

## The Human Body According to Mor Yakup

Jacob of Edessa (Mor Yakup, 633–708), in his Syriac work titled *Hexaemeron* (*Ṣtoth Yawme / The Six Days*), describes the human body not merely as a structure composed of flesh and bones, but as a temporary yet sacred dwelling engraved upon the earth by God. According to him, the body is a worldly projection of the heavenly, untouched eternal home. Therefore, it is transient, yet by virtue of the intellect and soul it carries within, it possesses a meaning deeper and more valuable than the vast universe. The universe serves the human being; the human being, through their intellect and free will, carries a secret that transcends the universe.

In Mor Yakup's description, the body resembles a skillfully constructed tower. This sacred tower consists of five layers: the feet, the legs, the abdomen, the neck, and the head. Each layer is part of an order woven with wisdom by the Creator. The feet are like the foundation of this structure; with their flexibility, toes, and sturdiness, they connect the human being to the earth. The legs are like pillars carrying the torso; shinbones, kneecaps, and strong joints come together to balance the weight of the body. The abdomen and the chest resemble a palace chamber hiding a king's treasures; the continuation, protection, and multiplication of life are concealed here.

This order is completed from end to end. The head is the home of the intellect; it is the dwelling place of the faculty that grants the human being an unparalleled value in the universe. Thus, the body transforms into a temple woven from feet to head with God's principles of order, balance, and beauty.

According to Mor Yakup, the human being, with this flawless structure, is a small exemplar of the vast universe; the essence of creation, and a living witness to divine wisdom. Every organ serves a purpose; every detail protects the human being from falling and falling apart. Even in the transient body, an infinite secret is hidden: God's intellect, order, and love. And this secret elevates the human being beyond being a body rooted in the soil; it connects them to the hope of an eternal home belonging to heaven.

This approach of Mor Yakup is essentially a reflection of the principle: "***The human being is an image of the universe.***" According to this idea, expressed in Arabic as "*al-insānu zubdatu'l- 'ālam,*" the human being is the purest essence, the highest representative, and the

bearer of meaning of the realm of existence. God has gathered all the features, secrets, and beauties of the universe within the human being. In this respect—with their dimensions of body, soul, and intellect—the human being is a small reflection of the universe, that is, a microcosm. Correspondingly, the universe is like a grand human being, a macrocosm, carrying the order and meaning found within the human.

This understanding emphasizes not only that the human being is the most precious of all created things, but also that they possess a deep spiritual responsibility lying at the center of creation. The human being is the essence of existence; with the meaning they carry, they bring the entire universe together within their inner world and reflect it with consciousness.

Translated and Commented from Syriac by Yusuf Beğtaş

**Important Note:** This article was written as a translation-commentary by Yusuf Beğtaş, inspired by the seventh chapter (pp. 215–216) of Jacob of Edessa’s work “*Ştoth Yawme / The Six Days*,” penned in Syriac. The work in question was published in 1985 at the Mor Ephrem Monastery in the Netherlands.