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### *Paradise and Hell*

Remember what ‘Aa`isha said: “If the first thing revealed in Qur’an was ‘do not drink’, the people would have said ‘we are never going to stop drinking.’ And if the first thing that was revealed in the Qur’an was telling the people to not commit fornication and adultery the people would have said ‘we’re never going to stop committing fornication and adultery!’ The first things that were revealed in the Qur’an were the Surah Al-Mufasssal<sup>[1]</sup> that talked about and mentioned hell fire and paradise. Until the hearts were attached to Allah subhaana wa ta’aala, THEN the orders for hallal and haraam came down.” ‘Aa`isha said that if you first tell people this is haraam, that’s haraam, they won’t listen to you. The first things that were revealed were about paradise and hell. When the hearts were attached to Allah the dos and don’ts were revealed.

We can tell from ‘Aa`isha radiyallahu anha that the way to attach the hearts to Allah is to remind ourselves about paradise and hell. We are immersed in this world too much and detached from reality. We are not getting enough dose of akhirah. Unless we remind ourselves of it constantly, it’s not going to be on our mind. We are very attached to the ones we love in this dunya, the things that we have and the pleasures this life can offer.

Ask ourselves, if we were faced with the angel of death in this moment – even though he doesn’t have to seek permission from us as with the ambiya – “Are you ready to leave right now?” would we be ready to go?

I don’t think any of us would be ready to go.

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam would talk about hell fire and jannah so much. He would especially talk about hell a lot. In fact, one of the sahaabiyyah said that she memorized Surah Qaaf from the mouth of RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam on the mimbar of jum’ah, because he used to mention it so much. Surah Qaaf is talking about Paradise and Hell, and also death. The reason why RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam talked about it so much was that after Allah, no one had as much Mercy on this Ummah as RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. He cared so much about this Ummah, he didn’t want this Ummah to be harmed.

Once, RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam stood on the mimbar, praised Allah, making Salah on the messenger of Allah, he said, “I’m warning you, Hell fire.” He was repeating it again and again and his voice was getting louder and louder. One of the sahabah said that if someone were in the marketplace, they would have heard him. That’s all that he was saying. The narrator of the hadith said that you could hear the weeping of the sahabah in the masjid. That is the sensitivity of their hearts. SubhaanAllah, we have such rigid hearts. I remember once that we were in a cemetery, burying a sister, and one brother started to tell jokes – right there in the cemetery.

‘Uthmaan, when he used to attend the burial, he would sit next to the grave and cry, unable to stand up. The sahabah would come and tell him, “What is wrong with you?” He said, “The grave is the first step of akhirah. If you make it through it, whatever comes after will be easier. And if

you do not make it through the grave, whatever will happen after it is. And that is why I cry whenever I remember the grave.”

There is no other religion that has given so much description to the after-life, like Islam. It's very rare to go through a page of the Qur'an without finding a reminder about al-akhirah. Why would Allah repeat to us constantly about it? It shows that it is very necessary for us to know. [In general, the more often something is repeated, the more important it is.] Our hearts change very easily.

Qalb comes from the word taqallab, which is water boiling in a pot. Our hearts change very easily. If you want an example of this – look at an infant. They can be crying one minute and laughing the next.

The Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam used to make the du'aa': "The One Who Overturns hearts, we ask You to make our hearts steadfast on Islam." Ya muqallibul quloob thabbit qulooboona 'ala deen. It was said that RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam used to repeat this du'aa' frequently. We should also repeat it frequently.

RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam says that the analogy of him and us is like a man standing next to a fire in the desert at night time. Whenever you have some light in the desert, it will attract insects to it. So these moths and insects will gather around the fire. Similarly, this happens around a light at night. RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said that he is like that man, trying to keep the insects [us] away from the fire. RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam says that we are jumping towards the fire and he is dragging us away from it, nevertheless, some of us insist on jumping into it. RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam is a guard from it, trying to guard us from the hell fire. Nevertheless, some people insist on throwing themselves into the fire, even though the reminder is there.

Jibreel couldn't understand how there could be some people who would give up Paradise and opt for Hell Fire. Jibreel says, "I am amazed. How could there be someone who could sleep safely when they know hell fire is waiting for them? How could there be someone who could sleep when he knows there is Paradise waiting for him?"

Our souls were created for eternity. There will not be a moment when your soul will cease to exist. We will live forever. This is the testing ground, and then it will be either heaven or hell.

Allah says: "For this, the ones who want to compete should compete." This is what we should compete on – the akhirah, not on the worldly things.

Allah and RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam gave us elaborate descriptions of heaven and hell. As human beings, the strongest motivation for us is the motivation of reward or punishment. Allah subhaana wa ta'aala has placed us on this earth for an open book test – we have the Qur'an and Sunnah to help us.

No matter how much we imagine heaven or hell, we cannot really imagine them. It is just to draw the information close to us. If this world was good enough as a reward, Allah would have given it as a reward to the believer. And if it was bad enough as a punishment, Allah would have given it as a punishment for the disbeliever. Therefore, we are not here for punishment or reward.

We have to have hope for Allah's Mercy and fear of his punishment. Remember the bird with these two wings. We have to be active in pursuing Jannah with both. Live a balanced life. The Old Testament portrays God as angry and someone to be feared too much. The New Testament portrays Him as a God of Mercy and Love. Both lack the balance.

Allah says He is the Forgiving and Merciful, but at the same time, His Punishment is severe. Allah says His punishment is severe, but One of His Names is the Forgiving and one is the Merciful.

### *The Description of Hell*

#### *The Size of Hell*

Allah created hell as a punishment for the disbeliever, hypocrite and believers who accumulated a lot of sin. We don't know exactly the size of it, but there are indications that it is huge.

One indication is that hell fire will always ask for more people. Hell would continue to say: Is there anything more, until Allah, the Exalted and High, would place His foot therein and that would say: Enough, enough, by Your Honour, and some parts of it would draw close to the other. [Muslim, 40/6823] [Also see Bukhaari, Chapter Book 6]

Another indication is the depth of hell fire. This hadith is a miracle. We cannot explain it in a scientific fashion; it is a miracle. Abu Huraira reported: We were in the company of Allah's Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam then we heard a terrible sound. Thereupon Allah's Apostle sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "Do you know what (sound) is this?" We said: "Allah and His Messenger know best." Thereupon he said: "That is a stone which was thrown seventy years before in Hell and it has been constantly slipping down and now it has reached its base." [Muslim, 40/6813] How this exactly happened – who all heard it, how did they hear it, etc – we do not know. This is a miracle. But the fact that this rock took 70 years to fall to the bottom of hell shows that hell is very deep.

The third indication is the number of angels involved in pulling it. Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam as saying: "Hell would be brought on that day (the Day of judgment) with seventy bridles and every bridle would be controlled by seventy angels." [Muslim, 40/6180] [Imam commented]: the translation of the hadith is incorrect here; it should be 70,000 bridles and 70,000 angels will be pulling them.

The fourth indication is that the sun and the moon will be thrown into hell fire. Obviously, this is the clearest indication to us because we know the size of the sun and moon. RasulAllah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam says that on the Day of Judgment, both the sun and the moon will be thrown into the hell fire. You might wonder why specifically the sun and the moon are thrown in hell – is that a punishment? The hadith is in Bukhaari and Muslim – any god that was worshipped other than Allah will be thrown into hell.

[Some Prophets, such as Jesus/Eesa and Ezra were worshipped, but of course they will not be in hell.]

### *Levels of Hell*

The levels of Jannah (paradise) get better as you go up. With hell, the lower you go the worse. Allah says: “Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths (grade) of the Fire [...]” (4:145)

There are levels above that – for example, the level in which RasulAllah’s (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) uncle will be in. Sa’eed al-Khudri reported: A mention was made of his uncle Abu Talib before the Messenger of Allah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. He said: “My intercession may benefit him on the Day of Resurrection and he may be placed in the shallow part of the Fire which would reach his ankles and his brain would be boiling.” [Muslim, 1/411] And this is the least punishment in hell – you can imagine how bad the worse would be.

### *Gates of Hell*

Hell has seven gates; Paradise has eight gates.

Allah says: “And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups, till, when they reach it, the gates thereof will be opened. And its keepers will say, ‘Did not the Messengers come to you from yourselves, reciting to you the Verses of your Lord, and warning you of the Meeting of this Day of yours?’ They will say: ‘Yes, but the Word of torment has been justified against the disbelievers!’” (39:71)

### *Fuel of Hell*

The fuel of hell is the people of hell and stones. “[...] fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.” (2:24)

### *Heat of Hell*

Allah subhaana wa ta’aala says: “And those on the Left Hand Who will be those on the Left Hand? In fierce hot wind and boiling water, And shadow of black smoke, (That shadow) neither cool, nor (even) good.” (56:41-44) Water, breeze and shade are three ways to cool ourselves from heat. The people of hell have these three options. Hameem is air that is very dry and scorching hot; that is the breeze they will get. Instead of a cooling wind, it’s a burning wind. Riyaah as-samoom is a wind that comes in Arabia from the north, and it crosses the desert and loses all of the humidity. Allah says the people of hell will have the same kind of wind – dry, scorching wind. Hameem is boiling water. Shade will be in dark clouds of black smoke; it will choke them from the dryness and the smell.

Allah says: “And what will make you know exactly what Hell-fire is? It spares not (any sinner), nor does it leave (anything unburnt)! Burning the skins!” (74:27-29)

Abu Huraira reported Allah’s Apostle sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam as saying: “The fire which sons of Adam burn is only one-seventieth part of the Fire of Hell.” His Companions said: “By Allah, even ordinary fire would have been enough (to burn people).” Thereupon he said: “It is sixty-nine parts in excess of (the heat of) fire in this world each of them being equivalent to their heat.” [Muslim, 40/6811]

The worst news that the people of hell fire will hear is mentioned in the Qur’an. Allah says: “So taste you (the results of your evil actions); no increase shall We give you, except in torment.”

(78:30) The people of hell will complain about their punishment and the answer will be that every day the punishment will become more severe. So they are not getting accustomed to it; their situation is not improving. Imagine this happening for eternity. I think that this ayah is sufficient for us to fear the risk of the consequences of hell.

### *We know that Hell Fire Sees, Hears and Breathes*

Allah says: “When it (Hell) sees them from a far place, they will hear its raging and its roaring [in other translations: raging sigh].” (25:12)

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam says that on the Day of Judgment a column of fire will come out from hell. It has two eyes that see, two ears that hear and a tongue that can speak. And it will say, “I am here to capture anyone who is a stubborn tyrant, and the ones who associate other gods with Allah and the ones who make statues to be worshipped.”

### *It is Eternal*

Hell is eternal. It will exist forever. At-Tahaawi says, in his book of aqeedah, that hell fire and jannah will exist for eternity. Ibn Hazm says that this is the consensus of the scholars of this ummah.

### *Size of the People*

The sizes of the people will be larger in paradise and hell. They will be greatly exaggerated. In a hadith in at-Tirmidhi, Abu Hurayrah narrates that RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam says that the thickness of the skin of the people of hell fire is 42 diraa’ (which is almost one meter – about three feet. This is an estimate). That’s about 126 feet! You might wonder why specifically the skin is mentioned. The skin is the centre of the nerves and that’s where the pain is felt. Then RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said that one tooth will be like the mountain of Uhud – which is huge. The area occupied by them when they sit down is the distance between Makkah and Madinah.

Why is the size expanded? So there would be more surface for punishment. The people of Jannah will not be the same size, but they will be larger.

### *Food and Drink of Hell*

Allah says: “No food will there be for them but a bitter Dhari’. Which will neither nourish nor satisfy hunger.” (88:6-7) We do not know what exactly dhari’ is, but it doesn’t give nourishment or satisfy hunger.

The main dish for the people of hell are the fruits of a tree in hell. Allah says: “Lo! the tree of Zaqqum will be the food of the sinners, Like molten brass; it will boil in their insides. Like the boiling of scalding water.” (44:43-46)

Allah says: “Is that (Paradise) better entertainment or the tree of Zaqqum (a horrible tree in Hell)? Truly We have made it (as) a trail for the Zalimun (polytheists, disbelievers, wrong-doers, etc.). Verily, it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-fire, the shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of Shayatin (devils). Truly, they will eat thereof and fill their bellies therewith.

Then on the top of that they will be given boiling water to drink so that it becomes a mixture (of boiling water and Zaqquum in their bellies).” (37:62-67)

The tree comes out from the bottom of hell – it gets its nourishment from the worst part of hell. The more that they eat from these fruits, the hungrier they will feel and the thirstier they will become. They will go to drink and they will drink boiling water.

Allah says: “Then will you truly – O you that go wrong, and treat (Truth) as Falsehood! – You will surely taste of the Tree of Zaqquum. Then will ye fill your insides therewith. And drink Boiling Water on top of it: Indeed ye shall drink like diseased camels raging with thirst!” (56:51-55) Sometimes camels are inflicted with a disease that causes them to drink and drink until they kill themselves. They feel thirst, but they never quench their thirst even though they keep drinking.

Allah says: “Here is a boiling and an ice-cold draught, so let them taste it, And other (torment) of the kind in pairs (the two extremes)!” (38:57-58) This ayah talks about hameem wa ghassaaq. Hameem is boiling water. Ghassaaq has been translated here as ice-cold water, but AlQurtubi says that ghassaaq and ghisleen (another word used in the Qur’an) both mean the juices of the flesh of the people of hell fire. [See Muhsin Khan’s translation of these ayaat.] Fire burns their flesh. The grease and the sweat will come out of the bodies and this will be drink for the people of hell. Whenever you cook meat on top of fire, you’ll notice that the grease falls out. That is ghassaaq and ghisleen.

Allah also says: “[...] And if they ask for help (relief, water, etc.) they will be granted water like boiling oil, that will scald their faces. Terrible the drink, and an evil Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting place, etc.)!” (18:29)

The first two drinks of hell that we mentioned were hameem and ghassaaq or ghisleen. The third is as-sadeed, which is the puss that comes out from injuries.

RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam says, “Every intoxicant is forbidden. Verily Allah the Exalted and Majestic, made a covenant to those who drank intoxicants to make their drink Tinat al-Khabal.” They said: “Allah’s Messenger, what is Tinat al-Khabal?” He said: “It is the sweat of the denizens of Hell or the discharge of the denizens of Hell.” [Muslim, 23/4962]

Al-Muhl is boiling oil. RasulAllah sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam says they would bring this drink forth, and as soon as it comes close to their faces, the flesh of their faces would melt and fall down. Nevertheless, they would drink it. That tells you how much pain and suffering of thirst they are feeling. They would bring this boiling oil that causes the flesh of their faces to melt. This hadith is in at-Tirmidhi.

### *Clothes of the People of Hell*

Allah says: “These two opponents (believers and disbelievers) dispute with each other about their Lord; then as for those who disbelieve, garments of fire will be cut out for them, boiling water will be poured down over their heads.” (22:19)

Allah also says: “And you will see the criminals that Day bound together in shackles, their garments of liquid pitch and their faces covered by the Fire.” (14:49-50)

### *Punishment of Hell*

Allah will ask the person with the least punishment of hell, suppose you had as much as gold to fill the earth. Would you offer it to ransom yourself? He will say, yes. Allah will tell him, I asked you for something less than that. You were asked for less than that – to join none in worship with Allah, but you refused. Many people in the world are willing to give up their religion for a few dollars, never mind a whole earth full of gold! This hadith is in Bukhaari.

Nu'man narrated: I heard the Prophet saying, "The person who will have the least punishment from amongst the Hell Fire people on the Day of Resurrection, will be a man under whose arch of the feet a smoldering ember will be placed so that his brain will boil because of it." [Bukhaari, 8/76/566]

Also, as we previously mentioned, there is the punishment of Abu Taalib, in which the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said that the fire would reach Abu Taalib's ankles, but it would cause his brains to boil.

The most punishment of hell will be for the hypocrites. "Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths (grade) of the Fire; no helper will you find for them." (4:145)

### *Roasting of the Skins*

Another punishment is the roasting of the skins. "Surely! Those who disbelieved in Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) We shall burn them in Fire. As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for other skins that they may taste the punishment. Truly, Allah is Ever Most Powerful, All Wise." (4:56) There is a scientific miracle in this ayah. We know that the concentrations of nerves that feel the pain of heat are in the skin. The muscle and fat tissue have less nerves. That is why you feel a needle going through your skin, but it going through the muscle doesn't cause as much pain. Therefore, as soon as the skin is roasted, then Allah will give them new skin. We talked about how thick this skin is.

### *The Melting*

There is another punishment, which is called The Melting. Allah says: "These two opponents (believers and disbelievers) dispute with each other about their Lord; then as for those who disbelieve, garments of fire will be cut out for them, boiling water will be poured down over their heads. With it will melt or vanish away what is within their bellies, as well as (their) skins." (22:19-20) The boiling water will wash out the guts and everything will come outside. We seek refuge from Allah from this.

There is the punishment of the face. The face is the most honoured part. That is why RasulAllah said not to hit the face. It is also sensitive. Allah says: "The Fire will burn their faces, and therein they will grin, with displaced lips (disfigured)." (23:104) The fire of hell will disfigure their faces.

### *Dragging and Darkening of the Faces*

There is also the sahr – the dragging. Allah says: “The Day they will be dragged in the Fire on their faces (it will be said to them): ‘Taste you the touch of Hell!’” (54:48) So they will be dragged by their feet on their faces.

Then there is the punishment of the darkening of the faces. This is a humiliation for them. Allah says: “And those who have earned evil deeds, the recompense of an evil deed is the like thereof, and humiliating disgrace will cover them (their faces). No defender will they have from Allah. Their faces will be covered, as it were, with pieces from the darkness of night. They are dwellers of the Fire, they will abide therein forever.” (10:27) Look at the justice of Allah – those who have earned evil deeds – He only holds accountable for the actions.

### *Surrounded by Fire*

The punishment is for eternity and it is surrounding them from every side. Allah says: “...And verily! Hell, of a surety, will encompass the disbelievers” (29:54) Why are they surrounded by fire from every side (and not just one place)? Allah says: “Yes! Whosoever earns evil and his sin has surrounded him, they are dwellers of the Fire (i.e. Hell); they will dwell therein forever.” (2:81) Because they surrounded themselves with sin, they are surrounded by the fire. [SubhaanAllah, you will always notice this in the justice of Allah – the recompense for the evil is similar and in accordance with that deed.]

The fire would get into their hearts. Allahu ‘Alam if this is psychological pain or physical. Allah says: “By no means! He will be sure to be thrown into That which Breaks to Pieces, And what will explain to thee That which Breaks to Pieces? (It is) the Fire of (the Wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze), that which doth mount (Right) to the Hearts.” (104:4-7)

### *Dragging of the Intestines*

Then there is the dragging of the intestines, which is for the ones who used to enjoin good and forbid evil, but not follow it themselves. The Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “A man will be brought and put in Hell (Fire) and he will circumambulate (go around and round) in Hell (Fire) like a donkey of a (flour) grinding mill, and all the people of Hell (Fire) will gather around him and will say to him, ‘O so-and-so! Didn’t you use to order others for good and forbid them from evil?’ That man will say, ‘I used to order others to do good but I myself never used to do it, and I used to forbid others from evil while I myself used to do evil.’” [Bukhaari, 9/88/218]

These people will also be chained (the ones who had double standards). Allah says: “When iron collars will be rounded over their necks, and the chains, they shall be dragged along.” (40:71)

### *Regret*

The people of hell will try to escape, and there will be angels with iron hammers to chain and pull them down. “And for them are hooked rods of iron (to punish them). Every time they seek to get away there from, from anguish, they will be driven back therein, and (it will be) said to them: ‘Taste the torment of burning!’” (22:21-22)

This will result in the pain and regret of the people of Hell. Allah says: “[...] they would feel in their hearts regret when they see the torment, and they will be judged with justice, and no wrong will be done unto them.” (10:54) They would suppress their regret that day because who can they



complain to? Nobody will help them. They neglected the call of the prophets of Allah, so the prophets of Allah will neglect them on the Day of Judgment. They ignored Allah's commands in this world, so Allah will ignore them. Allah says: "And it will be said: 'This Day We will forget you as you forgot the Meeting of this Day of yours. And your abode is the Fire, and there is none to help you.'" (45:34)

Allah says: "And when they are cast, bound together into a constricted place therein, they will plead for destruction there and then! This day plead not for a single destruction: plead for destruction oft-repeated!" (25:13-14)

Allah says: "Therein will they cry aloud (for assistance): 'Our Lord! Bring us out: we shall work righteousness, not the (deeds) we used to do!'- 'Did We not give you long enough life so that he that would should receive admonition? And (moreover) the Warner came to you. So taste you (the fruits of your deeds): for the wrong-doers there is no helper.'" (35:37)

Allah says: "They will say: 'Our Lord! Our misfortune overwhelmed us, and we became a people astray! Our Lord! bring us out of this: if ever we return (to Evil), then shall we be wrong-doers indeed!'" (23:106-107) And there are many similar ayaat.

### *Follow your Idols!*

What will happen to their gods that they associated besides Allah? Allah says: "Certainly! You (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell! (Surely), you will enter it. Had these (idols, etc.) been aliha (gods), they would not have entered there (Hell), and all of them will abide therein." (21:98-99) You didn't worship Allah, so don't expect any reward from Allah. Expect the reward from those idols you worshipped. The idols will be thrown into hell, so the people will follow the idols into hell.

What about 'Eesa? 'Eesa (Jesus) was worshipped. He did not ask to be worshipped. He will be in one of the highest ranks of heaven.

Shirk (associating others with One God) is the only sin that is not forgiven.

*[1] I read in Tafsir ibn Kathir, Volume 9, pg. 215, Tafsir of Surah Qaaf, that mufassal refers to the short surahs. wAllahu 'Alam if that's what this is referring to.*