

## **The Role of Human Deeds in *Barzakh*: Shaping Identity and Destiny Beyond Death**

### **Why Is Knowing the Role of Deeds in Barzakh Important for Understanding the Truth of Human Existence?**

After death, humans enter a distinct and new realm known as Barzakh, the intermediate stage between this world and the hereafter. In this realm, a person's inner truth is revealed openly and without veil. However, a crucial question arises: Where does this truth come from, and how is it formed? What determines whether an individual encounters peace and light in Barzakh, or finds themselves trapped in suffering and anxiety? What remains with us in this stage, and what is left behind? Will our worldly wealth, social status, and material influence accompany us? The answers lie in a deep examination of the role of deeds in Barzakh.

According to the Quran and Islamic traditions, one's deeds are the primary scale in the realm of Barzakh. A deed must not be viewed as a fleeting or temporary behavior in this world. Rather, it is a living, enduring truth that plays a decisive role in a person's eternal destiny. Good and bad deeds do not disappear; they manifest themselves as true companions and become an individual's actual asset in the hereafter.

Prominent scholars emphasize that while knowledge and *ma'rifa* build the Barzakh (facsimile) soul, deeds shape the Barzakh body. In other words, our deeds construct the new vessel in which we will exist after death. If our deeds are righteous, this body will be healthy, radiant, and peaceful. Conversely, corrupt or unrighteous

deeds become the source of pain and torment. Furthermore, the role of intention is important. The intention of a believer can surpass the deed itself, creating a more enduring truth in their soul.

Therefore, knowing the role of deeds in Barzakh is an analysis of an inevitable future that none of us can escape. If Barzakh is the stage where our inner truth is unveiled, that truth is nothing more than the embodiment of the very deeds we consciously choose and repeat in this life, deeds that remain our only lasting assets.

### **The Role of Deeds in Shaping Human Identity After Death**

Beyond death, more than anything else, a human being needs an enduring asset that neither depletes in this world nor abandons them at the moment of departure. Regarding this, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him and his family) stated: “Three things follow the deceased: their family, their wealth, and their deeds. Two return, and one remains. Their family and wealth return, but their deeds remain with them” [1]. This narration shows that wealth, family, and social status, which often seem like the greatest assets in this life, only accompany us to the threshold of death and hold no value in Barzakh. What truly endures and remains by our side is nothing but the deeds we performed during our earthly life.

The role of one's deeds in Barzakh goes far beyond external reward or punishment. A deed is a truth woven into the human soul, forming their existential core after death. One's appearance in Barzakh is nothing other than the embodiment of their deeds. Therefore, in Barzakh, an individual is not recognized by their physical appearance or social prestige, but by the truth of their conduct and deeds.

The Holy Quran repeatedly emphasizes this reality: “while those who do right make provision for themselves” [2]. Explaining this, Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) states: “Indeed, righteous deeds go ahead to Heaven and prepare the place for their doer, just as a man sends a servant ahead to spread his bedding for him. Then he recited: 'And as for those who believed and did righteous deeds, for themselves they are preparing (their place)’” [3]. This indicates that human deeds are not merely rewards or punishments waiting in the future. Rather, they are actively constructing the environment of Barzakh and the Resurrection in advance. They determine the very atmosphere of peace or suffering an individual will experience.

The late scholar, Allameh Hassanzadeh Amoli, elaborated on the role of deeds in shaping one's Barzakh identity: “Knowledge constructs and defines the human soul, while deeds construct and define the human body in the realms of the hereafter. In the truest sense, the nourishment of a human being is beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds. Every person will be resurrected in the form of their knowledge and deeds” [4].

Just as the physical body is built and strengthened by nutrition and exercise, the Barzakh body is a direct product of our deeds. If our deeds are righteous, the Barzakh body will be healthy and radiant; if they are corrupt, that same body will become the source of agony. This highlights that the role of deeds in Barzakh is an existential structure, one that is inseparable from the human being.

To better understand this reality, we only need to look at our daily lives. Even in this world, our behaviors shape our social personality. A habitual liar is recognized by society as untrustworthy, while a righteous person gradually earns the trust of others. This social reputation is, in fact, a manifestation of their deeds. In Barzakh,

a similar but much deeper transformation occurs. Our deeds will not appear as a mere reputation, but as our existential truth and our actual face, defining who we truly are for eternity.

### **The Impact of Sincere Intention and Knowledge on One's Deeds in Barzakh**

A deed only gains value and direction when accompanied by two essential elements: Knowledge and Intention. In religious teachings, these two are the pillars of a deed's quality. Without knowledge, a deed is blind; without intention, it is hollow and lifeless. Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) stated: "Knowledge commands, action drives" [5]. This means while knowledge shows the correct path, it is the deed itself that pushes a person toward becoming and spiritual growth.

While our Barzakh identity is formed by our worldly deeds, Islamic tradition emphasizes that it is not merely the quantity of deeds that matters, but their quality. This quality depends entirely on the intention and the level of awareness from which the deed originates.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him and his family) emphasized the weight of intention: "The intention of the believer is more valuable than his action" [6]. A sincere intention, even if not fully realized in practice, leaves an existential mark on the human soul and manifests as a lasting asset in Barzakh. Conversely, a deed performed out of hypocrisy or pretention, no matter how beautiful it appears outwardly, is internally void and will become a source of anxiety and suffering. Therefore, the status of deeds in Barzakh is determined not by their outward appearance, but by the motives behind them.

Another vital dimension is the lasting impact of a deed. The Prophet (Peace be upon him and his family) said: “When a person dies, his deeds cease except for three: ongoing charity (*sadaqah jariyah*), beneficial knowledge, and a righteous child who prays for him” [7]. This narration shows that the effects of a righteous deed can go beyond the boundaries of physical life, remaining as a living asset in Barzakh. In essence, the continuity of a deed’s effect is what expands and enriches one’s spiritual wealth in Barzakh.

What we perform today in this world constructs our tomorrow in Barzakh. Wealth, social status, and worldly attachments stay behind at the moment of death, but our deeds and intentions accompany us forever. The wisest choice, therefore, is to focus on the quality of our deeds. This is because these are our only true and enduring assets, unlike the fleeting gains of this world that hold no weight in the life to come.

Given the profound role of deeds in Barzakh, which of our daily deeds do you believe carry the most lasting impact? Which deeds will become a person’s true eternal asset? Share your thoughts with us?

## References

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- [2]. Holy Quran, 30:44
- [3]. Muhammad Baqer Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwaar*, vol. 8, p. 257.
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- [5]. Al-Harrani, *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*. Qom: Ansariyan Publications, 2009, no. 208
  
- [6]. Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 210.
- [7]. *Nahj Al-Fasahah (Height of Rhetoric)*. Trans. Hossein Vahid Dastjerdi, Ansariyan Publications, *Hadith* 2783.