

Heaven and Hell in the World | Our Daily Choices Shape Eternal Bliss or Suffering

Heaven and Hell in the World: How Daily Choices Shape Our Eternal Destiny

As human beings, we are constantly searching for happiness and trying to escape suffering. This search—whether rooted in spiritual beliefs or materialist ideologies—lies deep within every person. But how can we recognize the peak of happiness or misery? We often use the concepts of Heaven and Hell to describe the ultimate states of bliss or despair. But is reaching Heaven or avoiding Hell really that difficult or out of reach? Do we need to pay a high price to reach Heaven—or is it cheap? Can we, by simply changing our mindset and practicing small actions, experience Heaven or Hell in the world?

Heaven and Hell are not just reward or. They are inner states of the soul that can be experienced even in this world. Heaven reflects peace, satisfaction, happiness, and nearness to God. Hell, on the other hand, represents anxiety, dissatisfaction, misery, and separation from God. This means that each person, through right or wrong choices, can create Heaven or Hell within their own life.

Our everyday decisions—our relationships, thoughts, behaviors, and intentions—all contribute to the Heaven or Hell we experience. Small, seemingly insignificant decisions —like offering a smile, helping someone, or avoiding gossip—can open doors to inner peace and bring us closer to Heaven. In contrast, negative thoughts, pride, envy, and resentment creates Hell in our lives.

In this lesson, we explore practical examples to clarify the concept of Heaven and Hell in the world and offer concrete steps toward eternal bliss. We'll also examine how small daily decisions shape our eternal destiny, the role of intention, and the hidden traps of everyday life that slowly pull us toward Hell.

Heaven and Hell in the World: A Journey into the Heart of Daily Decisions

Have we ever considered that eternal happiness is not far away or reserved for those who endure extreme hardship? Could it be that it lies in our daily decisions, simple actions, and even private thoughts? Our common image of Heaven and Hell is often tied to grand rewards or terrifying punishments in some distant world—so far removed that it doesn't motivate real change in our behavior. But what if Heaven and Hell aren't distant places, but qualities of life we can already experience? That shift in perspective could change the way we think about even the smallest decisions.

Imam Reza (Peace be upon him) said: "God's transaction is cheap—so buy it before it becomes expensive [1]."

Let's start with a simple example. Imagine a family disagreement. You have two choices: You could end the conflict in a way that pleases God—holding your tongue and calming the situation. If you resist your ego, a light fills your heart, and you experience an inner peace and satisfaction. That is a taste of Heaven in the world—earned through a small but meaningful action.

On the other hand, if you give in to pride and insist on proving yourself right, even if you win the argument, you feel heavy, bitter, and distant from peace. That's a taste of Hell in the world, caused by a careless, ego-driven choice. This simple example demonstrates that Heaven and Hell are not just future recompense or torment, but rather a quality of life that can be experienced right here in this world. This truth profoundly illuminates the concept of Heaven and Hell and how to cultivate them.

We often dismiss our small decisions, assuming only major actions determine our fate. But the truth is that these small, repeated actions are what shape our character and define our path—just like water drops that carve through stone. Indeed, our small, consistent actions can gradually guide us towards either Heaven or Hell.

How to Reach Heaven or Avoid Hell in the World: The Power of Intention

Many people wonder: How can small choices and simple actions lead us to Heaven or Hell? The answer lies not in the number or greatness of the action, but in its quality and intention. One of the most important principles for understanding Heaven and Hell in the world is the power of intention and sincerity. A sincere smile, a kind word, or a small act of help can lead us to Heaven—if done with a pure heart, seeking God's pleasure.

Intention is the inner force behind our actions. If it's pure and for God's sake, even our smallest deeds gain immense value. But if it's polluted by ego, vanity, or self-interest, even our greatest deeds lose their meaning. In every endeavor, we must

pay attention to the various facets of our intention – discerning whether its nature leads us to light or to fire – and ensure that the purest intention forms the very foundation of our work.

For example, if you help someone in need purely for God’s sake, it brings joy and light to your soul. But if you do the same act to show off or gain praise, it loses its worth—and may even feed pride.

This principle also applies to avoiding sin. Sometimes, resisting a small temptation—especially when it’s difficult—can be more valuable than a long act of worship. Imagine a person who holds back their anger in a moment of deep frustration. This self-control—this struggle against the ego—may be more pleasing to God than a long, empty prayer. Heaven and Hell in the world remind us that the true value of any act lies in its inner essence, not its external form. That’s why we must examine our intentions carefully, aim for sincerity, and seek God's pleasure in all we do. With this mindset, even the smallest actions become keys to Heaven.

Intention acts like a key that unlocks the gate to Heaven. With a sincere intention, purely for the sake of God, we can advance towards Heaven even through our smallest deeds. This is precisely why our religious teachings place such profound emphasis on the importance of intention [2].

Hidden Traps of Everyday Life: Beware of the Small Sins!

As mentioned earlier, Heaven and Hell in the world are created in the heart of daily decisions. Alongside golden opportunities for eternal joy, our lives are filled with

hidden traps that lead to misery. We often overlook so-called “minor sins”, assuming they don’t affect our destiny. But the truth is, these little wrongs gradually taint the soul and take us off the path of bliss.

Take backbiting, for example. Many people casually talk about others’ flaws in social gatherings. They enjoy mocking or criticizing behind someone’s back—unaware that this act brings darkness to their hearts and plants seeds of hatred and distrust in their communities.

Another example is lying. Even small lies, told to escape discomfort or gain attention, slowly erode trust in our relationships. Lying is like a swamp: the more we enter, the harder it is to escape.

Hell does not signify the performance of actions that directly lead to Hereafter torment. Instead, it refers to actions that generate feelings of misery, despair, and a sense of distance from God in our lives.

To avoid these traps, we must constantly examine our thoughts and behaviors. We must identify and actively work to remove harmful traits. And we must remember that Heaven and Hell are not distant futures—they are real outcomes of our daily choices.

Obstacles to Reaching Heaven in the World; Negligence and Low Desires

Heaven and Hell are deep realities with serious impact on our lives. In our discussion about the strategies for creating heaven and hell in the world, we emphasized that reaching Heaven is not inherently difficult. However, certain

obstacles can indeed divert us from this path. The most significant of these obstacles are negligence and low desires.

Negligence means forgetting God and the ultimate purpose of creation. When an individual succumbs to negligence, they become enslaved by daily routines and lose sight of the true value of their actions. In this state, they easily surrender to Satan's temptations, stray from the right path, and descend towards Hell. Many people, reflecting on their past, recall instances where they were consumed by heedlessness and, in doing so, brought upon themselves an accessible Hell. This heedlessness not only negatively impacts their spiritual life but also leads to missed opportunities for drawing closer to God and attaining accessible Heaven. To break free from heedlessness, we must remain mindful of God and actively revive our connection with Him. Remembering the primary purpose of our creation and recognizing the barriers to achieving it will help us stay on the correct course.

Low desires are another significant impediment to reaching Heaven in the world. These are the irrational and illogical instincts and urges of the evil-commanding soul (al-Nafs al-Ammāra) or lower self that incites to evil that constantly entice us toward fleeting pleasures and worthless whims. If we surrender to these low desires, we swiftly drift away from God's path and gravitate towards Hell.

The first step to overcoming these obstacles is to precisely identify them. Recognizing the negligence and low desires within ourselves is paramount. By pinpointing these obstacles, we can devise a practical plan for changing our behavior. These changes may require consistent practice and perseverance, but their positive outcomes will lead us to attain Heaven in the world and experience a life filled with tranquility and contentment.

In this lesson, we explored the concept of Heaven and Hell in the world and the strategies for achieving eternal bliss. We saw that our destiny is intricately linked to our daily choices. By performing small and sincere actions, one can attain Heaven in the world, and by avoiding minor and major sins, one can steer clear of Hell in the world. The most crucial takeaway is to constantly be mindful of our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to proceed with sincere intention, purely for the pleasure of God.

Do you know of any other ways that lead to experiencing Heaven and Hell in the world?

References

- [1]. al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 94, p. 81,
- [2]. Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Sunnah.com, Book 83, Hadith 66.