

## **Why Cannot Most People Perceive the Hereafter in This World?**

### **Is It Possible to Perceive the Hereafter Without Having Seen It?**

The Hereafter stands as one of the greatest mysteries of the human mind—an idea that we do not know how to even approach! Our perception is entirely through this material body, and we understand the world solely through the limitations of our sensory forms. Given that condition, what awaits us after we leave our physical bodies? How is it that a vast and immense realm exists all around us, yet we cannot perceive it?

Can we truly claim that the blessings of Heaven or the torments of Hell are the same as the blessings and sufferings we experience in the world?

If the Hereafter is something far beyond this material world—and not merely a more advanced version of it—then why do so many Quranic verses describe the blessings of the Hereafter using worldly and material examples?

Furthermore, if in the Hereafter we are liberated from the confines of matter, how is it that we will be able to perceive the Hereafter?

In this lesson, we will seek answers to these questions.

### **The Ability to Perceive the Hereafter in This World**

To perceive something means to truly reach the essence and truth of a concept, beyond simply grasping it intellectually. The ability to perceive the Hereafter in this world can be examined from several perspectives:

### **Examining the Ability to Perceive the Hereafter Through the Law of Proportion**

We previously discussed that the relationship between this world and the Hereafter is like the relationship between the mother's womb and the world; just as the world is greater and more advanced than the womb, the Hereafter is likewise greater and more advanced than the world. A fetus, who has not yet been born, is incapable of perceiving the world—a world far vaster and filled with far more numerous and diverse blessings than the womb. For instance, a fetus, nourished solely by the blood flowing through the placenta, cannot perceive the taste of the various foods, fruits, and beverages found in the world.

In the same way, we too, lack the ability to perceive the Hereafter—a realm that is infinitely vaster, more advanced, and more beautiful than the world. In this world, we only experience limited forms of pleasure, and naturally, we cannot perceive the unlimited delights found among the blessings of the Hereafter. Likewise, the afflictions, losses, pressures, and punishments of the Hereafter are also far beyond any hardships we face in this world; yet now, we are unable to perceive their true reality.

### **Partial Knowledge of the Hereafter**

In this world, we are bound by the constraints of time and space, making it impossible for us to perceive the Hereafter, where both time and space are unlimited. Of course, through reason—and drawing upon the teachings conveyed through the Noble Quran and the narrations of the Infallibles (Peace be upon them)—we are able to perceive the truths regarding the *Barzakh*, the Day of Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. When we hear descriptions of gardens, rivers, palaces, trees, flowers, fragrances, melodies, fruits, foods, drinks, heavenly companions, attendants, or the gatherings of Heaven, we begin to imagine ourselves in that realm and take delight in such imaginations. Likewise, when we hear of Hell and its punishments—such as the blazing fire, foul and boiling water, molten metal, serpents and dragons, and the food and clothing of the damned — we are gripped by fear and dread. Nevertheless, the essence of these truths remains veiled. This is because we are attempting to understand these truths using knowledge that is confined to the material world, while our capacity to perceive the immaterial and imperceptible realm is exceedingly limited.

### **Lack of Awareness of Many Truths of the Hereafter**

A very important point regarding our inability—and the limited power within us—to perceive the Hereafter is that we have no idea of many of its truths. What has been mentioned in the Quranic verses and the narrations about the Hereafter is merely a glimpse of what truly it is. In other words, when describing Heaven or Hell, only those aspects have been conveyed that are comprehensible to us. The system governing the Hereafter is fundamentally different from that of the material world,

and the true nature of that realm transcends what we can perceive. This matter has also been emphasized repeatedly in the Noble Quran. For example, it states:

“But what will explain to you what *Saqar* is? [1]”

“And what will make you realize what the Crusher is? [2]”

“But what will convey to you what the Day of Justice is? [3]”

“But how can you know what *Elliyoon* is? [4]”

“What will explain to you what the Shocker is? [5]”

The phrases like “And what will make you realize...” in these verses—and in many other verses of the Quran—indicate that the truths of these matters concerning the Hereafter are beyond human perception. They have only been alluded to through words and expressions, without disclosing their true essence. Therefore, once we enter the Hereafter, we will encounter truths that far exceed our imagination. Allah states in the Noble Quran: “No soul knows what eye’s delight awaits them—a reward for what they used to do. [6]” Similar to this concept is also stated in the narrations. For example, Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) says: “...Whoever gives in charity in Rajab, for Allah’s sake, He will reward him in Heaven with that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has imagined. [7]” Thus, we do not have the ability to fully perceive the Hereafter while we are still in this world.

However, it is important to note that a small number of individuals—through purifying their souls and embarking on a spiritual journey—attain limited access to certain truths of the Hereafter. Some may even perceive, to a limited degree, immaterial matters within their dreams.

In this lesson, we discussed that we lack the ability to perceive the Hereafter in this world. Just as this world is vastly greater and more advanced than the mother's womb, and a fetus is incapable of perceiving the existing realities of the world prior to birth, we too—while still in this world—cannot perceive the Hereafter, which is infinitely more immense and contains far more diverse blessings than the world. On the one hand, we are confined within the limitations of the material world and are generally incapable of perceiving higher realms. Of course, we have received information about *Barzakh*, the Day of Judgment, Heaven, Hell, and their associated blessings and punishments through the Quran and the narrations of the Infallibles (Peace be upon them), and we comprehend them through our reason. However, understanding their true essence is not possible for us in this world. Moreover, our awareness of the Hereafter is limited to only a small portion and we remain entirely unaware of many of them. Therefore, we will not have the ability to thoroughly perceive the Hereafter until leaving this world.

## References

[1]. Quran, 74:27

[2]. Quran, 104:5

[3]. Quran, 82:17

[4]. Quran, 83:19

[5]. Quran, 101:3

[6]. Quran, 32:17

[7]. Al-Saduq, *Al-Amali*, Book 1, Chapter 81, Hadith 1, trans. Bilal Muhammad

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