

JANNAH – PARADISE

QUR'AN - (The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Give glad tidings to those who believe and do good, righteous deeds: for them are Gardens through which rivers flow. Every time they are provided with fruits (of different color, shape, taste, and fragrance, and that are constantly renewed) therefrom, they say, "This is what we were provided with before. " For they are given to them in resemblance (to what was given to them both in the world, and just before in the Gardens, familiar in shape and color so that they may not be unattractive due to being unknown). Furthermore, for them are spouses eternally purified (of all kinds of worldly uncleanliness). They will abide there (forever). (Surah Al Baqarah, 25)¹

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرَ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِي النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُمْ

A likeness of Paradise which the God-revering, pious are promised is this: in it are rivers of water incorruptible (in taste, smell, and color); and rivers of milk whose taste never changes; and rivers of wine delicious for the drinkers; and rivers of pure, clear honey. And in it, there are also fruits of every kind for them, as well as forgiveness from their Lord (to bring unforeseen blessings). (Are those who will enjoy all this) like those who will abide in the Fire and be given boiling water to drink, so that it rends their bowels? (Surah Muhammad, 15)²

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=2&min=20&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=47&min=10&show=10

These are the bounds set by God. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger (by remaining within these bounds), God will admit him into Gardens through which rivers flow, abiding therein. That is the supreme triumph. (Surah an Nisa, 13)³

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَيِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

And the companions of Paradise call out to the companions of the Fire: "Now we have found what our Lord promised us to be true. Have you (also) found true what your Lord promised you?" They say, "Yes!" And an announcer announces among them: "God's curse (rejection and condemnation) is the due of all wrongdoers!" (Surah Al Araf, 44)⁴

وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَاهُمْ وَنَادَوْا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ

And between the two, there is a barrier, and on the Heights (between Paradise and Hell) are some men, recognizing each by their countenances. They not yet entering Paradise, but longing for it call out to the companions of Paradise: "Peace be upon you!" (Surah Al Araf, 46)⁵

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَهَا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

And the companions of the Fire call out to the companions of Paradise: "Pour out some water upon us, or something of what God has provided for you!" They say: "Indeed God has forbidden both to the unbelievers. (Surah Al Araf, 50)⁶

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا

And so, by your Lord, We will most certainly raise to life and gather them all together, as well as the satans (of humankind and jinn whom they used to follow), before Us, and then We will most certainly heap them up on their knees in groups around Hell. (Surah Maryam, 68)⁷

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=4&min=10&show=10

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=7&min=40&show=10

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=7&min=40&show=10

⁶ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=7&min=40&show=10

⁷ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=19&min=60&show=10

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
يُحَلَّونَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ

(On the other hand,) God will admit those who believe and do good, righteous deeds into the Gardens through which rivers flow; adorned therein with armbands of gold and pearls, and their garments therein will be of silk. (Surah Al Hajj, 23)⁸

HADITH

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Allah said, 'I have prepared for my pious worshipers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and nobody has ever thought of.'" Abu Huraira added: If you wish you can read:-- 'No soul knows what is kept hidden (in reserve) for them of joy as reward for what they used to do.' 32.17.⁹

Abu Hurairah narrated:

"We said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What is wrong with us that when we are with you our hearts are softened and we feel free of desire for this world, and we are of the people of the Hereafter. But when we depart from you and socialize with our families and our children, we do not recognize ourselves(i.e., we are changed persons)?' So the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said: 'If you were to be in that condition when you depart from me, the angels would have surely visited you in your houses. And if you did not sin, Allah would surely have brought anew creation that they may sin, so that then He may forgive them.'" He said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! From what was the creation created?' He said: 'From water.' We said: 'Paradise, what is it constructed of?' He said, 'Bricks of silver and bricks of gold. Its mortar is musk of a strong fragrance, and its pebbles are pearls and rubies, and its earth is saffron. Whoever enters it shall live and shall not suffer, and shall feel joy and shall not die, nor shall their clothes wear out, nor shall their youth come to an end.' Then he said: 'Three persons , their supplication is not rejected: The just ruler, the fasting person when he breaks his fast, and the supplication of the wronged person. It is raised up above the clouds, and the gates of Heaven are opened up for it, and the Lord, Blessed and Exalted says: I shall surely come to your aid, even if after a time.'"¹⁰

Narrated `Abdullah bin Qais:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "(There will be) two Paradises of silver and all the utensils and whatever is therein (will be of silver); and two Paradises of gold, and its utensils and whatever therein (will be of gold), and there will be nothing to prevent the people from seeing their Lord except the Cover of Majesty over His Face in the Paradise of Eden (eternal bliss)."¹¹

⁸ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=22&min=20&show=10

⁹ <http://sunnah.com/urn/44570>

¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678320>

¹¹ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/97/70>

Narrated `Abdullah bin Qais Al-Ash`ari:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A tent (in Paradise) is like a hollow pearl which is thirty miles in height and on every corner of the tent the believer will have a family that cannot be seen by the others." (Narrated Abu `Imran in another narration, "The tent is sixty miles in height.")¹²

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever believes in Allah and His Apostle offers prayers perfectly and fasts (the month of) Ramadan then it is incumbent upon Allah to admit him into Paradise, whether he emigrates for Allah's cause or stays in the land where he was born." They (the companions of the Prophet) said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! Should we not inform the people of that?" He said, "There are one-hundred degrees in Paradise which Allah has prepared for those who carry on Jihad in His Cause. The distance between every two degrees is like the distance between the sky and the Earth, so if you ask Allah for anything, ask Him for the Firdaus, for it is the last part of Paradise and the highest part of Paradise, and at its top there is the Throne of Beneficent, and from it gush forth the rivers of Paradise."¹³

Anas narrated that the Prophet said:

"Indeed in Paradise there is a tree under whose shade a rider can travel for one hundred years without stopping. Recite if you wish: And in shade extended. And water flowing constantly. 56:30"¹⁴

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "There is a tree in Paradise (which is so big and huge that) if a rider travels in its shade for one hundred years, he would not be able to cross it."¹⁵

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A place in Paradise as small as a bow is better than all that on which the sun rises and sets (i.e. all the world)." He also said, "A single endeavor in Allah's Cause in the afternoon or in the forenoon is better than all that on which the sun rises and sets."¹⁶

¹² <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/97/51>

¹³ <http://sunnah.com/urn/680030>

¹⁴ <http://sunnah.com/urn/680030>

¹⁵ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/59/62>

¹⁶ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/56/11>

Dawud bin Amir bin Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas narrated from his father, from his grandfather that the Prophet (s.a.w) said:

"If as little as what can be placed on a fingernail of what is in Paradise were to become apparent, it would have beautified all the far corners of the heavens and the earth. And if a man among the people of Paradise were to appear and his bracelets were to become apparent, it would have blotted out the light of the sun, as the sun blots out the light of the stars."¹⁷

Sulaiman bin Buraidah narrated from his father that a man asked the Prophet (ﷺ):

"O Messenger of Allah, are there horses in Paradise?" He said, "If Allah admits you into Paradise, you will not wish to be carried, on a horse of rubies that will fly with you wherever you want in Paradise except that you will do so." He said: "And a man asked him: 'O Messenger of Allah, are there camels in Paradise?'" He said: "So he (ﷺ) did not say what he said to his companion, rather, he (ﷺ) said: 'If Allah admits you into Paradise, you will have in it whatever is desired by your soul and pleasing to your eye.'"¹⁸

Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "In Jannah there is a market to which the people will come every Friday. The northern wind will blow and shower fragrance on their faces and clothes and, consequently, it will enhance their beauty and loveliness. They will then return to their wives who will also have increased in their beauty and loveliness, and their families will say to them: 'We swear by Allah that you have been increased in beauty and loveliness since leaving us.' Thereupon they will reply: 'We swear by Allah that you have also been increased in beauty and loveliness since we left you.'"¹⁹

'Ali narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said:

"Indeed in Paradise there is a market in which there is no buying nor selling- except for images of men and women. So whenever a man desires an image, he enters it."²⁰

It was narrated from Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"This fire of yours is one-seventieth part of the fire of Hell. Were it not that its heat has been reduced by water twice, you would not have been able to benefit from it. And it is praying to Allah, asking Allah not to return it (to its original level of heat)."²¹

Abdullah bin Qais said:

"I was with Abu Burdah one night, and Harith bin Uqaish entered upon us. Harith told us that night that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: 'Among my nation are some by whose intercession more

¹⁷ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678440>

¹⁸ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678490>

¹⁹ <http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/20/21>

²⁰ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678560>

²¹ <http://sunnah.com/urn/129421>

(than the members of the tribe of) Mudar will enter Paradise, and among my nation are some who will be made huge for the Fire until they fill one of its corners."²²

Narrated Ibn `Umar:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "When the people of Paradise have entered Paradise and the people of the Fire have entered the Fire, death will be brought and will be placed between the Fire and Paradise, and then it will be slaughtered, and a call will be made (that), 'O people of Paradise, no more death! O people of the Fire, no more death!' So the people of Paradise will have happiness added to their previous happiness, and the people of the Fire will have sorrow added to their previous sorrow."²³

It was narrated from Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"A hand span in Paradise is better than the earth and everything on it."²⁴

Usamah bin Zaid said:

"The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said one day to his Companions: 'Who will strive hard with sincerity for Paradise? For there is nothing like Paradise. By the Lord of the Ka'bah, it is sparkling light, sweet basil waving in the breeze, a lofty palace, a flowing river, abundant ripe fruit, a beautiful wife and many fine garments, in a palace of eternal abode, in ease and luxury, in beautiful, strongly-built, lofty houses.' They said: 'We will strive hard for it, O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Say: In sha' Allah (if Allah wills).' Then he mentioned Jihad and encouraged them to engage in it."²⁵

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "The first group of people who will enter Paradise, will be glittering like the full moon and those who will follow them, will glitter like the most brilliant star in the sky. They will not urinate, relieve nature, spit, or have any nasal secretions. Their combs will be of gold, and their sweat will smell like musk. The aloes-wood will be used in their centres. Their wives will be houris. All of them will look alike and will resemble their father Adam (in stature), sixty cubits tall."²⁶

Jabir reported:

I heard Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) as saying that the inmates of Paradise would eat and drink but would neither spit, nor pass water, nor void excrement, nor suffer catarrh. It was said: Then, what would happen with food? Thereupon he said: They would belch and sweat (and it would be over with their

²² <http://sunnah.com/urn/1294260>

²³ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/81/137>

²⁴ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1294320>

²⁵ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1294350>

²⁶ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/60/2>

food), and their sweat would be that of musk and they would glorify and praise Allah as easily as you breathe.²⁷

It is narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w) that he said:

"Whoever of the people of (destined to enter) Paradise dies, young or old, they shall be brought back in Paradise thirty years old, they will not increase in that ever, and likewise the people of the Fire."²⁸

Abu Hurairah narrated from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) that he said:

"The people of Paradise are without body hair, Murd, with Kuhl (on their eyelids), their youth does not come to an end, and their clothes do not wear out."²⁹

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said:

"There are upon them crowns, the least of its pearls would illuminate what is between the East and the West."³⁰

Abu al-Sa'id Khudri reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying that the earth would turn to be one single bread on the Day of Resurrection and the Almighty would turn it in His hand as one of you turns a loaf while on a journey. It would be a feast arranged in the honour of the people of Paradise. He (the narrator) further narrated that a person from among the Jews came and he said:

Abu al-Qasim, may the Compassionate Lord be pleased with you! May I inform you about the feast arranged in honour of the people of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection? He said: Do it, of course. He said: The earth would become one single bread. Then Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) looked towards us and laughed until his molar teeth became visible. He then again said: May I inform you about that with which they would season it? He said: Do it, of course. He said: Their seasoning would be balim and fish. The Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) said: What is this balam? He said: Ox and fish from whose excessive livers seventy thousand people would be able to eat.³¹

²⁷ <http://sunnah.com/muslim/53/21>

²⁸ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678680>

²⁹ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678450>

³⁰ <http://sunnah.com/urn/678680>

³¹ <http://sunnah.com/muslim/52/13>

COMMENTARIES

From the Risale-I Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi – a thematic tafseer

The Words, Twenty-Eighth Word

This Word is about Paradise and consists of two Stations. The First indicates some of the subtle wonders of Paradise. However, it does not prove the existence of Paradise, since this has been proved in brilliant fashion by the twelve decisive Truths of the Tenth Word and by the firm and clear consecutive arguments in Arabic which form the basis and summary of the Tenth Word and the Second Station of this Word. This Station discusses in question and answer form a number of the aspects of Paradise which have been the cause of criticism. If Divine assistance is forthcoming, a great Word will later be written about that mighty truth. God willing.

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

And give glad tidings to those who believe and act righteously that theirs shall be gardens beneath which flow rivers. Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they will say: "Why, this is what we were fed with before." For they will be given things in similitude. And they shall have therein spouses pure, and shall abide there for ever.

The brief answers to a number of questions about eternal Paradise.

The descriptions of the Qur'an's verses about Paradise, which are more beautiful than Paradise, lovelier than the houris, and sweeter than the water of Salsabil, leave nothing to be said about it so that anyone should say it. However, in order to bring closer to the understanding those shining, pre-eternal, post-eternal, elevated and exquisite verses, we shall mention a number of steps, and, as samples of that Qur'anic Paradise, a number of fine points which are like samples of its flowers. We shall point to these through five allusive questions and answers. Indeed, Paradise is the means both to all spiritual and non-physical pleasures, and to all physical pleasures.

QUESTION: What connection with eternity and Paradise has faulty, deficient, changing, unstable, and suffering corporeality? Since the spirit has elevated pleasures, that is sufficient. Why is bodily resurrection necessary for bodily pleasures?

THE ANSWER: Because, just as in relation to water, air, and light, earth is dense and dark, but since it is the source and means of all the varieties of Divine artefacts, in meaning it rises above the other elements; and just as in regard to the mystery of its comprehensiveness and on condition it is purified, the human soul, which is also dense, rises above all the other human subtle faculties; so too corporeality is the richest and most comprehensive and all-embracing mirror to the manifestation of the Divine Names. All the tools and instruments for measuring the contents of the treasuries of mercy and reckoning their balances lie in corporeality. For example, if scales to the number of sorts of food and their pleasures did not originate in the sense of taste in the tongue, it could not taste and weigh them all up, and recognize and experience them. Also, the instruments for experiencing and knowing the manifestations of most of the Divine Names, and tasting and recognizing them, again lie in

corporeality. And the faculties for experiencing all the infinitely various pleasures are also in corporeality.

As is proved in the Eleventh Word, it is understood clearly from the disposition of the universe and man's comprehensiveness that the universe's Maker wants to make known all the treasures of His mercy, and all the manifestations of His Names, and to make experienced all the varieties of His bounties. The abode of bliss, therefore, which is a vast pool formed from the flood of the universe and a great exhibition of the textiles woven on the loom of the universe and an everlasting store of the crops produced in the arable field of this world, will resemble the universe to a degree. And it will preserve all its fundamental matters, both corporeal and spiritual. Its All-Wise Maker, the Most Compassionate One, will also give as recompense for the duties of the physical tools and instruments, pleasures worthy of them; and to His servants, as a wage and reward for the particular worship of each. Otherwise a situation would occur that was contrary to His wisdom, justice, and mercy, which is in no way fitting for the beauty of His mercy and perfection of His justice, and in no way compatible with them.

QUESTION: If a body is living, its parts are constantly being formed and dissolved; it is doomed to extinction and 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 this world, but there is no need for them in the world of eternity and hereafter. So why are they among the greatest pleasures of Paradise?

THE ANSWER: Firstly, the bodies of living creatures are doomed to annihilation and death in this world because of an imbalance between what is taken in and what is expended. From childhood until maturity much is taken in, and after that what is expended increases; the balance is spoilt, and the body dies. In the world of eternity, however, the particles of the body remain constant and are not subject to composition and dissolution, or else the balance remains constant. Like a closed circle or perpetual motion, the body of the living creature becomes eternal together with the functioning of the machine of bodily life for pleasure. Although in this world eating and drinking and sexual relations arise from need and perform a function, various delights and pleasures have been placed within them as an immediate wage for the duty performed, and these are superior to other pleasures. Since in this abode of sorrows eating and sexual relations are the means to so many wonderful and various pleasures, certainly in Paradise, which is the abode of pleasure and bliss, those pleasures will take on a sublime form. The recompense of the duties pertaining to the hereafter performed here will also be added to them as pleasure, and they will be augmented by worldly needs which have taken the form of agreeable, otherworldly appetites, so will become an all-embracing, living source of pleasure worthy of Paradise and suitable to eternity. Indeed, according to the meaning of the verse,

And what is the life of this world but amusement and play? But indeed the Abode of the hereafter, that is life indeed, substances, matters, which are inanimate and without consciousness and life in the abode of this world, there will be living and conscious. 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. And if you tell such-and-such a stone to come, it will come. Since stones and trees will take on this elevated form, it surely necessitates that, together with preserving their bodily realities, eating, drinking, and sexual relations also will take on a form higher than their worldly form, higher to the degree that Paradise is higher than this world.

QUESTION: According to the meaning of:

Everyone will be together with those he loves, in Paradise, friend will be together with friend. Therefore, love for God's sake kindled in a simple nomad during one minute's conversation with the Prophet (PBUH), means he has to be with the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) in Paradise. But since God's Noble Messenger (PBUH) receives limitless effulgence, how can it be united with that of a simple nomad?

THE ANSWER: We shall allude to this elevated truth with a comparison. For example, a magnificent personage set up a vast banquet and finely-adorned spectacle in a splendid garden. He prepared it in such a way that it included all the delicious foods that the sense of taste can experience, and all the fine 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 give pleasure to the external and inner senses. Now, there were two friends and they went together to the banquet and sat down at a table in a pavilion. But the sense of taste of one of them was very limited, so he received only minor pleasure. His eyes could see only a little, he had no sense of smell, and he could not understand the wondrous arts nor comprehend the marvels. He could only benefit from and take pleasure in a thousandth or even a millionth of that beautiful place, to the extent of his capacity. The other man however had developed his outer and inner senses, his mind, heart, emotions, and subtle faculties so perfectly and to such a degree that although he was next to his friend, he could perceive and experience all the subtleties and beauties and marvels and fine things in the exhibition, and receive their different pleasures.

Since this confused, sorrowful, and narrow world is thus, and although the greatest and the least are together, the difference between them is as great as from the ground to the Pleiades, surely in Paradise, the realm of bliss and eternity, while friend is together with friend, each will receive his share from the table of the Most Merciful and Compassionate One in accordance with his capacity and to the extent of his abilities. Even if the Paradises in which they are found are different, it will not be an obstacle to their being together. For although the eight levels of Paradise are one above the other, the roof of all of them is the Sublime Throne. If 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 and look to one another, but do not prevent each other seeing the sun. There are also various narrations of Hadiths indicating that the Paradises are in a manner close to this.

QUESTION: It is said in Hadiths: “Although the houris are clothed in seventy garments, the marrow of their leg-bones may be seen.” What does this mean? What sort of meaning can it have? What sort of beauty is this?

THE ANSWER: Its meaning is truly beautiful and its beauty is most lovely. It is like this: in this world, which is ugly, inanimate, lifeless, and for the most part just a husk, beauty and loveliness only appear beautiful to the eye, and so long as familiarity is not an obstacle, that is sufficient. Whereas in Paradise, which is beautiful, living, brilliant, and entirely the essence without the husk and the kernel without the shell, like the eye, all man’s senses and subtle faculties will want to receive their different pleasures and various delights from the houris, the gentle sex, and from the women of this world, who will be like houris and even more beautiful. That is to say, the Hadith indicates that from the beauty of their top garments to the marrow of their bones, each layer will be the means of pleasure to a sense and a subtle faculty. Yes, by saying, “The houris wear seventy garments and the marrow of their leg-bones can be seen,” the Hadith points out that however many senses, feeling, powers, and faculties man has which are enamoured of beauty, worship pleasure, are captivated by ornament, and yearn for loveliness, the houris comprise all of them – every sort of adornment and exquisite loveliness, physical and spiritual and immaterial, which will please and satisfy all of them, and gratify them and make them all happy.

That is to say, just as the houris are clothed in seventy of the varieties of the adornment of Paradise, and not one sort, none of which conceal the others; so they display beauty and loveliness perhaps seventy times greater than their own bodies and beings, all of different sorts and varieties. They demonstrate the truth indicated by the verse:

There will be there all that the souls could desire and all that the eyes could delight in.

There is also a Hadith which states that since in Paradise there are no unnecessary, extraneous, waste-matters, the people of Paradise will not excrete waste after eating and drinking.² Since in this lowly world, trees, the most ordinary of living beings, do not excrete despite taking in much nourishment, why should the people of Paradise, who are the highest class of life?

QUESTION: It says in Hadiths: “Some of the people of Paradise are given lands as extensive as the world, and thousands of palaces and hundreds of thousands of houris are bestowed on them.”³ What need has a single person of all these things, why should it be necessary? How can this be and what does it mean?

THE ANSWER: If man was only a lifeless being, or was only a vegetable creature consisting of a stomach, or consisted only of a limited, heavy, temporary, simple corporeality or animal body, he could not own many palaces and houris, or be fit for them. But man is such a comprehensive miracle of power that even in this transitory world and brief life, if he is given the rule of all the world with its wealth and pleasures, his ambition is not satisfied – in respect of the need of some of his subtle faculties, which do not develop here. It is therefore reasonable, right, and true that a person possessing an infinite capacity who knocks on the door of an infinite mercy with the hand of infinite desires and the tongue of infinite needs will receive in an eternal abode of bliss the Divine bounties described in Hadiths. We shall observe this elevated truth through the telescope of a comparison. It is as follows:

Although, like this valley garden, all these gardens and vineyards of Barla have different owners, all the birds and sparrows and honey-bees in Barla, who have only a handful of grain for food, may say: “All the gardens and orchards of Barla are my pleasant resorts where I fly around and enjoy myself.” Each may take possession of Barla and include it in its property. Others sharing it does not invalidate his ownership. Similarly, a man who is a true human being may say: “My Creator made this world a house for me. The sun is my lamp and the stars my electric lights. The face of the earth is my resting-place spread with flowered carpets.” And he offers thanks to God. The other creatures sharing it does not negate his statement. On the contrary, the creatures adorn his house like decorations. And so, if in this narrow fleeting world, by virtue of his humanity, man – and even a bird – claims a sort of power of disposal over such a vast sphere and receives such a vast bounty, how can it be deemed unlikely that he is given ownership of a property stretching over a five hundred year distance in a broad and eternal abode of bliss?

Moreover, just as in this dense and dark narrow world the sun is present in the same way at the same time in numerous mirrors, so too, as is proved in the Sixteenth Word, a luminous being may be present in many places in the same way at the same time. For example, Gabriel (Peace be upon him) being on a thousand stars simultaneously, and at the Divine Throne, and in the presence of the Prophet (PBUH), and in the Divine Presence; and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) meeting with most of the righteous of his community at the resurrection of the dead at the same time and appearing in this world in innumerable places simultaneously; and a strange group of the saints known *asabdāl*, appearing at the same time in many places; and ordinary people sometimes carrying out as much as a year’s work in one minute in a dream and observing this; and everyone being in contact with and concerned with numerous places at the same time in their hearts, spirits, and imaginations – all these are well-known and may be witnessed. Most certainly, in Paradise, therefore, which is luminous, unrestricted, broad, and eternal, the people of Paradise, whose bodies have the strength and lightness of the spirit and the swiftness of imagination, being in hundreds of thousands of places at the same time, and conversing with hundreds of thousands of houris, and receiving pleasure in hundreds of thousands of ways, is fitting for that eternal Paradise, that infinite mercy, and as told by the Bringer of Sure News (PBUH), is reality and the truth. Nevertheless, these vast truths cannot be weighed on the scales of our tiny minds.

*This tiny mind cannot perceive the true meanings,
For this scale cannot bear such a weight.*

Glory be unto to You! We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us; indeed, You are All-Knowing, All-Wise.

O our Sustainer! Do not call us to task if we forget or fall into error.

O God! Grant blessings to Your Beloved, who by being Your Beloved and through his prayers, flung open the doors of Paradise, and because of the benedictions for him of its members, You confirmed its opening for his community, and bless him and grant him peace.

O God! Appoint us to Paradise among the righteous, through the intercession of Your Beloved, the Chosen One. Amen.³²

Al-Mathnawi al-Nuri, The Fifth Treatise, A bubble from the ocean of the Qur'an

The Belief Seed

KNOW, O FRIEND, that the seed of unbelief potentially bears Hell, just as a mustard plant is contained in its seed. Likewise, belief potentially bears the seed of Paradise, just as a palm tree is contained in its seed. It is normal for a mustard seed to grow into a mustard plant, and a palm seed to grow into a palm tree. In the same way, misguidance leads to Hell and guidance leads to Paradise.³³

The Flashes, Thirteenth Flash, Twelfth Indication

Second Question: It is said in the Shari 'a that Hell is punishment for actions, but Paradise is a divine favour. What is the reason for this?

The Answer: It is clearly shown in the above Indications that with his faculty of will and trifling wishes, man causes awesome destruction and evils by giving form and reality to something non-existent or theoretical. Similarly, since his soul and appetites always incline towards evil and harm, he is responsible for the evils that occur as a result of his trivial wishes. For his soul wanted them and his desires gave rise to them. And since evil pertains to non-existence, the servant is the agent and Almighty God creates it. Being responsible for the infinite crime, he certainly deserves infinite punishment.

However, since good deeds and actions pertain to existence, man's will and wishes cannot be the direct cause of their existence. Man cannot be the true agent in such acts. Also, his evil-commanding soul does not tend towards good deeds; it is divine mercy that requires them and dominical power that creates them. Man can only lay claim to them through belief, a wish, or an intention. And having claimed them, such good works consist of thanks for the infinite divine bounties received, such as the gifts of belief and existence. Such thanks looks to past bounties, while Paradise is a

³² <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.513>

³³ https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/sgia/imeis/masnavinuriye_ingilizce_23_02_07.pdf

favour of the Most Merciful which since it has been promised by Him will be given. Apparently it is a reward, but in reality it is a favour.

That is to say, in evils the soul is the cause and deserves the punishment, while in good deeds, both the cause and the occasion are from God. Man can only lay claim to them through belief. He may not say: "I want the reward," but he may say: "I hope for divine favour."³⁴

Fethullah Gulen - Reflections on the Qur'an, Suratu'l-Baqarah (The Cow)– a thematic tafseer

"Every time they are provided with fruits there from (from Paradise), they say, "This is what we were provided before." They are given to them in resemblance (to what was given to them in the world). Furthermore, for them are spouses eternally purified; and therein they will abide. " (Al-Baqarah 2:25)

The expression of "wa utū bihī mutashābihān" (They are given to them in resemblance [to what was given to them in the world]) emphasizes the resemblance of bounties, blessings, and honors to be given in Paradise, familiar in shape and color so that they may not be unattractive because unknown. According to Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, the resemblance may be either between the blessings in this world and those to be given in Paradise or between the blessings of Paradise, which will be given to believers time and time again in recurrent forms. For instance, when a person says "al-hamdu li'llāh" (All praise be to God) as gratitude in this world; he or she receives a fruit of Paradise in the Hereafter in return. That is, every proclamation of God's greatness (Allāhu Akbar), every declaration of God's Oneness and Unity (lā ilāha illa'llāh), every glorification of God (Subhāna'llāh), and every praise of God (al-hamdu li'llāh) is like a seed sown in earth that will yield different fruits of Paradise. However, there is a significant point to mention here. We cannot grasp the relationship between our actions in the world and the results they will give in the Hereafter. In the world, we approach and consider everything within the framework of cause and effect; hence, we cannot always be saved from the influence of cause-and-effect relation in our thoughts and analyses. However, the nature of many phenomena in the world enables us to perceive what the verse means. For instance, we have never harvested barley from the soil where we sowed wheat although both are the same type of grain. Likewise, we never harvest pears from an apple tree or figs from a vineyard. When we go back to the time of God's Messenger, we see that he understood exactly what Archangel Gabriel revealed to him whereas his Companions around him did not hear even a buzz. Also, can we claim that we can understand the meaning of God's descent to the heavens of the world after one-third of night or other such matters from the perspective of or within the framework of causality?

As al-Ghazālī states, we cannot comprehend some of the metaphysical events with the aql al-ma'ash (the worldly mind) while in this world. However, we will be granted the aql al-ma'ad (the otherworldly mind) in the Hereafter, where everything happens according to the principles of metaphysics. Only then can we fully understand the relationship between saying Subhāna'llāh (Glory

³⁴ <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.203.121>

to God) and receiving a fruit of the Garden in return. And only then can we understand clearly the connection of the bounties in the Hereafter with the good deeds in this world.

The laws of physics are no longer valid in the Hereafter. For example, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, informs us that our daily prescribed prayers will be a friend and companion to us when we are in grave.³⁵ Similarly, a person will be able to enter Paradise at its eight different gates,³⁶ and the Qur'ān will be embodied or take on an otherworldly form and intercede with God on behalf of the ones who read it in this world...

As for the above verse, Fakhru'd-Dīn ar-Rāzī, a Qur'anic interpreter, asserts that such examples in the Qur'ān are given to assure us that these issues are comprehensible enough for human reason.³⁷ They are not beyond human reason. The reality of the matter will be manifested and understood with all aspects in the Hereafter. As a result, the believers who performed good deeds in this world will announce, "These are what we were provided with in the world or some time ago while in Paradise" whenever the bounties of Paradise are bestowed on them.

Each bounty to be given in the Paradise is either the otherworldly reward of a good deed done in the world or its otherworldly form, or it is the harvest of the deeds sowed as seeds here. Therefore, there is an internal or essential similarity between the worldly bounties and their counterparts in the Hereafter. However, they are worlds apart from each other in respect to their worldly and otherworldly forms. For the worldly bounties are the seeds of Divine Wisdom while eternal bounties are the fruit of Divine Power. Also, the former are temporary and blurred while the latter are permanently purified and limpid. The former relate to bodily appetites while the latter represent or have the profundity of spiritual pleasure. Furthermore, God's bounties in this world are received and perceived to the degree of certainty based on knowledge while their otherworldly counterparts are favors of Mercy to be received and tasted to the degree of certainty based on experience.³⁸

Fethullah Gulen - Reflections on the Qur'an, Suratu't-Tawbah (Repentance)— a thematic tafseer

"God has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide, and blessed dwellings in Gardens of perpetual bliss; and greater (than those) is God's being pleased with them. That indeed is the supreme triumph." (At-Tawbah 9:72)

"Gardens of perpetual bliss" (Jannātu 'Adn), according to the above verse and several hadīths,³⁹ are the place where mostly material and partially spiritual pleasures will be tasted. Indeed, there are people whose physical desires outweigh their spiritual desires and whose carnal desires are

³⁵ Musnad Ahmad, 6/352; 4/287, 295.

³⁶ See Bukhārī, Bad'u'l-Khalq, 9; Muslim, Īmān, 46; Abū Dāwūd, Tahārah, 65; Tirmidhī, Tahārah, 41.

³⁷ Ar-Rāzī, Mafātīhu'l-Ghayb, 2/72.

³⁸ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/1518-reflections-on-the-quran/suratu-l-baqarah-the-cow/32935-al-baqarah-2-25>

³⁹ At-Tabarī, Jāmiu'l-Bayan, 10/179–182.

dominant. “Gardens of perpetual bliss,” which include every kind of physical pleasure in it, mean a lot to such kind of people as a reward. While there are others whose spiritual faculties are developed to such degree that pleasures of eating, drinking, and maidens of Paradise mean little to them. They always pursue spiritual pleasures to satisfy their souls. Therefore, the Highest Abode or Floor of Paradise (Jannātu’l-Firdaws) is for them. The part of the verse, “and greater (than those) is God’s being pleased with them,” must be indicative of this.

It is because of the superiority of Firdaws over other abodes or floors of Paradise that God’s Messenger said in one of his hadīths: “When you pray for Paradise, ask for Firdaws, for it is the highest of the abodes of Paradise.”⁴⁰ First of all, as we understand from the relevant hadīths, Paradise has a conical shape and the Firdaws is such a superior place in this Paradise that those who dwell there will be able to observe all the layers of Paradise. Second, since belief in the Unseen did not develop much among ancient communities, they were not able to deepen their knowledge in matters concerning the Unseen and of metaphysical import. As for the ummah, or community, of Prophet Muhammad, as its members have deepened in belief in the Unseen and the related issues much more than the previous communities and can therefore be satisfied with spiritual pleasures rather than physical ones, the Prophet advised his ummah to ask for Firdaws, which is full of spiritual pleasures. It can be said that while the “Gardens of perpetual bliss” (Jannātu ‘Adn) mark the horizon of the bliss of the other communities or the followers of the previous Prophets to certain extents, Firdaws is the Garden of Prophet Muhammad’s ummah.

Actually, God will be pleased with all the people of Paradise, but “God’s greater or particular good pleasure” is the greatest of the bounties of Paradise, one so profound and exceptional that one favored with it no longer needs another bounty and pleasure. Therefore, the Community of God’s Messenger, who is the owner of the Maqām al-Mahmūd, or the Station of Being Praised, which symbolizes the reward of being the most grateful to God, will be rewarded with it. In fact, the name Muhammad itself (meaning the One Who is Praised) is exactly consistent with the Station of Being Praised and the Flag of Praising. Since Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is he who praised and thanked God and called people to thanking and praising Him much more than everybody else, he will be honored with the Station of Being Praised and carrying the Flag of Praise in the other world. Therefore, the abode of his Community will be Firdaws, which signifies God’s greater or particular good pleasure, or His being more pleased with some of His servants.

O God, we ask You for forgiveness, wellbeing, and good pleasure!

O God, guide us to what You love and are pleased with.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Bukhārī, Jihād, 4; Tawhīd, 22; Tirmidhī, Jannah, 4.

⁴¹ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/faith/fethullah-gulen-reflections-on-the-quran/1283-suratut-tawbah-repentance/13972-at-tawbah-9-72>