

RESURRECTION

المعاد

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that we will be brought back to life, body and soul, on the Resurrection Day
- Understand that the Hereafter has a number of stages, and know some of these stages
- Understand that we will see the reality of actions in the Hereafter
- Discuss the differences between this world and the Hereafter
- Understand that this world can mislead us into forgetting about the Hereafter but can be used to get eternal happiness
- Be reminded that both our body and soul will be resurrected and will live in Hell or Heaven
- We will see our actions in the Hereafter, as they will make our Heaven or our Hell
- Discuss the fact that Hell and Heaven have levels
- Learn some examples of people who are promised Hell and people who are promised Heaven
- Discuss fear and hope as two motivators in our life
- Discuss the balance between fear and hope

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 3

LESSON 1: THE RESURRECTION

As you know, we have been discussing the last fundamental of our faith in the previous lessons: The Resurrection (al-ma'ād). So far, we have discussed the stage of death as well as the stage of Barzakh, and now we come to the resurrection itself.

THE RESURRECTION

Resurrection means bringing back to life, and in this lesson we will discuss how after our death and after we pass through the world of Barzakh, our body will be brought back to life and joined together with the soul again. This happens in the world of the Hereafter (al-ākhirah). Before this happens, all creatures will die, even the angel of death himself. The only Being to remain alive and who never dies is Allah, the Eternal (SWT).

When we are brought back to life in the Hereafter, our soul will be joined again to exactly the same body that it had in this world. We will then go through various stages in the Hereafter where we are judged by Allah (SWT), and given the just rewards of our actions. After we go through these stages, we enter either Hell or Heaven, depending on our actions.

One of the important things to remember is that even though we all die at different times, we are all brought back to life together in the Hereafter. Everyone is raised from their graves at the same time, and people are judged not only individually, but also as communities and groups.

We know from the Holy Qur'ān and the words of our prophets and Imams (as) that the day of resurrection is a frightening day with many horrors, to such an extent that the Qur'ān says:

“Surely they see (that day) as being far, but We see it as near, on the day when the skies will be like molten copper and the mountains will be like tufts of wool, and friends shall not ask about each other, even though they will see each other. The guilty person would sacrifice his children to be saved from the punishment of that day, and he would even sacrifice his wife and his brother and his nearest relatives who used to shelter him, and everyone on earth, wishing that they might save him...” (70:6-14)

The Holy Qur’ān also says:

“Therefore leave them alone to go on with their lies and their games until they meet that day which they are promised. On that day, they will come out from their graves hurrying, as if they are rushing towards a target, their eyes will be cast down, they will be completely humiliated, this is the day that they were promised” (70:42-44)

STAGES IN THE HEREAFTER

THE BOOK OF ACTIONS

As we mentioned, after we are raised from our graves, we will pass through a number of stations of judgment. One of these stations is the station of the Book of Actions. Each person will be given their book of action, which will contain every detail of their actions. No action is forgotten and no action is ignored. Every deed, small or large will be recorded in this book. The believers will be given their books in their right hand, whilst the disbelievers are given their book in their left hand or behind their backs. Let us look at how the Holy Qur’an describes the reactions of people when they receive their book of actions:

“On that day, you shall be exposed, none of your secrets will remain hidden. At that time, those who are given their book in their right hand will say: ‘here, read my book, I knew that I will come to this day where I would have to account for my actions’. This person will live a life of pleasure... As for the people who are given their book in their left hand, they will say: ‘I wish my book was never given to me, and I did not know what my account was. I wish this was my end. My wealth has not helped me, my power has gone from me’. Take him, and put a chain on him, then throw him into the burning fire...” (69:18-31)

Remember that no action of ours will be ignored by the angels who record our actions, even though we might forget about some of these actions. Once, an elderly religious man passed away. After his funeral, his

daughter, who was not very religious, had a dream about him. In the dream she asked him how he was. He said: ‘I am fine, but every Friday morning they come to me and put a burning hot iron on my tongue’. His daughter was horrified by this and said: ‘but father, you were a good man’. He said: ‘yes, but when I was young, I would go out on Friday mornings with my friends and pick fruit from people’s gardens without asking their permission, and then I would eat this fruit. So now, every Friday morning I am punished for that action’. Even though the elderly man had forgotten about his actions when he was young, the angels who recorded his actions had kept the record of that action in his book of deeds, and he was being punished for that action.

AL-SIRAAT: THE PATH

Al-*Ṣirāṭ* literally means the path. This is another stage in the Hereafter and is another reflection of our actions. It is a path that passes over the fire of Hell. The people who believed and stayed on the right path in this life will be able to pass over this path. Some will cross as quickly as lightning because in this world they always stayed on the right path, while others will stumble, fall and get up again, because this is how they were in this world. The disbelievers will fall from Al-*Ṣirāṭ* and plunge into the fire of Hell.ⁱ

THE ACCOUNTING

Another of the stages of the Hereafter is the stage of accounting (al-*Ḥisāb*). Every person will have to stand before Allah (SWT) to answer questions about all of his action.

Here, it is important to note that God does not have a body. As we learnt in previous units, God is not material like us. So we won’t see Allah in a physical sense of seeing.

At this stage of the Judgement Day, no action is ignored and no action is forgotten. Allah (SWT) reminds us that this day is coming very soon, and that we should not ignore it. The best way to prepare for it, as we have learnt, is to take account of our actions now so that our accounting will be easier in the Hereafter.

“The time of accounting has come near to men, but they are heedless of it and turn away” (21:1)

When we are being questioned by Allah (SWT), we cannot deny or lie about our actions as we do in this world. This is firstly because Allah (SWT) has seen them and has full knowledge about them, and secondly because our own organs will testify against us. If we sinned with our tongue, our tongue will testify to all the sins we performed with it. If we sinned with our hands or our ears, they will also testify against us. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (SWT) says:

“On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did.” (24:24)

The Holy Qur'ān also says:

“And they shall say to their skins: Why have you testified against us? They will say: Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak” (41:21)

Review Questions

Q1. On the Day of Resurrection, our soul:

- Will be brought back to life but our body will not
- Will be brought back to life and joined to a different body
- Will be brought back to life and joined to the same body we had in this world

Q2. The Book of Actions in the Hereafter:

- Has a record of all of our deeds, large or small
- Has a record of only our major deeds
- Has a record of only the things we did in public

Q3. Al- Al-ŞIRĀṬ means:

- Heaven
- Hell
- The Path that people must cross on the Judgment Day

LESSON 2: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

As we learnt in our last lesson, the world of the Hereafter is very different to the world in which we live now. When we compare this world to the Hereafter, we see two major differences:

- In the Hereafter we see the reality of everything. In this world, we often don't see things the way they really are. For example, a boy might think that real happiness is in being popular. However, when that boy becomes popular he realises that he is still not happy and there is something else out there that he is missing. So he goes in search of the next thing that he thinks will make him happy, but again he finds that this is not what he really wanted. This is why the Holy Qur'an says that this world is like a mirage that a thirsty person thinks is real and will satisfy him but never actually does. The Hereafter, though, is the world of realities, where things appear in their real form. If a person works for a pleasure in the Hereafter, he will receive exactly what he hoped for (and more) and he will be truly happy and pleased with it.

The Hereafter is the world of truth, where no one can lie or make false excuses or escape punishment, whereas in this world people use all sorts of tricks to try to justify things to themselves and escape justice. No one can lie in that world because their body parts, their very actions, the places they were at etc...are all witnesses against them. More than that, the Judge Himself, Allah (SWT), is also the witness of our actions, and so there is no way we can get away from our deserved punishment.

- In the Hereafter, things last forever, whereas in this world things last only a short time. If a person enters Heaven, they will be there forever, and if they enter Hell, they may also be there forever. The pleasure of Heaven lasts forever, while the pain of Hell lasts forever. However, in this world, both pain and pleasure last a short period of time only, especially in comparison to forever.

RESISTING THE TEMPTATIONS OF THIS WORLD

Allah (SWT) asks us to think about those differences and to give up the short-lasting fake pleasures of this world for the real, ever-lasting pleasures of the next world, and to go through the short-lasting pains of this world to save ourselves from the ever-lasting pain of the next world.

However, the world around us is so tempting sometimes that we ignore this fact and we start chasing after the world. How comfortable we are, how much fun we have, how rich or famous we are become more important than preparing ourselves for the Hereafter.

Abu Dhar al-Ghifāri was one of the companions of the Prophet (saw). He was a very pious man. One day someone asked him: 'Abu Dhar, why do we hate death?' He replied: 'you hate death because anyone would hate moving from a mansion to a wreck. You have built up this world of yours until it is like a mansion, but you have ignored your Hereafter so much so that it is a wreck'. Abu Dhar is advising us to make sure we do not get carried away with this world and ignore the Hereafter because in that case, when we die it will be as if we are going to live in a wreck and that is something none of us want.

The other important thing we need to remember about this world is that it draws us in very cleverly or cunningly. The more we get into it, the more it sucks us in. There was a man who lived at the time of Prophet Muḥammad (saw) who would always be at the mosque and pray in congregation with the Prophet (saw). He was a poor man who could not find a job. His poverty made him very sad and he would always ask the Prophet (saw) to pray for him so that he would no longer be poor. The Prophet (saw) would ask him if he was sure this was what he wanted, and he would say that yes, he was sure he wanted to no longer be poor. So the Prophet (saw) prayed for this man and a little while later this man managed to start up a business in raising sheep and selling them. He started with one sheep. Then the one sheep became two and so on. Little by little, this man's visits to the mosque became less and less. The Prophet (saw) would ask what was happening, and he would say that he was busy with his business. After a while, his business grew so large that he stopped visiting the mosque completely and would never see the Prophet (saw) anymore. This man, who used to be poor, was now wealthy and had more than enough to look after himself and his family, but he could not make time for the mosque or for his religion anymore, because the world had drawn him in and was not letting him go. The more wealth he got, the more he wanted. The bigger his business got, the bigger he wanted to make it and so he could never stop working for this world. Eventually, the Prophet (saw) sent some people to collect Zakāt- wajib charity- from this man. When they reached his farm and

asked him for the Zakāt he refused to even pay it!. This upset the Prophet (saw) very much. This man, who used to be at the mosque all the time, had now been completely sucked in by this world, and he could no longer save himself.

This is why Imam al Kāḍimī (as) tells us:

"This world is like seawater. The more a thirsty person drinks from it, the thirstier he gets, until it eventually kills him".ⁱⁱ

Now that we know all this, there is something very important that we need to remember. This world and all the good and pleasurable and fun things in it are not evil. They can be good or evil depending on the way we use them. This world is a fantastic thing if we use it to get rewards and prepare for Heaven, but is a terrible thing if we use it for evil purposes and prepare for a life in Hell. The important thing to remember is to not get attached to this world, so that we never forget that the point of being here is to get ready for the Hereafter.

Practical Activity

To practice breaking our attachment to this world, and to see what we mean by loving this world, we will perform an activity. Next week, bring something that you own and to which you are very attached. We will each bring something and then we will leave it for one week at a safe place in the centre. Let's see how we go without it for one week. Why are we so attached to such things? Will this affect our life in the Hereafter?

Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following is true?

- The pleasure of this world and the Hereafter both last forever
- The pleasure of this world lasts a short time, while the pleasure of the Hereafter lasts forever
- The pleasure of this world lasts longer than the pleasure of the Hereafter

Q2. In this world:

- We get everything that we want and end up happy
- We often get what we chase but find it does not make us happy
- We never get what we want

LESSON 3: HEAVEN AND HELL

In this lesson, we will discuss Hell and Heaven, the two final destinations in our Journey to the Unseen World. We will also discuss fear of Allah and hope in Allah, the two characteristics that Allah (SWT) has given us to help us avoid His punishment and to gain His rewards and blessings.

HEAVEN AND HELL

We have all learnt in previous years that our final destination in the journey of life is either Heaven or Hell. After we are brought back to life from the grave, both our body and soul will be brought together again. The soul returns to exactly the same body, and then it goes through the stages of the Hereafter (that we talked about in our last lesson) until it reaches either Hell or Heaven. Therefore, in Hell and Heaven, it is both our soul and body that either suffer together or live comfortably and happily together.

Let us see what more we can learn about Heaven and Hell.

HELL AND HEAVEN ARE THE DIRECT RESULT OF OUR ACTIONS

The actions that we perform in this world have direct results in another world. Do you remember when we were learning about dhikr (remembrance of Allah SWT)? In that lesson, we mentioned the following story:

When the Prophet (saw) was raised to Heaven, he saw a group of angels laying gold and silver bricks for castles in Heaven. Every now and then, they would stop. He asked them why they stopped. They said that their supplies ran out. When the Prophet (saw) asked what their supplies were, they said: 'when a person on earth says 'subhāna Allah, wal Ḥamdu lillāhi wa lā ilāha illa Allāh wa Allāhu Akbar' we receive our supplies from him'. We can also build trees for ourselves in Heaven by saying dhikr.ⁱⁱⁱ At the same time, it is important to remember that we can destroy these buildings and trees through our sins. If we do not control our anger or jealousy, for example, a fire burns these heavenly trees.

We can see from this story that it is almost as if our actions have a photocopy in the world of the Hereafter. Whatever we do here has a reality that is created over

there. Our good actions build good things for us in Heaven, but our evil actions build places and forms of torture for us in Hell. Look at this example: we know from the narrations that backbiting is the food for the dogs of Hell^{iv}. Therefore, when we backbite, we are in fact providing energy for those dogs to attack us and terrify us. Here are some other examples:

- deceiving people brings to life flames of the Hell-fire
- not paying charity is a snake that hangs around the neck of the person eating his flesh^v

We can see from all these examples that our actions are in fact creating comforts and blessings for us in Heaven, or terrors and tortures for us in Hell.

HELL AND HEAVEN HAVE LEVELS

Both Hell and Heaven have a great number of levels. Some narrations tell us that the levels of Heaven are equal to the number of the ayaat of the Qur'an^{vi}. The levels of Heaven and Hell are also a result of our actions. Let us look at the following story to get an idea of the levels of Heaven:

A great scholar of recent times had a very religious, loyal and helpful wife. After both he and his wife passed away, one of their children had a dream about them. In the dream, the child saw the mother and asked how she was. She said: 'I am in Heaven and I am happy'. The child asked: 'where is our father? Do you see much of him?' The scholar's wife said: 'O no, your father is on a much higher level of Heaven than me, I only get to see him some of the time'.

We can see from this story that although two people are both good and both enter Heaven, they will be in different levels of Heaven according to their actions. Let's look at another example:

One day, the Prophet (saw) told his companions that a person who 'loses his 'Aṣr prayer' will be 'mawtūr'. They asked what he meant by this, and he said: 'the person who delays his 'Aṣr prayer until it is so late that the sun is about to set will be alone in Heaven without his family, and will have no wealth in Heaven either'.^{vii}

This story shows that the better we perform our obligations, the higher the level of Heaven we gain, and the more comfortable we will be there.

Remember that in all levels of heaven, even the lowest, the person would be living in eternal bliss, and would get all of their desires and whatever they wish for.

We will learn more about Heaven and Hell in our next lesson.

Review Questions

Q1. The reality of refusing to pay charity is:

- Being poor in Hell
- Being thirsty in Hell
- A snake that hangs around the neck, eating the flesh of the person in Hell

Q2. Heaven and Hell

- Have very little to do with our actions
- Are a reward or punishment for our actions in this world
- Are the direct reflection of our actions in this world

Q3. Heaven:

- Has only one level
- Has only seven levels
- Has a large number of levels, perhaps to the number of the *ayāt* of the Qur'ān

Let us look at one example of a person who is promised Heaven by Allah (SWT) Himself in the Holy Qur'ān. A long time ago, in a city called Antakia, Allah (SWT) sent prophets to guide people to worship Allah (SWT) rather than the idols they were worshipping. These people did not listen to their prophets and in fact, after a while, planned to kill them. They all gathered in the town square to attack the prophets. At this time, a man who lived on the outskirts of the city- called *Ḥabīb al-Najjar*- rushed to the centre of Antakia to stop his people from doing this horrible deed. He told them: '*why do you not follow these prophets who want nothing from you, and why do you worship idols who do not benefit or harm you, when Allah (SWT) is the one who created you?*' They became very angry with his words, and according to the narrations, they either trampled him to death or stoned him to death. As they were murdering him the only thing he was saying was this: '*O Allah, guide my people*'. Some narrations say that by distracting his people like this, he allowed the prophets to escape while others say that the people of Antakia also killed their prophets. Once this man died from the attack of these people, Allah (SWT) says the following to him:

"it was said to him: 'enter Heaven'. (The man said): 'I wish my people knew how my Lord had forgiven me and made me one of the honourable'"^{viii}(36: 26-27)

This man received a direct entry into Heaven because:

- he believed in Allah (SWT) and the message His prophets brought
- he performed a good action by defending the prophets and trying to guide his people

In contrast to this amazing man, his people met the opposite fate. Due to their terrible actions, Allah (SWT) destroyed them with a severe punishment. People enter Hell because of their disbelief and arrogance against the truth. These people ignored the truth no matter how obvious it was and never truly believed in Allah (SWT). They also performed evil actions like killing prophets.^{ix}

We have to remember that whatever our background is, even if we are learned about Islam, or we come from a religious family, at the end, Allah will judge us on our own actions and our faith. If we have been doing bad things and defying Allah's commands we will be punished and if we have been obedient to Allah and doing good things we will be rewarded accordingly.

LESSON 4: LEARNING MORE ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL

THE PEOPLE OF HEAVEN

In the Qur'ān, Allah (SWT) says that there are two main criteria that allow a person to enter Heaven. These two things are always mentioned together in the Qur'ān and are never separated. Without these two things, no one can enter Heaven. The two criteria are:

- faith in Allah (SWT)
- doing good deeds

Memorisation Task

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

*"And give good news to those who believe and do good deeds:
they shall have gardens from under which rivers flow..."*

(2:25)

A SHORT TOUR OF HEAVEN

Let us take a short tour of Heaven by looking at some of the pleasures promised to the people of Heaven:

- living in comfortable, cool gardens with various types of food
- being in the company of good people whom we love
- having a choice of special Heavenly drinks like Heavenly milk
- never feeling any pain or sadness again

A SHORT TOUR OF HELL

Now let us have a brief look at life in Hell:

- having to eat food that does not satisfy and that tastes and smells awful and in fact burns the insides
- being among terrible people who dislike one another
- when thirsty, being given drink that is boiling and tastes awful
- always being in pain and never being relieved from it

FEAR AND HOPE

As we have learnt so far, Heaven is a place in which we would all hope to be, and Hell is a place which we all fear. Allah (SWT) wants us to always have the fear of Hell and other punishments, as well as hope in Heaven and other rewards.

Part of being a believer is to have absolute fear of Allah's punishment and to have absolute hope in His Mercy. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) tells us that Luqmān gave the following advice to his son:

“Fear Allah such that you believe that even if you bring as many good actions as all the humans and jinn He may punish you, and have so much hope in Him such that if you came with as many sins as the humans and jinn, He may have mercy on you”.^x

We need always keep this balance between hope and fear. When we feel that we are going well and performing good actions, we need fear to balance out the hope for reward and to stop us from becoming arrogant or thinking ‘we have made it’ or ‘we are the best’. When we are not doing so well and may be committing sins we need hope to balance out the fear of punishment and stop us from feeling hopeless and giving up on ourselves. Let us finish the lessons with two short stories:

- *A man called Ḥabīb ibn al-Ḥarīth came to the Prophet (saw) and said: ‘I am a man who commits many sins’. The Prophet (saw) said: ‘repent’. He said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, I repent but then I go back to the sin’. The Prophet (saw) said: ‘every time you sin, repent’. He said: ‘what if my sins become many?’ The Prophet (saw) said: ‘the Mercy of Allah is greater than your sins, O Ḥabīb ibn al-Ḥarīth’.*^{xi}

This story shows that we have to always keep the hope that Allah will forgive us but at the same time we need to always remember the possible punishment of our sins and therefore always try to repent and avoid the sin.

- Prophet Dawūd (as) would be so much in fear of Allah (SWT) that people would come to visit him thinking he was sick. However, he was not sick; it was just that he was so much in fear of Allah (SWT)^{xii}.

Similarly Imam al-Sajjād (saw) would turn yellow out of fear when he heard the adhān or when he was performing his Wuḍūʿ.

These two stories show just how much we should both fear Allah and hope in Allah (SWT).

Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following is true?

- a. We should have more fear of Allah than we have hope in Him
- b. We should have more hope in Allah than we have fear of Him
- c. We should hope in Allah and fear Him in equal amounts

Q2. The people of Heaven are those who:

- a. Have faith
- b. Have faith and do good deeds
- c. Do good deeds

ⁱ Al-Ma’ad, Dastghaib Shirazi, section on Siraat

ⁱⁱ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 311

ⁱⁱⁱ Journey to the Unseen World, lecture 24

^{iv} ??

^v Ibid

^{vi} Haydari, lectures on Divine Justice, lecture 55

^{vii} Wasailul Shia, chapter 9 from the chapters on the prayer times, narration 10

^{viii} The Holy Qur’an, 26:26-27

^{ix} TafsirulAmthal, commentary on Surat Yasin

^x ??

^{xi} Mishkatul Anwar, no. 595

^{xii} Ibid, no. 592