**PARADISE AND HELL**



43.68. "O My servants! You will have no fear today, nor will you grieve!



43.69. "(You) who have believed in My signs and Revelations, and have submitted to Me wholly (as Muslims).



43.70. "Enter Paradise, you and your (believing) spouses, made contented. "



43.71. Trays of gold and goblets will be passed round them; and there will be therein all that souls desire, and eyes delight in: "And you will abide therein.



43.72. "That is the Paradise which is made your inheritance, in return for what you used to do (in the world).



43.73. "In it, there is for you fruit (of all kinds) in abundance, to eat therefrom. "



43.74. But the disbelieving criminals will abide in the punishment of Hell.(1)

871. Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Allah the Almighty said, ‘I have prepared for My righteous servants something that the eye has not seen nor the ear heard and that has not occurred to the heart of man. Recite if you wish, ‘No soul knows what joyous means of happiness is kept hidden (reserved) for them as a reward for what they have being doing’” (as-Sajdah 32:18). (Sahih al-Bukhari, Tafsir as-Surah, 32/1; Sahih Muslim, Jannah, 2).(2)

872. Ibn Mas’ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “I know who will be last of the people of Hell to come out of it and the last of the people of Paradise to enter Paradise. A man will emerge from Hell crawling and Allah the Almighty will say to him, ‘Go and enter Paradise.’ He will come to it, imagine that it is full and return and say, ‘My Lord, I found it full.’ Allah the Almighty will say to him, ‘Go and enter Paradise.’ He will come to it and imagine that it is full and return and say, ‘My Lord, I found it full.” Allah the Almighty will say to him, ‘Go and enter Paradise. You will have the same as this world and ten times more—or you will have the same as it ten times over.’ He will say, ‘Are You making fun of me—or laughing at me—when You are the King?’” Ibn Mas’ud said, “I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, laugh until his molars showed. He was saying, ‘That will be the position of the least of the people of Paradise.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Riqaq, 51; Sahih Muslim, Iman, 308).(2)

873. Abu Said al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “The people of Paradise will look at the people in the rooms above them as you look at a bright star far on the horizon of the east or the west because of the great distance between them.” They said, “O Messenger of Allah, are those the stations of the Prophets which only they attain?” He said, “Rather, by the One in whose hand my soul is, they are men who believed in Allah and confirmed the Messengers.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Badu’l-Khalq, 8; Sahih Muslim, Jannah, 119).(2)

874. Abu Said and Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with them, said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “When the people of Paradise enter Paradise, a herald will call out, ‘You will live and never die. You will be healthy and never ill. You will be young and never grow old. You will have blessing and never experience hardship.’” (Sahih Muslim, Jannah, 22).(2)

875. Abu Said al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will say to the people of Paradise, ‘O people of Paradise!’ They will say, ‘At your service and in obedience, O our Lord!’ He will say, ‘Are you content?’ They will say, ‘How could we not be content, our Lord, when You have given us what You have not given any of Your creation?!’ He will say, ‘Shall I give you even better than that?’ They will say, ‘What thing could be better than that?’ He will say, ‘That I send down My pleasure upon you and after it never more be angry with you.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Riqaq, 51; Sahih Muslim, Jannah, 9).(2)

876. Jarir ibn Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “We were with the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and he looked at the moon on the night of the full moon. He said, ‘You will see your Lord directly as you see this moon and you will not be harmed by seeing Him.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Tafsir as-Surah, 50/2; Tawhid, 24; Sahih Muslim, Masajid, 211).(2)

**Necessity of Hell and Heaven**

The confrontation, co-existence, and intermingling of good and evil, pleasure and pain, light and darkness, heat and cold, beauty and ugliness, and guidance and misguidance in the universe are there for an extremely important purpose and are full of wisdom. If there were no evil, the exis­tence of good would be indiscernible. If there were no pain, pleasure would have no meaning. Light without darkness would have no importance and the different degrees of heat are realized only through the existence of cold. Through ugliness, a single truth of beauty becomes a thousand truths, and thousands of varying degrees of beauty come into existence. If there were no Hell, many of the pleasures of Paradise would remain hidden. Extrapo­lating from these examples we see that in one respect everything becomes known through its opposite; a single truth contained in any one thing pro­duces numerous shoots and becomes numerous truths. Since these inter­mingled beings flow from this transient abode into the abode of eternal per­manence, certainly, just as things such as good, pleasure, light, beauty, and belief flow into Paradise, so harmful matters such as evil, pain, darkness, ugliness, and unbelief pour into Hell. The floods of this continuously agitat­ed universe are emptied into these two lakes.

**PARADISE IS SURROUNDED BY HARDSHIP AND HELL IS SURROUNDED BY DESIRES**

“Hell is surrounded by lusts and Paradise is surrounded by things displeasing to the carnal self.”
(Bukhari, Riqaq, 28; Muslim, Janna, 1)
Hell is screened by lusts, whereas Paradise is hidden by apparent hardships and undesirable aspects. For those who pursue everything for the material value, the difficulties on the path that leads to Paradise may not seem to be very appealing. Primarily, both Paradise and Hell are a blessing for human beings, for one is a form of encouragement for those seeking the true path, while the other is terrifying, a path of fear. When a human sees the incentives that lie on the path of benefaction they struggle to reach Paradise, and when they see the dreadful path that leads to Hell they make every effort to avoid its evil, turning back to the path of righteousness; in this way both paths become a form of mercy for us.
The Almighty One has put Paradise and Hell in different coverings. Then He presented them to human beings as exchanges for their deeds; we make a choice between the paths leading to either destination by using our free will. Paradise is a precious pearl screened by an unattractive shell; performing the rituals of purification and prayer, the pilgrimage, giving to charity, striving to remove the obstacles between people and God and, bearing difficulties and mistreatment for His sake are among the elements of this shell. Those who only see the outward face are always misguided. Therefore, the candidates for Hell outnumber those of Paradise.
Humans tend to choose the easier alternative; those who think “Prayer is beneficial, but praying five times every day is too difficult” avoid this duty, which is of great benefit, out of their petty calculations. The difficulty of performing the ritual of purification under harsh winter conditions is one of the main reasons why people abandon the duties bestowed upon them. However, we are told in the hadith that those who endure hardships will be able to move one step closer to the gates of Paradise; this is also pertinent to fasting, giving charity, performing the hajj and other duties.
Various trivial things that prevent an intelligent person from acting with a sense of consciousness are also forms of deceit that prevent one from entering the gardens of Paradise; the fire of Hell is a place of destruction which lures us with ambition and desire. Most of those who choose the path of evil are unaware of the agonizing trap they are about to fall into, like a fly landing on poisoned honey. Passion is nothing but a poison; it destroys those who dare to reach to it like fire destroys the moths that approach the heat of the flames. With total ignorance, people approach passion that screens evil and suddenly find themselves in the burning flames of Hell. Before they have the chance to escape this trap, they are lured on by attractions that pull them ever deeper into the burning flames.
The apparent burdens around the path to Paradise do not deceive those who know the Prophet, one who stands on the crossroads of the two paths. Such people will find guidance to the path of truth from his words of wisdom. They will find the way that leads to the gates of Paradise, for their souls have embraced the desire to reach the prosperity of the garden. However, others who seek the pleasures of prosperity elsewhere live steeped in the deceit of passion and the artificial blessings of their so-called heaven in this world. But the fact of the matter is that those who live in this heaven of materialism will never reach the true prosperity that awaits the devoted believer in Paradise, not even for a moment.
Faith and blasphemy are like seeds which will reveal their true faces in the next world and transform into Paradise and Hell; this means that despite what might seem to be difficult, a believer actually lives the life of Paradise in the world of mortality. The truth of the matter is that it is inconceivable for a person who is aware of the benefits of Paradise to reject the chance of eternal happiness and take the path to Hell; what deceives people are the cloaks they wear. If we re-examine the words of Prophet we can see how significant they are; here laid out before us the consequences of following the two paths—the prosperous path which leads to happiness and contentment and the path which leads to fear and destruction.

**The Messenger said: ‘Some of the people of Paradise will be given a place as large as the world, and hundreds of thousands of palaces will be granted to them.’ What is the reason for this and why and how does a single man need all these things? What does this mean?**

**Answer**: If man was only a solid object, or was only a vegetable creature consisting of a stomach, or consisted only of a limited, heavy, simple, and transient corporal or animal body, he would not own, nor deserve, so many palaces. But man is such a comprehensive miracle of the Divine Power that even in this transient world and brief life, if he is given the rule of the whole of the world with all its wealth and pleasures, to gratify the need of some of his undeveloped senses and faculties, it will not be possible to satisfy his greed. Whereas, a man with an infinite capacity in an eternal abode of happiness, who will knock on the door of infinite Mercy in the tongue of infinite needs, will of a certainty and most reasonably receive the Divine bounties described in the Sayings. We shall try to see this elevated truth through the telescope of a comparison, which is as follows.

Although, like this valley garden, each of the vineyards and gardens of Barla has a different owner, each bird, each sparrow, each honey-bee in Barla, which possesses with regard to food only a handful of grain, may say: ‘All the vineyards and gardens of Barla are my places of recreation.' Each may take possession of Barla and include it in its property. Others sharing it does not limit its rule. A man who is truly human may say: ‘My Creator has made the world home for me, with the sun as its chief lamp and the stars, its electric lights. The earth is my cradle spread with flowered carpets.' He offers thanks to God. The other creatures sharing it does not negate this conclusion of his. On the contrary, the creatures adorn his home and are like its decorations.

If on account of being human, a man in this narrow brief world--even a bird--claims a power of disposal over such a vast area and receives such a vast bounty, how can it be deemed unlikely that he will be given the ownership of a property stretching a distance of five hundred years in a broad and eternal abode of happiness?

Just as in this dense, narrow world the sun is present at the same moment in numerous mirrors, so too, as is argued in The Sixteenth Word, a spiritually enlightened being may be present in many places at the same moment. For example, the Archangel Gabriel being present on a thousand stars at the same moment he is at the Supreme Throne of God, and in the presence of the Prophet and in the Divine Presence; and the Prophet meeting with most of the devoted, God-fearing members of his community in the Place of Gathering after the Resurrection at the same moment and appearing in this world in countless places at the same moment; and a strange group of the saints known as abdal (the substitutes), appearing at the same moment in many places; and ordinary people sometimes doing as much as a year's work in one minute in a dream or having vision of it; and everyone being in contact with and concerned in many places at the same time in heart, in spirit, and in imagination--all these are well-known and witnessed. So, most certainly in Paradise, which is of light, unrestricted, broad, and eternal, the people of Paradise, who will have bodies of the strength and lightness of the spirit and of the swiftness of imagination, being in hundreds of thousands of places at the same time, and receiving pleasure in hundreds of thousands of ways, is fitting for that eternal Paradise, that infinite Mercy, and as reported by the Truthful Reporter, upon him be peace and blessings, is reality and the truth. Nevertheless, these vast truths cannot be weighed on the scales of our tiny minds.

**What does the body, defective, changing, unstable and pain-stricken, have to do with eternity and Paradise? The elevated pleasures of the spirit must be enough. Why should a bodily resurrection take place for corporal pleasures?**

****Since, despite its darkness and density in contrast to water, air, and light, earth is the means and source of all the varieties of the works of Divine art, in meaning it has some superiority to the other elements. Also, despite its density, on account of being comprehensive and provided it is purified, man's selfhood gains some kind of superiority to his other senses and faculties. Likewise, man's body is a most comprehensive and rich mirror to the manifestations of the Divine Names. It has been equipped with the instruments to weigh and measure the contents of all of the Divine treasuries. For example, if the sense of taste in the tongue was not the origin of as many measures as the varieties of food and drink, it could not experience each and recognize them; it could not measure them. Furthermore, the instruments with which to experience and recognize the manifestations of most of the Divine Names, and the faculties for experiencing the most various and infinitely different pleasures are also in the body.

Since, as is understood clearly from the conduct of the universe and the comprehensiveness of man, the Maker of the universe wants through the universe to make known all the treasuries of His Mercy, and all the manifestations of His Names, and to make us experience all the varieties of His bounties, for sure, the world of eternal happiness, which is a mighty pool into which the flood of the universe flows and a vast exhibition of the products of the loom of the universe and the everlasting store of the crops produced in the field of the world, will resemble the universe to a degree. The All-Wise Maker, the All-Compassionate Just One, will give as wages for the duties of the bodily organs and in reward for their services and particular types of worship, pleasures particular to each. To think otherwise would be contrary to His Wisdom, Justice and Compassion.

**A living body is in constant formation and deformation and subject to disintegration; therefore it cannot be eternal. Eating and drinking are for the perpetuation of the individual, and sexual relations are for the perpetuation of the species. These are fundamental to the worldly life but there is no need for them in the world of eternity. So why have they been included in the greatest pleasures of Paradise?**

Firstly, a living body is doomed to decline and death because of the imbalance between what it takes in and what it consumes. From childhood to the age of maturity, what it takes in is more than it expends. Afterwards its expenditure increases until it results in the destruction of the balance and death. In the world of eternity, however, the particles of the body remain constant and are not subject to disintegration and reformation. Or the balance between the body's income and consumption remains constant. The second, Like moving in perpetual cycles, a living body gains eternity together with the constant operation of the factory of bodily life for pleasure. Although in this world eating, drinking and sexual relations between married couples arise from a need and ****perform a function, a great variety of excellent pleasures are ingrained in them as an immediate wage for the functions performed, which are superior to other pleasures. Since in this world of ailments eating and marriage are means to many wonderful and various pleasures, for sure, in Paradise, which is the realm of happiness and pleasures, those pleasures will take on a most elevated form, and with the addition to them as pleasures of the otherworldly wages for the duties performed in the world and of the need felt for them in the world in the form of a pleasant, otherworldly appetite, they will become an all-encompassing, living source of pleasure, appropriate to Paradise and eternity.

***This life of the world is nothing but a pastime and a game, but the Abode of the Hereafter, it is all living indeed.***

According to the verse, all the lifeless and unconscious substances and objects in this world are living and conscious there. Like human beings and animals here, the trees and stones there will understand commands and carry them out. If you tell a tree to bring you such-and-such a fruit, it will bring it. If you tell a stone to come, it will come. Since stones and trees will take on such an elevated form, for sure and of a necessity, together with preserving their bodily realities, eating, drinking and marital relations also will take on a form as much higher than their worldly forms as Paradise is higher than this world.

**According to the meaning of the Narration, "A person is with whom he loves, friends will be together in Paradise." This requires that a simple Bedouin who feels a deep love for God's Messenger in one minute's companionship with him should be together with God's Messenger in Paradise. But how can illumination and reward of a simple nomad cause him to share the same place with God's Messenger, whose illumination and reward are limitless?**

**Answer:** I shall point to this elevated truth by a comparison. For example, in an extremely beautiful and splendid garden, a magnificent person prepared a vast banquet and richly-adorned spectacle in such a way that it included all the delicious foods that the sense of taste can experience, and all the beautiful things that please the sense of sight, and all the wonders that amuse the faculty of imagination, and so on; he included in it everything that would gratify and please all the external and inner senses. Two friends went together to that banquet, and sat at a table in the same pavilion. But the sense of taste of one of them was very limited, he received little pleasure. His power of sight was weak, and he had no sense of smell, and therefore he could not understand the wonderful arts nor comprehend the marvels. Proportionally to his capacity, he could only benefit from and take pleasure at that beautiful place of recreation to the degree of a thousandth or millionth. As for the other man, since all his external and inner senses, his intellect, heart, and all his faculties and feelings, had been developed to the utmost degree, he could perceive and experience all the subtleties and beauties, and marvels and fine things in that exquisite garden, and derive all varieties of pleasure from them.

Since it is so in this confused, painful and narrow world, and there is as great difference as from the ground to the Pleiades between the greatest and the least who exist side by side, for sure, in Paradise, which is the abode of happiness and eternity, while friends are together, it is more fitting for them that each will receive his share from the table of the Most Merciful of the Merciful in accordance with the degree of his abilities. Besides, even though they are in different Paradises or different ‘floors' of Paradise, it will not prevent them from coming together. For although the eight levels of Paradise are one above the other, the roof of all of them is the Supreme Throne of God. Suppose there are walled circles round a conical mountain, one within the other and one above the other from its foot to the summit, the circles are one over the other, concentric with, and look to, one another, but do not prevent each other seeing the sun. (Indeed, there are various narrations indicating that the levels or floors of Paradise are in a manner like this.) (3)

**References**

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