



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

During the lifetime of the Prophet (saws) the Jews of Medina sent their allies, the Makkan infidels, to the Prophet (saws) to ask about the soul. In reply to their questions, the following Qur'anic verse was revealed:

"They ask you [O Muhammad (saws)] concerning the Ruh (Soul). Say: 'It is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given very little.' [Qur'an Al-Israa 17: 85]

The soul is a creature of Allah. It is blown into every human being when it is just a foetus of 120 days old, it remains in contact if not inside the human being throughout its life on earth, and at the point of death it departs from the body to reside in the heavens. Like everything else in the universe it is a creation of Allah, but as the above Qur'anic verse informs us, mankind has been given only limited knowledge concerning it. When a body is given a soul, life begins. And when the soul leaves the body, life ends and death begins.

During their journeys through this universe, the soul and its body travel through four different worlds:

1. **The womb** - where the soul joins its body.
2. **This world** - where we all live for a limited period only.
3. **The grave** - a 'Barzakh' period.
4. **The Hereafter** - The final destination of all human beings.

What is the Soul ?

The Qur'an and Sunnah give us only a limited knowledge concerning the soul. From it we can say that the Arabic words 'Ruh' and 'Nafs' are both used, sometimes interchangeably, for the soul. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim wrote in his scholarly work "Kitab al Ruh",

" Ruh is an entity which differs totally from the physical body. It is a subtle, ecclesiastical, enlightened living and moving body which penetrates into the depths of the organs and flows into them like the water in the rose or the oil in the olive or the fire in the coal. As long as these organs remain able to accept the impressions of this subtle body, the 'Ruh' remains attached to these organs and provides them with feeling and movement. But when these organs are spoiled because of the dominance of diseased elements upon it, and they are no longer able to accept the impressions of the soul, it leaves the body and heads towards the world of the souls. "

There is some difference in the way the words 'Ruh' and 'Nafs' are used. The 'Ruh' is the subtle spirit, which resides in the heavens and needs a physical body to carry it on the earth. When this spirit is given a body, life begins and it is described as 'Nafs'. The word 'Nafs' is used in a number of ways by the Qur'an, all of which imply the meaning of a soul with a body.

The Different States of Each Nafs

1. NAFS AL-MUTAMAINNA - the Satisfied Soul.

"O you satisfied soul. Return to your Lord pleased with yourself and pleasing to Him. Enter among My servants. And enter My paradise". (Qur'an Al Fajr 89: 27-30)

The Qur'an explains how one can achieve the noble state of the satisfied soul.

"Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." (Qur'an Al-Ra'd 12: 28)

Illness, financial worries, loss of property or death of dear ones does not cause the satisfied soul to wail, curse or lament. Whenever it faces any problems it simply say, "To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return" and faces the misfortune with patience and trust in its Lord.

Such are the souls described in the Qur'an;

"Be sure, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, some loss of goods or lives or fruits of your toils. But give glad tidings to those who are patient. Those who say, when afflicted by calamity: "To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.

(Qur'an Al Baqarah 2: 155-156)

The satisfied soul believes that all happiness and sorrow is by the decree of Allah. It therefore feels no need to lament at misfortunes or to boast at success.

"No misfortune can happen on earth or to your soul but it is written in a decree before We bring it into existence. That is truly easy for Allah. In order that you

may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult in favors bestowed upon you, for Allah loves not the vain boasters."

(Qur'an Al Hadid 57: 22-23)

No worldly anxieties upset the satisfied soul. If it fails to acquire something for which it has struggled for many years, it will accept its destiny and remember the following words of the Prophet of Allah (saws):

"What has reached you was never meant to escape you and what has escaped you was never meant to reach you." (Muwadih by Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdadi)

The satisfied soul seeks its nourishment in Dhikr (the remembrance of Allah), prayer, fasting, Zakat and Hajj. It relies heavily for support on the branches of faith, the highest of which is to say and believe in 'There is no god worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', and the lowliest of which is to remove an obstacle from the path. Angels are present to strengthen this soul and to bless and greet it when it departs this material life, when it is resurrected and when it is admitted into the gardens of paradise. Their greeting to it is the greeting of a Muslim to his fellow Muslim: 'Peace be unto you';

"And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Paradise in crowds; until they arrive there, its gates are opened and its keepers will say: 'Peace be upon you! Well have you done. Enter here and dwell forever."

(Qur'an Az Zumar 39: 73)

2. NAFS AL AMMARA BIS SU' - the soul that dictates evil.

"And I do not free myself from blame. Indeed the human self is inclined to evil, except when my Lord bestows His Mercy (upon whom He wills). Indeed my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful." (Qur'an Yusuf : 53)

In contrast this soul which earns the company of Satan because it ignores the remembrance of Allah.

"The one who withdraws himself from the remembrance of the Merciful, We appoint for him a Satan to be a companion to him."

(Qur'an Az-Zukhruf 43:36)

Satan's cohorts and tunes surround the evil soul day and night. It drives from one satanic act to other. You will see it lying and cheating, wasting time on

leisure and sports, frequenting cinemas and concerts, listening to music and dancing.

3. NAFS AL LAWWAMA - the Self-reproaching soul.

The self-reproaching soul succumbs to evil inspirations but then regrets its actions and reproaches itself for being weak and vulnerable. These feelings of remorse cause it to turn back to Allah, to repent sincerely, and to receive spiritual solace. It is better for each Nafs to blame itself whenever it commits a wrong. If not, it will find itself being blamed from all those around it. Consider how the self-reproaching soul is mentioned with the Day of Resurrection in the Qur'an.

"I do call to witness the Resurrection Day. And I do call to witness the self-reproaching Soul." (Qur'an Al Qiyamah: 1-2)

The noblest of the souls is the satisfied soul, which at its last moments on earth will receive the glad news from its lord of "Enter among My servants and enter into my Paradise." In contrast is the soul, which inspires evil and disobedience. And between these two extreme states is the self-reproaching soul, which checks its actions and blames itself when it commits evil. Most souls hover between these different states depending on the person's faith and actions.

THE WOMB - BEFORE BIRTH

We begin this journey in our mother's wombs. 120 days after conception the soul is blown into the foetus. Narrated 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud: "Allah's Apostle, the true and truly inspired said, '(The matter of the Creation of) a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allah sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his (i.e. the new creature's) deeds, his livelihood, his (date of) death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into him'"[Bukhari]

We have no choice in who our parents are, our race, colour or nationality. "He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no god but He, The Exalted in Might, The Wise." (3:6) Allah knows all of this before our birth even, but we still continue our journey to fulfil our destiny.

DURING LIFE IN THE DUNYA

The next part of our trip begins after we are born. This is the life of this world, in which we now reside and are familiar with. We may stay at this station for a few

seconds or as long as 100 years or more. Here we grow up and acquire the means to happiness or misery. We are given the ability to make choices after the age of puberty and we will later be punished or rewarded based upon them. Allah gives each of us the natural Fitrah, knowledge of good and bad as well as right and wrong. The rest is up to us. As the Quran says, "By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right--Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!" (91:7-10)

DURING SLEEP

In this life, the soul and the body are together except during sleep when the soul may leave the body and come back in the morning or Allah may take the soul at that time. "It is Allah that takes the souls at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily in this are Signs for those who reflect."
(39:42) It is indeed something to be pondered; that we die each night and Allah gives us another chance at life when we wake up the next day.

Du'a upon waking up:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ

Alhamdu lillaahil-lathee 'ahyaanaa ba'da maa 'amaatanaa wa'ilayhin-nushoor. Praise is to Allah Who gives us life after He has caused us to die and to Him is the return.

(Reference: Al-Bukhari, cf. Al-Asqalani, Fathul-Bari 11/113; Muslim 4/2083)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي عَافَانِي فِي جَسَدِي، وَرَدَّ عَلَيَّ رُوحِي، وَأَذِنَ لِي بِذِكْرِهِ

Alhamdu lillaahil-lathee 'aafaanee fee jasadee, wa radda 'alayya roohee, wa 'athina lee bithikrihi. Praise is to Allah Who gave strength to my body and returned my soul to me and permitted me to remember Him.

(Reference: At-Tirmithi 5/473. See Al-Albani's Sahih Tirmiihi 3/144)

The Soul's Journey after Death -

Allah, the Most Exalted, Says in the Quran (what means):

"Then why, when it [i.e. the soul at death] reaches the throat. And you are at that time looking on. And We [i.e. Our angels] are nearer to him than you, but you do not see."
[Quran 56-85]

When someone dies, the Angel of Death comes to take his soul, no matter where he is. The dying person sees him, hears him, and speaks to him, but not with his eyes, his ears, or his tongue. How then? I do not know exactly. All I do know is that when he begins to move to another world, he sees, hears, and speaks, by some means which, we, the living, do not perceive. Many instances of this have been recorded:

"Ibn Abi Ad-Dunya mentions that on the day 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul 'Azeez died, he said to those with him, 'Sit with me.' When they sat down next to him, he said, 'I am the one you commanded and I failed you. You forbade me and I rebelled.' He said this three times. Then he said, 'But there is no god but Allah.' Then he lifted his head and stared. They said, 'You are looking very intently, O prince of the faithful.' He replied, 'I see a presence which is neither man nor jinn.' Then he died."

Fadhlah Ibn Dinaar said, "I was with Muhammad Ibn Waasi' when he was very near to death. He began to say, 'Welcome, my Lord's angels! There is neither strength nor power except by Allah!' I smelled the sweetest fragrance that I had ever smelled. Then his eyes glazed over and he died."

After the soul is taken, if it is a pure soul and has relatives in the Next World who are people of the Garden, they come to meet the soul with yearning and great joy. They ask it about the condition of those who are still alive in this world.

The angels then bear the soul from one heaven to the next until it comes into the presence of Allah, glory be to Him and may He be exalted! Then it returns and sees the washing of the body, its shrouding, and the funeral procession. It says either, "Take me forward! Take me forward!" or 'Where are you taking me?' The people there cannot hear this.

When the corpse has been placed in the grave, the soul inserts itself between the body and the shroud so that the questioning can take place. Then the soul hears the receding footfall of the last of the people who followed the funeral and the earth is leveled over him. The earth, however, does not prevent the angels from reaching him. Even if a stone had been hollowed out for him and he had been placed into it and the opening sealed over with lead, it still would not stop the angels from reaching him. These dense substances cannot prevent the passage of souls. They do not even stop the Jinn. Allah Almighty made stone and earth the same for the angels as air is for birds.

The grave expands and stretches for the soul, and as a result for the body as well. The body is in a grave of the narrowest dimensions and yet it expands, because of the soul, as far as the eye can see.

Hadeeth on this journey of the soul upon death

Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu alayhi wa sallam, said, 'When the believer is about to depart from this world and go forward into the Next World, angels with faces as bright as the sun descend from the heavens and sit around him in throngs stretching as far as the eye can see. Then the Angel of Death comes and sits at his head and says, "Good soul, come out to forgiveness and

pleasure from Allah!" Then his soul emerges like a drop of water flows from a water-skin and the angel takes hold of it. When he has grasped it, the other angels do not leave it in his hand even for the twinkling of an eye. They take it and place it in a perfumed shroud and a fragrance issues from it like the sweetest scent of musk found on the face on the earth.

Then they bear it upwards and whenever they take it past a company of angels, they ask, 'Who is this good soul?' and the angels with the soul reply, "So-and-so, the son of so-and-so", using the best names by which people used to call him in this world. They bring him to the lowest heaven and ask for the gate to be opened for him. It is opened for him and angels who are near Allah from each of the heavens accompany him to the subsequent heaven until he reaches to the heaven where Allah, Most Exalted, is. Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, Says, 'Register the book of My slave in Illiyyun (in the seventh heaven) and take him back to earth. I created them from it and I return them to it and I will bring them forth from it again.'"

'His soul is then returned to his body and two angels come to him. They make him sit up and say to him, 'Who is your Lord?' He replies, 'My Lord is Allah.' They ask him, 'What is your religion?' He replies, 'My religion is Islam.' They ask him, 'Who is this man who was sent among you?' He replies, 'The Messenger of Allah.' They ask him, 'How did you come to know these things?' He replies, 'I read the Book of Allah, believed it, and declared it to be true.' Then a Voice from on high declares, 'My slave has spoken the truth, so spread out carpets from the Garden for him and open a gate of the Garden for him!' Then some of its fragrance and perfume comes to him, his grave is expanded for him as far as the eye can see, and a man with beautiful garments and a fragrant scent comes to him and says, 'Rejoice in what delights you for this is the day which you were promised.' He asks, 'Who are you? Yours is a face which presages good.' He replies, 'I am your good actions.' Then he says, 'O Lord, let the Last Hour come soon so that I may rejoin my family and my property!'

When an unbeliever is about to depart from this world and go forward into the Next World, angels with black faces descend from the heavens carrying rough hair-cloth and sit around him in throngs stretching as far as the eye can see. Then the Angel of Death comes and sits at his head and says, 'Foul soul, come out to the wrath and anger of Allah.' Then his soul divides up in his body and it is dragged out like a skewer is pulled out of wet wool. Then the angel takes hold of it. When he has grasped it, the other angels do not leave it in his hand even for the twinkling of an eye. They take it and wrap it in the rough hair-cloth and a stench comes out of it like the worst stench of a corpse on the face of the earth.

Then they take it up and whenever they take it past a company of angels, they ask, 'Who is this foul soul?' and the angels with the soul reply, 'So-and-so, the son of so-and-so," using the worst names by which people used to call him in this world. They bring him to the lowest heaven and ask for the gate to be opened for him. It does not get opened.'

The Messenger of Allah, sallallahu alayhi wa sallam, then recited the verse (which means): "*... the gates of Heaven will not be opened for them, nor will they enter Paradise until a camel enters into the eye of a needle [i.e. never].*" [Quran 7: 40]

Then Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will Say "Register his book in Sijjin (in the lowest earth)." Then his soul is flung down.

The Prophet (SallaAllahu alayhi wa sallam) then recited the verse (which means): "*And he who associates with Allah – it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.*" [Quran 22: 3]

Then his soul is returned to his body and two angels come and say to him, 'Who is your Lord?' He replies, 'Alas, alas, I do not know!' Then a voice calls from on high, 'My slave has lied, so spread out carpets from the Fire for him and open a gate of the Fire for him!' Then a hot blast from it comes to him, his grave is made so narrow for him that his ribs are pressed together, and a man with a hideous face and clothing and a foul odour comes to him and says, 'Grieve on account of what has brought you disgrace for this is the day which you were promised!' He asks, 'Who are you? Yours is a face which presages evil.' He replies, 'I am your bad actions.' Then he says, 'O Lord, do not let the Last Hour come!'"

[Muslim]

Regarding the words used by the two angels who question the dead person in the grave, Allah, the Exalted, Says in the Quran (what means):

"*Allah keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah sends astray the wrongdoers. And Allah does what He wills.*" [Quran 14:27]

THE FIRST SQUEEZE OF THE GRAVE

The squeezing of the grave is the first thing that happens to the deceased when he is placed in his grave. In the texts it indicates that this is something that happens to everyone who is placed in the grave, and no one is spared it. And Allaah is the One Whose help we seek.

Ahmad (6/55, 98) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The grave has squeezing. If anyone were to be saved from it or spared it, Sa'd ibn Mu'aadh would have been spared it." Al-Albaani said in al-Saheehah (1685): This hadeeth, when its isnaads and corroborating reports are all taken into account, is undoubtedly saheeh. We ask Allaah to make the squeezing of the grave easy for us, for He is the Most Generous.

From shaykh Albani

Questioner: He said in the *Musnad* ... the *hadith* of Hudhaifah, who said, "We were with the Prophet of Allaah, ﷺ, during a funeral. So when we got to the grave he sat down on his two shins and started to look at it, and then said, 'The believer is squeezed in it one time such that his *'hamaa'il'* are crushed, and the disbeliever is covered in Fire.'"

He said the *hamaa'il* are the veins of the testicles. What does, "... the veins of his testicles are crushed ..." mean?

Al-Albani: It's an expression to show the severity of the punishment. [The compiler of the book said, 'I.e, his ribs are crushed to such an extent that it affects his testicles.']

Questioner: Namely, the believer will be squeezed to such an extent?

Al-Albani: And his ribs will overlap, no one will escape it, not even Sa'd ibn Mu'aadh [did] as he, *السلام عليه*, said in some authentic *hadiths*.

Questioner: Namely, he will feel pain from this squeezing?

Al-Albani: ... without doubt. When the ribs overlap then this is severe pain, but it does not persist. One squeezing and then everything returns to its natural state, if he was a righteous person then [he will be in the state of a] righteous person, and if he was an evil person then [he will be the state of an] evil person, as we just explained that a window is opened up in the grave for the dead person.

Questioner: Namely, the squeezing, there is no escape from it?

Al-Albani: There is no escape from it.

In his book, *Life in Al-Barzakh*, Muhammad al-Jibaly states:

"No human being will be spared the squeeze of the grave. However, the following hadith indicates that it is not at the same degree of severity for all people; some of the believers are released from its grip quicker than others. Iban `Abbas (ra) said that Allah's Messenger (saw) said:

'If anyone were to escape from the squeeze of the grave, it would be Sa`d Bin Mu`ath; however, he was squeezed once and then released.' (At-Tabarani in al-Kabir; Sahih ul-Jami by al-Albani No. 5306)"

LIFE IN BARZAKH

So the life of al-barzakh lasts from after a person dies until he is resurrected, whether he is buried in a grave or not, whether he is burned or eaten by wild animals. The evidence that points to this life is the hadeeth narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who said that after the deceased is placed in his grave, he can hear the footsteps of his family (as they walk away from the grave).

This life (in al-barzakh) will either be filled with delight, or it will be hellish, and the grave will either be one of the gardens of Paradise or one of the ditches of Hell.

What indicates that there will be either delight or torment (in al-barzakh) is the aayah in which Allaah says concerning the people of Pharaoh:

"The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon. And on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): 'Cause Fir'awn's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!'"

[Ghaafir 40:46 – interpretation of the meaning]

Ibn Mas'ood said: The souls of the people of Pharaoh and those of their like among the kaafirs are shown the Fire morning and evening, and they are told, this is your abode.

Ibn Katheer said: this aayah is the main basis of the Sunni's belief in the torment of al-barzakh in the grave.

(Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/82)

Al-Qurtubi said: Some of the scholars quoted as evidence to prove the torment of the grave the phrase *"The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon"* [Ghaafir 40:46]. A similar view was expressed by Mujaahid, 'Ikrimah, Muqaatil and Muhammad ibn Ka'b, all of whom said that this aayah is proof of the torment of the grave. Do you not see that it says concerning the torment of the Hereafter: *"And on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): 'Cause Fir'awn's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!'"*? (Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 15/319)

It was narrated that 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: *"The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'When any one of you dies, he is shown his place morning and evening. If he is one of the people of Paradise then he is one of the people of Paradise, and if he is one of the people of Hell, then he is one of the people of Hell.'"* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, *Bid' al-Khalq*, 3001; Muslim, *al-Jannah wa sifat na'eemihaa*, 2866).

It was narrated from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that a Jewish woman entered upon her and mentioned the torment of the grave, and said to her, *"May Allaah protect you from the torment of the grave!"* 'Aa'ishah asked the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about the torment of the grave, and he said, *"Yes, the torment of the grave."* 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: *"I never saw the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) pray any prayer after that but he sought refuge with Allaah from the torment of the grave."* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, *al-Janaa'iz*, 1283; Muslim, *al-Kusoof*, 903).

These aayahs and ahaadeeth indicate that the torment of the grave is real and that it is ongoing in the case of some people.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him and save him from the torment of the grave) said:

If a person is a kaafir (we seek refuge with Allaah), then there is no way that the delight will ever reach him, and his torment will be continuous. If a person was a sinner but he was a believer, then his torment in the grave will be commensurate with his sin, and perhaps the punishment for his sin will take less time than the time in al-barzakh between his death and the onset of the Hour, in which case it will cease.

(*al-Sharh al-Mumti'*, vol. 3, p. 253)

The punishment in the grave is continuous or it may stop?

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

The answer is that the punishment in the grave is of two types:

A type which is continuous, apart from what has been narrated in some ahaadeeth which say that it will be reduced during the period between the two blasts of the Trumpet, then when they are raised from their graves, they will say:

“Woe to us! Who has raised us up from our place of sleep.” [Yaa-Seen 36:52 – interpretation of the meaning].

Further evidence that this punishment will be continuous is to be seen in the aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

“The Fire, they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon” [Ghaafir 40:46]

This is also indicated by the hadeeth of Samurah which was narrated by al-Bukhaari, about the dream in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw that being done to him (the person who was being punished in the grave) until the Day of Resurrection.

And by the hadeeth of Ibn ‘Abbaas about the story of the two palm branches, where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prayed that the punishment (of the people in the two graves) would be reduced as long as the palm branches did not dry out, so the lessening of the punishment was connected only to the period of time that the branches remained fresh.

And by the hadeeth of Rabee’ ibn Anas from Abu’l-‘Aaliyah from Abu Hurayrah, then he [the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)] came to some people whose heads were being smashed with rocks, and every time they were smashed, they were then restored, and they would have no respite from that.

And by the story in al-Saheeh of the man who put on two garments and strutted about in an arrogant manner, so Allaah caused the earth to swallow him up, and he will remain sinking down into it until the Day of Resurrection.

And by the hadeeth of al-Baraa’ ibn ‘Aazib about the story of the kaafir for whom a door to Hell will be opened (in his grave) and he will look upon his place in Hell until the Hour comes. This was narrated by Ahmad, and in some versions it was said that that a hole will be made in his grave and he will feel its distress and smoke until the Resurrection.

The second kind: which will last for a while, and then stop.

This is the punishment of some sinners whose sins are not so great; they will be punished in accordance with their sins, then the punishment will be reduced, just as they will be punished in the fire then the punishment will end.

The punishment may be stopped by du'aa', charity, seeking forgiveness or the reward of Hajj - this may reach the deceased from some of his relatives or others.