

BARZAH – LIFE IN THE GRAVE

QUR'AN – (Translated into English by Ali Unal. THE QUR'AN with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَعْمَى

"But as for him who turns away from My remembrance (and from the Book), his will be a suffocated life, and We will raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection." (Surah Ta – ha, 124)¹

الْآيَاتِ أَفْصَلْنَا قَدْ تَوَدَّعْوَ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَاحِدَةً نَفْسٍ مِّنْ أَنْشَاكُمْ الَّذِي وَهُوَ
يَفْقَهُونَ لِقَوْمٍ

He it is Who developed you from a single human self, and has appointed (in each station of your journeying from mother's womb to eternal life) for each of you a lodging-place where, and time-limit during which, you will stay and then be transferred. We have certainly set out in detail the signs and proofs (of the truth) for a people seeking to attain profound understanding. (Surah Al – An'am, 98)²

تَعْلَمُونَ سَوْفَ كَلَّا () الْمَقَابِرَ زُرْتُمْ حَتَّى

Rivalry in worldly increase (seeking and then boasting of the acquisition of things, wealth, pedigree, and posterity) distracts you (from the proper purpose of life), until you come to the graves. (Surah At-Takaathur, 1-2)³

يَسْأَلُونَ رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْأَجْدَاثِ مِنْ هُمْ فَإِذَا الصُّورِ فِي وَنُفَخَ

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=20&min=120&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=6&min=90&show=10

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=102

And the Trumpet will be blown, and see, out of the graves they rush forth to their Lord. (Surah Ya – Sin, 51)⁴

مُخْرَجُونَ أَنْكُمْ وَعِظَامًا تُرَابًا وَكُنْتُمْ مِتُّمَ إِذَا أَنْكُمْ أَيْعِدُكُمْ

"Does he promise you that, after you have died and become mere dust and bones, you will be brought forth (to a new life)? (Surah Al Mu'minun, 35)⁵

دَبَعُ الْأَرْضِ وَيُحْيِي الْحَيِّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ يُخْرِجُ
تُخْرِجُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ مَوْتِهَا

He brings forth the living out of the dead, and brings the dead out of the living, and revives the earth after its death. It is in this way (that He revives the dead earth) that you will be brought forth from the dead. (Surah Ar – Rum, 19)⁶

مُنْتَشِرٌ جَرَادٌ كَانَتْهُمْ الْأَجْدَاثُ مِنْ يَخْرُجُونَ أَبْصَارُهُمْ خُشَعًا

With eyes downcast, they will come forth from their graves as if they were locusts scattered abroad (in confusion) (Surah Al – Qamar, 7)⁷

HADITH

Narrated Masruq:

Aisha said that a Jewess came to her and mentioned the punishment in the grave, saying to her, "May Allah protect you from the punishment of the grave." 'Aisha then asked Allah's Apostle about the punishment of the grave. He said, "Yes, (there is) punishment in the grave." 'Aisha added, "After that I never saw Allah's Apostle but seeking refuge with Allah from the punishment in the grave in every prayer he prayed."⁸

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was in a garden belonging to Banu'l-Najjaar on a mule of his and we were with him, it stumbled and nearly threw him. There he saw some graves, six or five or four. He said: "Who knows the occupants of these graves?" A man said: I

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=36&min=50&show=10

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=23&min=30&show=10

⁶ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=30&min=10&show=10

⁷ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=54

⁸ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/23/125>

do.” He said: “When did these people die?” He said: “They died in shirk.” He said: “This ummah will be punished in their graves. Were it not that you would not bury one another, I would pray to Allaah to make you hear what I hear of the torment in the grave.” Then he turned to us and said: “Seek refuge with Allaah from the punishment of Hellfire...”⁹

Ibn 'Umar (RAA) narrated:

‘Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) took hold of my shoulders and said, “Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a passerby.” Ibn ‘Umar used to say, “If you are alive in the evening, do not expect to be alive till the morning and if you are alive in the morning do not expect to be alive till the evening, and take from your health for your sickness, and from your life for your death.” Related by Al-Bukhari.¹⁰

COMMENTARIES

Tafseer – by Ali Unal

لَخَبِيرٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِهِمْ رَبَّهُمْ إِنَّ () الصُّدُورُ فِي مَا وَحُصِّلَ () الْقُبُورِ فِي مَا بُعِثَرَ إِذَا يَعْلَمُ أَقْلًا

Al-'Aadiyaat (The Chargers) 9-10: 9. Does he think he will not come to know when all that is in the graves is raised and brought out, 10. And all that is in the breasts is laid open and made out? 11. Surely their Lord on that Day will be fully aware of them. (THE QUR'AN with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

Al-Mujadilah (The Pleading Woman) 6. :

On the day when God will raise them all from the dead, and make them truly understand all that they did (in the world, and call them to account): God has had it written down, though they have forgotten it. God is witness over everything. (THE QUR'AN with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

At-Taubah (The Immunity) 35. : On that day, it (that hoarded wealth) will be heated in the fire of Hell and, therewith, their foreheads and their sides and their backs will be branded (and they will hear): “This is the treasure which you hoarded up for yourselves; taste now what you were busy hoarding!”

10. The last two verses contain a serious warning. God’s Religion can never be made a means of worldly gain; it cannot be exploited for such things as show, fame, acquiring wealth, status, or political aims. What people are commanded to do is to practice Islam purely to please God; this is the duty of His servants, and this must be done because God has commanded us to do so (98: 5). For

⁹ hadeeth of Zayd ibn Thaabit ; Muslim 2867

¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/urn/2054320>

this reason, it is severely prohibited to attempt to use Islam for ulterior motives, i.e. to use it for reasons other than why it has been sent; this is especially pertinent to religious scholars and spiritual masters who are expected to represent and convey Islam in its purity, not to exploit it. Such leaders have a place and status in the people's eyes, and these leaders are more liable than others to exploit this status for worldly aims. 'Ali, the Fourth Caliph and cousin of the Messenger, may God be pleased with him, says of some types of scholars, whom the Messenger had said would exploit God's religion for their selfish benefits toward the end of time: "Know, O community of brothers! The worst of people at that time are the scholars who, for the sake of worldly benefits, approve the innovations invented against the religion." Such scholars are called the "evil scholars" in Islamic literature. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, talked about 70,000 men who would wear turbans (i.e. religious scholars) who would support the practices of the Dajjāl (the man or a collective personality that is expected to appear toward the end of time and who will try to eradicate Islam from the social life of Muslims) for worldly benefits. In addition to the ways mentioned above, the scholars and spiritual masters may also exploit religion for selfish motives by distorting some rules of religion or arbitrarily interpreting some of its commandments. In whatever way they exploit religion, such attitudes on the part of religious scholars and spiritual masters cause people to grow antipathetic towards religion and prevent its being taught correctly. A scholar or spiritual master who sells religion for material gain cannot help but distort it. Holding such attitudes is what is meant by barring people from God's way. Hoarding up money and goods without spending them in God's cause to promote God's cause and to help the poor and needy is one of the major sins. The foremost duty with respect to wealth is paying the Prescribed Alms (the Zakāh). Some scholars are of the opinion that any wealth out of which the Prescribed Alms is given cannot be considered hoarded wealth. However, this opinion has not received welcome from the majority of scholars. The standard by which to judge whether any accumulation of money is regarded as hoarded wealth is the general living standard of all Muslims and the conditions that affect the Islamic world. In another verse (59: 7), the Qur'ān openly declares that wealth should not be a means of prosperity circulated among the rich only. At a time when the majority of Muslims are poor and Islam is left without support, any wealth exceeding the limit of richness according to Islam (which is the amount out of which the Prescribed Alms should be given) and some amount of which is not spent in God's cause, is regarded as hoarded wealth, and is the object of the threat in the verse. The verse clearly mentions hoarded wealth and the failure to spend it in God's cause.

(THE QUR'AN with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

Al-Anfal (The Accessions) 60. : (Believers:) make ready against them whatever you can of force and horses assigned (for war), that thereby you may dismay the enemies of God and your enemies and others besides them, of whom (and the nature of whose enmity) you may be unaware. God is aware of them (and of the nature of their enmity). Whatever you spend in God's cause will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.¹⁴

14. This verse contains important advice and warnings for the Muslims: • Until Doomsday, there will always be enemies of belief and Islam. For this reason, Muslims must always be on the alert against any enmity and be powerful enough to deter it. • The next verse (61) is especially important as it follows verses concerned with warfare, verses that state that a Muslim state must always be ready for war since such readiness can act as a deterrent. However, in verse 61, it is stated that Muslims are peaceful and that they must live peacefully and be representatives of universal peace. So, their acting as a deterrent in the power balance is one of the most important factors in bringing peace to the world and in preserving this peace. For this reason, if Muslims are not powerful enough to do

this, and if, because of this, others shed innocent blood in the world, it is also the Muslims who will be held accountable for that blood by God. • There are many kinds of enemies of belief and Islam. Some of them are overt enemies of God and religion, and thus display their enmity and are known. Some others maintain enmity against Islam and Muslims for other reasons, beyond their being Muslims. And there are some enemies that the Muslims may not be aware of because they are usually found among the Muslims, and they conceal their enmity. These people are hypocrites, or they live in Muslim society because they see their interests lie in so doing; sometimes, such persons may not yet have their beliefs ingrained in their hearts and, therefore, may easily change sides, even for insignificant reasons. God knows these people well. Muslims must also take these people into account, trying to accumulate the necessary power to overwhelm them. • Muslims must be powerful. Islam holds individuals and societies responsible for their own fate; therefore, people must be responsible for governing themselves. The Qur'ān addresses society with such phrases as, "O people!" and, "O believers!" The duties entrusted to modern states are those that Islam refers to society and classifies, in order of importance, as "absolutely necessary, relatively necessary, and commendable to perform." Such a system causes Muslims to establish the institutions necessary to fulfill these duties. One of the ways to be powerful is that everyone should expend in God's cause of whatever they have. This usually occurs by way of the Zakāh (Prescribed Purifying Alms); and, when necessary, by imposing new taxes in addition to the Zakāh; and, again when necessary, by way of general mobilization.

(THE QUR'AN with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

From the Risale-i Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi – a thematic tafseer

The Words, Thirteenth Word, Second Station

Being assaulted by the deceptive, seductive amusements of the present time, a group of young people were asking: "How can we save our lives in the hereafter?", and they sought help from the *Risale-i Nur*. So I said the following to them in the name of the *Risale-i Nur*:

The grave is there and no one can deny it. Whether they want to or not, everyone must enter it. And apart from the following three 'Ways', there is no other way it can be approached:

First Way: For those who believe, the grave is the door to a world far better than this world.

Second Way: For those who believe in the hereafter, but who approach it on the path of dissipation and misguidance, it is the door to a prison of solitary confinement, an eternal dungeon, where they will be separated from all their loved ones.

Third Way: For the unbelievers and the misguided who do not believe in the hereafter, it is the door to eternal extinction. That is to say, it is the gallows on which both themselves and all those they love will be executed. Since they think it is thus, that is exactly how they shall experience it: as punishment.

These last two Ways are self-evident, they do not require proof, they are plain for all to see. Since the appointed hour is secret, and death may come any time and cut off his head, and it does not differentiate between young and old, perpetually having such an awesome and serious matter before him, unhappy man will surely search for the means to deliver himself from that eternal

extinction, that infinite, endless solitary confinement; the means to transform the door of the grave into a door opening on to an everlasting world, eternal happiness, and a world of light. It will be a question for him that looms as large as the world.¹¹

Al-Mathnawi al-Nuri, The Seventh Treatise

Know, O friend, that your private world is a grave-like, narrow place. But since its “walls” are made of “glass,” you see it as spacious. With respect to this worldly life’s material dimension, the past has finished and the future does not exist. However, as your world’s two mirror-like walls face each other, they come together at the point of your present time and make it difficult for you to distinguish between what is real and what is reflected [in them]. The “line” of your present extends into [your past and future] and becomes an area. When misfortune moves you, you strike your head against the walls, suffer disappointment, and lose sleep. You see your world as narrower than a grave and a bridge, and your life moves faster than a river and even lightning. KNOW, O ONE WHO WANTS TO SEE the witnesses of the manifestations of the Divine Name the All-Recording and Preserving. This Name is referred to in: Whoever does an atom’s weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil shall see it (99:7-8) and Not an atom’s weight in Earth and in heaven escapes your Lord, nor is there anything smaller or greater, but it is in a Manifest Book (10:61).¹²

The Rays, The Eleventh Ray, The Eleventh Topic

Another particular and example of the fruit of belief in the angels concerns the questioning angels, Munkar and Nakir; it is this: in my imagination I entered my grave, telling myself: “I am bound to enter here, the same as everyone else.” While taking fright at the bleakness and despair of the lonely, dark, cold, narrow solitary confinement of the grave, two blessed friends resembling Munkar and Nakir appeared. They began to debate with me. My heart and grave were broadened, illumined, and warmed; windows were opened up onto the world of spirits. I felt truly happy at that situation which I saw in the imagination then, and will see in reality in the future, and I offered thanks.

A *medrese* student who was studying Arabic grammar died and in replying to Munkar and Nakir’s question of “Who is your Sustainer?”, thought he was in his own *medrese* and said: “‘Who’ is the subject, ‘your Sustainer’ is its predicate; ask me something difficult; that’s easy.” It made both the angels, and the spirits who were present, and a diviner of graves who witnessed the incident, laugh, and brought a smile to Divine mercy. Being delivered from torment, the late Hafiz Ali, a martyr hero of the *Risale-i Nur*, died in prison while writing out and enthusiastically studying the treatise of The Fruits of Belief. Just as he replied in the grave to the questioning angels with the truths of The Fruits of Belief —as he had in court here—, so I and the *Risale-i Nur* students shall reply to those questions with the brilliant and powerful proofs of the *Risale-i Nur*, in the future in fact and now in meaning, and will cause the angels to confirm them and appreciate them and congratulate them; God willing.¹³

al-Mathnawi al-Nuri, The Sixth Treatise

¹¹ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.155>

¹² https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/sgia/imeis/masnavinuriye_ingilizce_23_02_07.pdf

¹³ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.204.279>

KNOW, O FRIEND who strives for the world. Renounce the world for the following four reasons:
 First: It goes swiftly and decays. The pain arising from decay and separation remove the pleasure of attainment of, or union with, something subject to decay.

Second: Only pain and grief are left after pleasure.

Third: The grave, which waits for you and toward which you travel, is the door to the other world. It does not accept your ornaments of the world as gifts, for in the other world they will change into error and sin.

Fourth: [To understand the difference between this world and the Hereafter, reflect on] the difference between staying for an hour among enemies and vermin and among your most beloved friends and elders for years. The Lord of earthly and spiritual dominion calls you to abandon that hour of pleasure so that you may have perfect comfort and satisfaction in the company of your beloved ones in those years. So answer His call before you are sent to Him fettered.

All glory be to God, how great are His Mercy and Favor toward humanity. He buys the property that He has entrusted to us for a very high price, and preserves it permanently for us. If we claim ownership of it and do not sell it to God, we are exposed to great calamity and misfortune, as our power is so small and insufficient that we cannot preserve and carry it. If we try to carry it, it will prove too heavy for us to carry. It will disappear swiftly and go for nothing, leaving to us only our sins.¹⁴

Fethullah Gulen – Questions And Answers - a thematic tafseer

What Happens to the Spirit in the Intermediate World?

Following death, each person's spirit is taken to God's Presence. If it led a good, virtuous life and became refined, the angels charged with taking it to His Presence wrap it in a piece of satin and take it, through the heavens and all inner dimensions of existence, until they reach His Presence.

Along the way, angels at all stations welcome it and ask: "Whose spirit is this? How beautiful it is!" The angels conveying it introduce it with the most beautiful titles it acquired in the world: "This is the spirit of that one who (for example) prayed, fasted, gave alms and bore all kinds of hardship for God's sake." Finally, God Almighty welcomes it and then orders the angels: "Take this back to the grave where its body is buried, so that it can answer the questions of Munkar and Nakir, the interrogating angels."

The spirit of a wicked person is treated with disdain everywhere it passes, and is thrown back to the grave after being presented to God's Presence.

Whatever evil happens in the world is due to our own sins. If sincere believers cannot always resist the temptation to sin, out of His Mercy God allows some misfortunes to strike them so that they

¹⁴ https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/sgia/imeis/masnavinuriye_ingilizce_23_02_07.pdf

may be purified thereby. God may also subject them to severe death agonies in order to forgive some of their sins or to promote them to higher (spiritual) ranks. In any case, their spirits are taken very gently. If there are still some sins that need to be forgiven, the believers will suffer some sort of punishment in the grave and then be freed from Hell's punishment. In addition, since the grave is the first station toward eternal life, where everyone will receive what they have earned, it is also the place of preliminary interrogation. While in their graves, everyone will be questioned by two angels about their worldly deeds. And almost everyone, except the Prophets, will undergo some suffering.

As is recorded in reliable books, 'Abbas (the Prophet's uncle) wanted to see 'Umar in a dream. However, he only saw him 6 months later. When 'Abbas asked 'Umar where he had been, the latter replied: "Don't ask! I've only just now finished accounting (for my life)."

Sa'd ibn Mu'adh was one of the greatest Companions. When he died, Gabriel told the Messenger: "The Divine Throne trembled because of Sa'd's death." Innumerable angels took part in his funeral. After his burial, the Messenger spoke in amazement: "Glory to God! What (will happen to others) if the grave squeezes even Sa'd?"

In the grave, everyone is questioned by the angels Munkar and Nakir, who ask such questions as: Who is your Lord? Who is your Prophet? What is your religion? Believers can answer these questions with great ease; unbelievers cannot. These questions are followed by others dealing with the person's life.

The relation between the spirit and its body differs according to the worlds in which they live. In this world, the spirit is confined within the body. If the evil-commanding self and bodily desires dominate the spirit, the spirit will deteriorate and doom the person. But if the spirit can discipline the evil-commanding self through belief, worship and good conduct, and free itself from servitude to bodily desires, it is refined and acquires purity and laudable qualities. This will bring happiness to the spirit in both worlds.

After burial, the spirit waits in the intermediate world, the world between this one and the Hereafter. Although the body decomposes into the ground, its essential particles do not rot. According to a hadith, this is the coccyx (ajb al-dhanab) We do not know whether this term refers to a person's genes. But regardless of part it is, the spirit will use it to maintain its relation with the body. This part will also serve as a foundation upon which God will re-create us on the Day of Judgment. God will make the elements of this foundation conducive to eternal life while destroying and re-creating the world and resurrecting us on the Day of Resurrection.

What does the spirit do in the intermediate world? The intermediate world is the realm where the spirit feels the "breath" of the bliss of Paradise or the punishment of Hell. Those who led virtuous lives will be met by their good deeds (e.g., prayers, recitations, charity, etc.) in the form of amiable companions. Windows will be opened so that they can see heavenly scenes. And, as stated in a hadith, the grave will be like one of Paradise's gardens. However, even these people will suffer some punishment if they have some unforgiven sins, for such punishment will purify them of all sins and make them worthy of Paradise after the Resurrection.

Unbelievers will be met by their If unbelief and evil deeds, which will assume the forms of bad companions and such vermin as scorpions and snakes. They will be shown scenes of Hell and will experience the grave as one of Hell's pits.

Do some bodily parts or cells remain alive after death? While we live in this world, it is our spirits that suffers pain and feel joy and happiness. The spirit seems to feel pain through the nervous

system, and uses this system to communicate with all bodily parts. Just how it does this remains a mystery to science, as does the type of interaction going on between the spirit and the body, especially the brain. Any bodily failure that results in death terminates the functioning of the nervous system. However, scientists have established that certain cells brain continue to live for a while after death. Scientists have studied the post-death signals received from the brain. If they can decipher such signals, such fields as criminology will benefit greatly when it comes to solving "unsolvable" crimes.

The following verses, which tell us how God revived a dead person during the time of Moses, suggests this:

When Moses said to his people: "God commands you to sacrifice a cow" ... they sacrificed her, a thing they had scarcely done. And when you killed a living soul, and disputed thereon, God disclosed what you were hiding so We said: "Smite him with part of it." Even so He brings to life the dead, and He shows you His signs, that haply you may have understanding. (2:67, 72–73)

Torments of the grave and Hell. Given the above understanding of the spirit, and the fact that it will remain in contact with the body's essential particles while in the intermediate world, it is meaningless to discuss whether the spirit, the body, or both will suffer in the grave. However, as pointed out above, God will rebuild people on the Day of the Resurrection from or with those essential bodily particles, and they will be resurrected on the "morning" of the eternal life.

Since the spirit lives the worldly life together with the body and shares all its joys and griefs, God will resurrect people both bodily and spiritually. The Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a agree that the spirit and the body will go to either Paradise or Hell together. God will build bodies in forms peculiar to the Hereafter, where everything will be alive: This life of the world is but a pastime and a game. Lo! the home of the Hereafter, that is life if they but knew. (29:64)

What gifts we can send to the spirit after death? The spirits in the intermediate world will see and hear us, provided God allows this. He may even permit some saintly people to see, hear, and communicate with them.

After we die, our record of deeds is not closed. If we leave behind good, virtuous children, books, or institutions from which people continue to benefit, or if we have brought up people beneficial to humanity or contributed to their upbringing, our reward will continue to increase. If, we leave behind only evil things, our sins will continue to increase as long as they harm others.

So, if we want to benefit our loved ones who have gone to the other world, we should be good heirs. We should help the poor, take part in Islamic services, and lead a good and virtuous life, and spend what they left us to promote Islam and help those who need some help, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. All of these activities will cause their reward to increase.¹⁵

¹⁵ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/faith/questions-and-answers/24973-the-happens-to-the-spirit-in-the-intermediate-world>