

WHAT THE HELL !!

By

Maulana Khalid Dhorat

Hellfire is indeed something no one wants to experience even in a nightmare. No one can be completely fearless of it unless he safely crosses over it.

The Qur'an and Sunnah are full of the blood-curdling and terrible descriptions of hellfire - their purpose is not to scare us or make us despondent, but to make us aware of them. The more we know about the fire, the more we will prepare to distance ourselves from it. These hair-raising descriptions are not meant for us to say: "Look how cruel our Almighty is. He is scaring His own servants!!" No, the reason for their presence is for people to connect evil deeds with their punishment. If a murderer knows he will be hanged, he will not commit murder. Likewise, if people know the consequence of their evil, they will not commit any evil.

I discussed paradise in my previous article, but there is a need to also discuss its opposite. There are those stubborn people who do not respond to rewards, only to threats. For such people, the following saying applies: "If the carrot doesn't work, use the stick!" The fear of the Almighty, unlike the fear of worldly people, brings us closer to Him, whilst fear for worldly people drives us away from them. So, speaking about hellfire is actually a mercy. It is not depressing, it is refreshing. Let us taste the acid of these words in this world before actually experiencing it in the next.

Why is hellfire mentioned in the Qur'an?

In the Qur'an, the description of paradise is usually followed by the threats of hellfire. None have been spared from these threats: even the sinless Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Al-Isra:39) and the illuminated angels (Al-Anbiya:29) were warned about the fire for the sin of associating partners with Him. Sayyadina 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, a Sahabi who was already promised paradise in this world, once remarked that he had so much fear of hellfire that if he were placed between paradise and hell in order to await his final judgement, he would prefer to be turned to ashes before receiving it. Sayyadina 'Umar was once patrolling the streets of Madinah when he passed by a person reciting the following words of the Qur'an in his tent: "Verily the punishment of your Lord is sure to happen. There is none to stop it." (at-Tur:8) These words had such a profound effect on him that he immediately developed a high fever, and he had to go home. This fever lasted for a full month, and people would come in crowds to visit him, not knowing that the reason for his fever was actually fear.

A mother will threaten her child with a spanking even before he is naughty; likewise our Almighty threatens His servants with hellfire even before we can taste it. This is a sign of mercy, not cruelty. As a mother will scold her child: "Ismail, if you curse your brother, I will put chillies in your mouth," likewise our Merciful Lord tells us: "O my servant, if you sleep before performing

your Isha prayers, your head will be repeatedly crushed with a huge rock and your minced brains will be splattered all over hell. So don't do it. If you disobey your parents, your one tooth will be made as big as Mount Uhud and the fire will reach even beneath your teeth, so don't do it. If you have pride, you will be transformed into an ant in hellfire, to be trampled upon by everyone. You will then be thrown in to a river of fire called "Bolis" in which you will be fed with the blood and pus of all the other inhabitants. So don't have pride. If you do not practice what you preach, your stomach will be sliced open and your intestines will be spilled about. You will then be made to endlessly parade around your own intestines, further grinding it and crushing it. So practice what you preach. If you did not pay your zakaat, an extremely poisonous bald snake will coil itself around you, repeatedly biting you. Be careful. Those who fornicated will be dumped in a narrow oven and the fire will rise and drop them, just like water. Such a stench will emanate from their private parts that all the other inhabitants of hellfire will complain of them. So, be chaste." Thus, there is no need to jump under the blanket whenever you hear the word "jahannum." Just take note and reform yourself!!

Then there are those foolish people who think that they will enjoy a life of sin and pleasure in this world, and then just have a dip in hellfire for a few days to be cleansed by a conveniently "Merciful Almighty". Such people are not only gambling with the quality of "Al-Qahhar" and "Al-Jabbar" (The All-Powerful, the Almighty) of their Lord, but should ponder this fact: the lowest form of punishment in hellfire will be for a person who will be made to wear shoes of steel. The laces only of these shoes will be so hot that it will cause his brains to boil, just like a boiling kettle. Indeed, the fire of hellfire is 70 times more intense than the fire of this world. Practice placing your hand on a hot stove for only ten seconds. If you can manage that, place your foot in the oil fryer at your local KFC outlet; if you feel you can also manage that, try diving into a volcano the next time it erupts in Hawaii. If you can't play with fire in this world, how dare you think you can play with it in the next world?

The Description of Hellfire

On the day of Judgment, everyone will be made to cross the bridge over hellfire. Those unfortunate enough to fall therein, either due to lack of spiritual light or having being nicked by a fork-like tongue of fire, will find themselves in such ghastly surroundings that will make him forget all his years of pleasures in this world in an instant. Everyone will be shackled by the neck, and will be made to wear a coat of fire and molten lead that will cover their face. Does anyone wear a fur jacket in the heat of summer? As the fire will start eating away at their skin, then their organs, until it reaches their heart, they will, in unbearable pain, wish for death. But in response it will be said to them: "Don't ask for death once, ask for it many times." (Al-Furqan: 14)

In this world, even prisoners are fed at a table with edible food, but in the murky dungeons of the Almighty, the food is stuffed down your throat in any position you are found in. Meals are meant to humiliate you, not nourish you. These hellish foods are thorny branches (daree' and zaqqum) and suffocating matter (dha ghussah). When these will choke one to the point of death, he will ask for water in order to push down his food. Instead of refreshing Tropika or Sparberry, boiling water (hameem) will be brought to him in a mug of steel. The steam of this water alone will disfigure one's entire face, causing one's lips and jaws to stretch until their

naval. When the food will eventually reach his stomach, it will tear up his stomach and intestines. Still dying of hunger, they will see a river of putrid blood and pus which would've gathered from the flesh of the other inmates, and they will scamper to drink this before the fire evaporates this too.

Science has proven that nerve ends are only to be found in our skin, and so in hellfire, a disbeliever's skin will be considerably thickened – a journey of three days according to a narration in Sahih Muslim. His thigh will be as huge as a mountain and he will be dragging his 100-meter tongue behind him, just to maximise the pain. Whenever his skin and body will be completely burnt out, another will be given to him just before death. This process will continue till eternity, 70 000 times a day. To add salt to the wound, everyone will be punished in full view of each other. This depressing sight, together with their desperate screams that will resemble the barking of dogs, as well as the obnoxious odour of body liquids from their charred bodies, will only add to their misery.

When continuous screaming will cause their throats to collapse, they will resort to crying in order to attract attention. They will cry until their tears will dry up. They will continue crying until blood will flow freely from their eyes, until their blood too, will dry up. By this time, their tears would've engraved pathways on their cheeks. However, hellfire itself, in response will increase its clamour to drown out their voices. No permission will be granted to them to address their Lord. They will then try to have patience, then they will try to plead with Angel Malik, the keeper of hellfire, to give them a second chance in the world so that they can work good deeds. When this too will not work, they will heave with heavy sighs of regret at the conclusion that no matter what they do, there is just no escape. (Ibrahim: 21)

After a while, the people of hellfire will learn of a more “comfortable” place in hellfire called “zamhareer.” They will run towards it, but it will be so cold that the coldness will cause their flesh to fall off. The freezing temperature will crack their bones with loud noises. Unable to bear this, they will opt for the fire instead. En-route, they will then try to break out of their cells, but there will be 70 000 guards at each of the seven doors of hellfire. The task of these angels is to fan the flames with fans of poisonous fire in the shape of scorpions and other fearsome elements. Some of these guards will also be armed with clubs of steel, and they will smite those who attempt to escape with such force that they will tumble downwards for 70 years. There are seven doors of hellfire – jahannum, hutamah, laza, sa'eer, saqar, hawiyah and jaheem - and the distance between each is 1000 years journey. The people of hellfire will try to escape from each door, but they will always fail.

Save yourself

In this terrible cycle of desperation, will the people of hell spend their time. The hypocrites will be right at the bottom, whilst those believers who will be saved will be in the first level. May we all be spared from such a fate. Lastly, the punishment of hell is not actually a punishment, it is pure justice. It is severe because of the greatness against Whom the sin is committed. According to Hasan al-Basri, the least amount of time a believer who even recited once “There is no God but Allah” with sincerity, and who will eventually be saved from it, is 1 000 years - a day in the hereafter being 50 000 years of our worldly time. By that time, he will resemble a

piece of ragged coal.

The descriptions of hellfire are meant to soften a person. If it does not produce this effect, you have a heart of stone. Melt it with the tears of repentance and the coolness of charity before it's too late.