

northeast of Beirut.

The Qurʾān mentions *Baʿl* as a deity in the Makkan Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt (Q 37:125) in a pericope situated in the flow of verses succinctly narrating what happened to the ancient multitudes to whom Allah, Most High, had sent Messengers but who had afterwards gone astray (*q.v.*). Beginning with the prelude, *And, indeed, most of the people of old went astray before them, although verily We had sent warners unto them* (37:71-72), the stories of five Prophets are narrated in rapid succession. These include Nūḥ (*q.v.*), Ibrāhīm (*q.v.*), Ishāq (*q.v.*), Mūsā (*q.v.*), and Hārūn (*q.v.*)—may peace be upon all of them. Then comes the mention of Ilyās, upon him peace, and his people, worshippers of *Baʿl*: *Indeed, Ilyās too was among the Messengers. When he said to his people: “Will you not be conscious of Allah? Do you call upon Baʿl and forsake the Best of Creators? Allah is your Lord and the Lord of your ancestors of yore.” But they denounced him as a liar, so they will surely be arraigned, except Allah’s chosen servants* (Q 37:123-128). According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), *Baʿl* was a golden idol twenty cubits high, with four faces and 400 attendants (*sadana*); Satan (*q.v.*) entered into its mouth and preached a religion of misguidance (*bi-sharīʿat al-ḍalāla*) (Rāzī, *sub* Q 37:125).

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**See also:** FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD; IDOLS AND IDOLATRY; ILYĀS, UPON HIM PEACE; MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE; SATAN; SYRO-PALESTINE.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL

### Balance

See HARMONY AND BALANCE

### Banū Isrāʾīl

See CHILDREN OF ISRĀʾĪL

### Baqara

See ANIMALS

### Barrier

See BARZAKH; HIJAB

## BARZAKH

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definition, Usage, Etymology; ii. The Estuarine *Barzakh*; iii. Figurative *Barzakhs*; iv. The Pre-Resurrection Afterlife; v. The Bliss or Punishment of the Grave; vi. The Life of Martyrs and Prophets in *Barzakh*; vii. The Hearing of the Dead; viii. Bibliography.

### Definition, Usage, Etymology

The Arabic noun *barzakh* is a quadrilateral *faʿlal* form used three times in the Qurʾān to denote a barrier (*ḥājiz*, *maḥbas*), twice in the sense of the space where seas and rivers meet—*And it is He Who has let loose the two seas: this, sweet and thirst-quenching; that, saltish and bitter; and has placed between the two a barrier (barzakh) and a great partition complete (ḥijran maḥjūran)* (Q 25:53, cf. Q 55:20), including the senses of dry land (*yabas*) and natural boundary (*tukhūm*)—and once in the sense of the other-worldly barrier between the living and the dead: *and behind them* (i.e., the dead) *is a barrier until the day when they are raised* (Q 23:100): “Everything that is between two things is a *barzakh*, and what lies between this world and the next is a *barzakh*” (Abū ʿUbayda, *Majāz*, *sub* Q 25:53; Ibn Qutayba, *Gharīb*, *sub* Q 23:100; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *sub* Q 25:53).

The Qurʾān also uses the term *ḥājiz* in the first sense of estuary above: *Or, Who has made the earth a fixed abode, and placed rivers in the folds thereof, and placed firm hills therein, and has set a barrier (ḥājizan) between the two seas? Is there any deity beside Allah? Nay, but most of them know not!* (Q 27:61). In the second sense *barzakh* has also been defined metonymically as “the grave” (al-Sijistānī, *Gharīb*; Abū Ḥayyān, *Tuhfa*, both *sub b-r-z-kh*) and translated as “life of/in the grave,” “isthmus-life,” and “interlife.” Accordingly, it is said that the *barzakh* is “an invisible barrier” (*ḥājiz khafīy*) (al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿānī*, *sub* Q 23:100; cf. Azharī, *Tahdhīb* and Ibn Manzūr). *Barzakh* therefore is a major theme

connected to death (*q.v.*) and Resurrection (*q.v.*), reward and punishment (*q.v.*), and the states and types of humanity connected therewith, which the Prophet—upon him blessings and peace—described at length in hadiths. It has been glossed as the forty-year pause between the first two trumpet-blasts that initiate the Resurrection (Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *sub* Q 20:98-102; Rāzī, *sub* Q 17:52; and Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 23:100).

The word *barzakh* is not found in the Prophetic Sunna, but ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Ibn Mas‘ūd—Allah be well-pleased with them—reportedly used it: the former to refer to an “interval passage” of the Qur’ān he skipped (*aswā barzakhān*), reciting what came before and after it in the prayer; the latter in the plural, in the expression “these are the intervals of faith” (*tilka barāzikh al-īmān*), to refer to the believers’ struggles against satanic whisperings (*q.v.*)—that is, “what lies between the beginning and the end of *īmān*” (see BELIEF) (Abū ‘Ubayd, *Gharīb* and Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāya*; cf. al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Nuskha*, Aṣl 221). These and other meanings were summed up by al-Fayrūzābādī (729-817/1329-1415) in his trove of exegetical insights:

Insight into *barzakh*: It is the barrier between two things. It sometimes [means] the power of Allah itself, and sometimes something existing through the power of Allah (*tāratan qudrat Allāh wa-tāratan bi-qudrat Allāh*). *Barzakh* lasts from the time of death to Resurrection. Whoever dies enters it. The *barāzikh* of faith are what lies between its beginning and its end. *Barzakh* after Resurrection is the barrier between a human being and the attainment of the highest homes in the hereafter. That is the allusion to the steep ascent (*al-‘aqaba*) in the verse *Yet he has not conquered the steep ascent* (Q 90:11). That steep ascent presents impediments to states unreachable by those other than the righteous.

*Baṣā’ir* 2:238

*Barzakh* is listed under the quadriliteral entry *b-r-z-kh* in major lexicons (Jawharī, *Ṣiḥāḥ*; Ibn Durayd, *Jamhara*; Fayrūzābādī; Ibn Manẓūr; Zabīdī) but it has been suggested that it originated from the root *b-r-z*, meaning “to emerge prominently,” to which a euphonic consonantal *kh* suffix was added. “*Barzakh* is a barrier between two things, as if there were a prominent emersion (*barāz*) between the two, that is, a vast stretch of land; then any barrier became [known as] a *barzakh*” (Ibn Fāris, 1:333, Bāb min al-rubā‘ī ākhar). The lexicographers deem it an Arabic word, and it is not mentioned in the manuals on Arabicized words

such as al-Jawālīqī’s (465-540/ca.1073-ca.1145) monumental *al-Mu‘arrab*, al-Suyūṭī’s (849-911/1445-ca.1505) *al-Mutawakkilī*, or al-Khafājī’s (d. 1069/ca.1659) *Shifā’ al-‘alīl*—which relegates any claimed etymological connection with the Persian noun *farsakh* (a unit of distance) to the realm of speculation.

### The Estuarine *Barzakh*

*Barzakh* has received a variety of interpretations in its usage in the marine sense; these were summed up by Ibn ‘Aṭīyya (d. ca.542/1147) in his commentary on the verse *And it is He who has let loose the two seas...* (Q 25:53):

People have given discrepant explanations of this verse. Ibn ‘Abbās (3BH-68/619-688) said, “He means the sea of clouds and the sea that is on the earth, and the wording of the verse was arranged accordingly.” Mujāhid (d. 104/722) said: “The freshwater sea is the water of the rivers that pour into the salt sea. Its pouring into it is its being *let loose*. The barrier and the partition are a wall of which Allah [alone] knows, invisible to human beings.” Al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) said the same. According to another group, the meaning of *let loose* is “He made one perdure inside the other”, while according to Ibn ‘Abbās it means “He left one on top of the other.” There are other such views that are more or less connected to part of the wording of the verse. My own view of the verse is that its purport is to warn us of the power of Allah and how consummately He creates things, in that He has let forth sweet waters in abundance in the earth in the form of rivers, springs, and wells, putting bitter waters next to them and vice-versa. Thus you can see the sea with sweet waters embracing it on both its shores, and you can see sweet water inside islands and the like with bitter salt waters embracing them... and by *the two seas* He means all [bodies of] sweet water and all [those of] salt water.

*Muḥarrar*, *sub* Q 25:53

Thus, as the space where seas and rivers meet, *barzakh* in Q 25:53 and 55:20 and *ḥājiz* in Q 27:61 denote estuaries, the sea inlets where the saline tide meets the freshwater current without the two intermingling (see RIVERS AND SPRINGS).

It has also been suggested that, in keeping with the Qur’ān’s use of the unqualified term *two seas* (*baḥrayn*) in Sūrat al-Raḥmān (Q 55:20), *barzakh* also refers to the invisible divides between large bodies of salt