliss.

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ 90 فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ 91

And if he be of the People of the Right Hand,
then" Peace be on you," [a greeting] from the People of the Right Hand!

Three Different Experiences of the Grave

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ 92 فَنُزِّلُ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ 93 وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَحِيمٍ 94 إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ 95

But if he be of the impugnors, the astray ones,

then a treat of boiling water

and entry into fire.

Indeed this is certain truth.

القَمِّي عن الصادق عليه السلام فَنُزِّلُ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ يَعْنِي فِي قَبْرِهِ وَ تَصْلِيَةٌ جَحِيمٍ يَعْنِي فِي الْآخِرَةِ

Al-Sadiq (a): the treatment of boiling water is in his grave and entry to fire is in akhirah.

Three Different Experiences of the Grave

What we understand from these verses is that:

People in the grave are divided into three broad groups.

The first is the group of those who led an exemplary life; any pollution that they may have had has been cleansed by the process of death.

The second is the group of those who are completely impure and any virtue they possessed is lost in their impurity.

The third is the group in the middle, with evil and virtue both present.

Within this large latter group there is a great diversity of levels.

Three Different Experiences of the Grave

This third group is left alone after their encounter with Rūmān, and allowed to begin their barzakhi life.

They are the ones about whom Imam al-Sadiq (a) said;

يُلهى عنهم they are left to themselves

As for the first two groups, they have to pass another stage, and that is the questioning in the grave.

This is because their fate is decided at this stage. In fact this is just a final stage to confirm their permanent abodes.

Questioning in the Grave.

Therefore, most people – who make up the third group – do not experience the questioning in the grave.

It has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that he said;

انما يسأل في قبره من محض الايمان محضا و من محض الكفر محضا و اما ما سوى ذلك فيلهم عنهم (الكافي، ج ٣ ص ٢٣٥)

“Only the exemplary believers and the absolute disbelievers are questioned in the grave. All others are left alone.”

The questioning in the grave which is carried out by designated angels is actually a validation of the personalities of the people of the first and second groups so that they can be sent to their eternal abodes.

Questioning in the Grave.

In other words, everyone who enters into the world of barzakh is met by angels who cater to their needs and who attempt to familiarize them with God and the after world and the new life of barzakh, and to introduce them to a deeper understanding of truths.

Since the people of the middle group are yet unable to affirm or reject these truths, they are left alone until they have spent sufficient time in the world of barzakh for their situation to become clearer.

It is for this reason that this group does not experience the presence of the interrogating angels in the first instance.

Questioning in the Grave.

But the corrupt individuals who mocked these truths in *dunyā*, both by word and deed, and spent their days in self-serving and vain activities, making no attempt to understand the deeper reality of their existence are now subject to a difficult examination;

For them nothing is more distressing and painful than their encounter with these two angels, whose terrifying appearance causes them to lose any remaining sense of composure and control.

Munkar and Nakir

They seem formidable for what they say is not familiar

The angels petrify them when they suddenly materialize from the surrounding earth,.

يبحثان الارض بانياهما (بحار الانوار، ج 6، ص 225)

appearing to cleave through the ground with their teeth.

اصواتهما كالرعد القاصف و ابصارهما كالبرق الخاطف (بحار الانوار، ج 6، ص 225)

Their voices reverberate like thunder while their gaze is as piercing as lightning

Munkar and Nakir

In appearance these two angels are truly Nakīr and Munkar, meaning “ugly” and “fearsome”, because the individuals’ inner pollution has distorted their perception – they see beauty as ugliness and vileness as pleasant.

They are not reminders, they are evaluators of personality

His personality needs to be located

But what is the meaning of personality there?

Munkar and Nakir

This is the realm of *malakūt* of God and here everything is to do with Him, first and last.

The qualifiers of personality here are:

Who is your lord?

What is his faith?

Which Book did he read?

How did he followed it?

Munkar and Nakir

انّ اول ما يسألانك عن ربك الذي كنت تعبدته، و عن نبيك الذي ارسل اليك، و عن دينك الذي كنت تدين به،
و عن كتابك الذي كنت تتلوه، و عن امامك الذي كنت تتولاه، ثم عن عمرك فيما افنيته، و مالک من اين
اكتسبته و فيما اتلفته. (بحار الانوار، ج 6، ص 221، به نقل از شيخ صدوق از امام زين العابدين ع)

You will be first asked about the God that you worshipped, then about the Messenger sent to you, and the religion you lived by and the Book that you followed, and about the Imam who was your authority. Thereafter, you will be asked about how you spent the years of your life, and how you earned your wealth and where you spent it?

Munkar and Nakir

These questions are not meant to distress the new arrivals, rather its purpose is to gauge the level of their understanding so as to be able to evaluate accordingly. In reality, these angels are not actually frightening at all; it is the individual's Satan-tinged soul and self-absorption that makes everything related to God appear frightening and bleak.

Through these, and countless other questions, they gradually expose the deepest features of his character. Every question forces him to face the unpleasant truth that is reflected within the *barzakhi* manifestation of his actions.

Munkar and Nakir

Quranic Examples:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانَ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا
4:97-99

Indeed, those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves, they ask, " What state were you in?" They reply, " We were oppressed in the land." They say, " Was not Allah's earth vast enough so that you might migrate in it?" The refuge of such shall be hell, and it is an evil destination.

Except the abased among men, women and children, who have neither access to any means nor are guided to any way

Munkar and Nakir

That means no cheating is possible and no lies are acceptable;

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَأَلْقَوْا السَّلَامَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ سُوءٍ بَلَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ
فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَلَئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ 16:28-29

Those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves. There they submit: “We were not doing any evil!” “Yes, indeed Allah knows best what you used to do!

Enter the gates of hell to remain in it forever. Evil is the final abode of the arrogant.

Munkar and Nakir

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ قَالُوا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا وَ شَهِدُوا عَلَيَّ
أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ 7:37

When Our messengers come to take them away, they will say, "Where is that which you used to invoke besides Allah?" They will say, "They have forsaken us," and they will testify against themselves that they were faithless.

And ...

They continue exploring until the inner layers of his personality becomes manifest for him. Until he knows his place.

Bashir and Mubashir

But for the purely good ones these angles are bearers of good news.

قال الشيخ المفيد: وسمى ملكا المؤمن مبشرا و بشيرا لانهما يبشرانه من الله تعالى بالرضا و الثواب المقيم. و ان هذين الاسمين ليسا بلقب لهما و انهما عبارة عن فعلهما. (بحار الانوار، ج 6، ص 280)

“The two angels who come to the believers are called Bashir and Mubashsher because they are messengers from God bringing the good news of eternal happiness and reward. These are not their names, but their titles, signifying the role that they perform.”

They are the same angels seen from different eyes.

قال ابو بصير: جعلت فداك، يدخلان على المؤمن و الكافر في صورة واحده؟ فقال لا. (كليني، كافي، ج 1، ص 65)

Abu Basir asked do they come to Mu'min and kafir in the same form? He said, no.

Bashir and Mubashir

For the pure soul nothing is now more pleasant than listening to these angels. They teach him, guide him and make him realize his own beauties.

Every question that they ask and every layer of his life that they expose to him is good news for him. He is able to reply confidently because the truth has saturated his heart and soul.

Their language is vastly different from the languages of mankind, each word transferring to the heart of the listener wisdom that could not be contained even within several volumes in the corporeal world.

They unravel truths which can only be comprehended in that world, as a result of which the deceased gains the deepest realization of the Majesty of God that he has yet experienced.

Bashir and Mubashir

The horizons of his thoughts and comprehensions continue to expand, and the new arrival does not tire from listening to the illuminating murmur of the angels and learning from their great and wondrous wisdom.

They make his grave a garden of paradise, as the Prophet (s) said,

القبر إما روضة من رياض الجنة ، أو حفرة من حفر النيران (بحار الانوار، ج 6، ص 275).

The grave is either a garden from the gardens of paradise or a pit from the pits of hell.

After The First Night

After the first night

After initiation to barzakh, man is now in a new stage in which the intensity of life and its dimensions are exponentially increased.

But still there is long way to go before they are prepared for meeting with God.

Since life there is qualitatively different from what we know of life here, so our descriptions would not be more than examples and similes.

The soul in its *mithali* body is the swiftest thing in moving, relocating, ascending, or descending from one place to another.

Different types of life

These souls are divided into various categories:

The ones that are free to move about, and those that are confined

The ones that are celestial, and those that are earthly and of a lower order.

After separation from their bodies, souls do experience health and sickness, and they feel far more pleasure and pain than they experienced when they were joined to bodies.

Hence, they are subject to confinement, pain, punishment, sickness, and grief as they are to various states of joy, rest, bliss, and freedom.

Different types of life

People in Barzakh are of different types, much more than what we see in this world.

Their food and drink and dress, their houses and furniture, their cities and neighborhoods, are of diverse and dissimilar kinds

What the Prophet (s) saw in *Miraj* was an indication of such diversity.

“I passed by a people who had lips like camels. Flesh was cut from their sides and was put in their mouths. I asked Jebrail, who are these? He replied, these are slanderers and backbiters.”

Different types of life

“I then saw a group of people in whose mouths fire was poured which was let out from their backs.” Jebrail said that they were those who devoured what belonged to the orphans and the oppressed.

“I then saw a people who could not stand up because of their huge bellies.” Jebrail said they were those who exacted *riba*.

Now they could not rise up but like those deranged by the Devil’s touch. They continuously say, Our Lord! When will the Hour sets in?

“Then I saw women who were hung by their breasts.” Jebrail said they were those women who had children from others and attributed them to their husbands.

Different types of life

He, on the other hand, saw a very different type of people.

Then we ascended to the fifth heaven (the fifth depth or high rank of Barzakh). I saw a middle-aged man with huge eyes. I never had seen anyone as awesome as him. He was surrounded by a large group of his people; they were so numerous that I was amazed.” “Who is this man?” I asked Jebrail. “This is Harun, son of Imran,” he replied. So I greeted him and he greeted me.

Then we ascended to the seventh heaven. I saw a man with hoary hairs and beard sitting on an armchair. I asked Jebrail, “Who is this man sitting on the gates of *bait al-ma'mur* in the neighborhood of God?” He said, “This is your father Ibrahim, and this is your abode and the abode of the righteous among your Umma.” (بحار الانوار، ج 18، ص 325-326)

The conclusion is that there is a specific type and space for every group in Barzakh