

Al-Hashr: The Gathering

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It starts when one comes out of his grave, having a new form with which he is not familiar, and it is one of the three most critical times through which a human being has to go. Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ), peace be with him, refers to these three stages during which he will see nothing but peace as we read in verse 33 of Surat Maryam, a chapter in the Holy Qur'an named after his saintly mother, Maryam (Mary), where Jesus is quoted by the Almighty as saying on the very first day when he was born, a miracle which testified to his extra-ordinary birth to an extra-ordinary Lady, the Mistress of the world of her time, the following: "So peace is upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I shall be raised up to life (again)!" (Qur'an, 19:33).

In Surat al-Ma`arij (Chapter 70 of the Holy Qur'an), the Almighty says the following: "So leave them to plunge into vain talk and play until they encounter the Day they have been promised. (It is) the Day on which they will come out of their sepulchers in sudden haste as if they were rushing to a goal-post (fixed for them), their eyes lowered in dejection, ignominy covering them (all over). Such is the Day they are promised" (Qur'an, 70:42-4).

On p. 111, Vol. 7, of Bihar al-Anwar, we read the following text: "In the Hereafter, there will be fifty stations: Each station lasts a thousand years. The first station is getting out of the grave. People will be confined in it for a thousand years barefoot, hungry and thirsty. Whoever comes out of his grave believing in Allah, in Paradise and Hell, in the Accounting and the Judgment, admitting Allah as the Lord, believing in His Prophet and in what Allah Almighty had revealed to him, will be saved from hunger and thirst." The Holy Qur'an refers to these fifty thousand years in the following verse: "The angels and the spirit ascend to Him in a Day whose measure is fifty thousand years" (Qur'an, 70:4).

In Nahjul-Balagha, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (as) says the following: "It is the Day on which Allah gathers the early generations and the last to discuss settling accounts and to reward good deeds. People will be submissive as they stand stifled by sweat, the earth having shaken underneath their feet. The best condition among them all is one who can find a foothold and a space." Obviously, the reckoning will take place on the same earth on which humans have been living for many years, but the earth will not be the same: All mountains will be then be flattened, all water in the seas and the oceans would have been turned into fire: The oxygen will be separated from the hydrogen and set ablaze: "When the mountains vanish (like a mirage); when the she-camels, ten months with young, are left untended; when the wild beasts are gathered together, and when the oceans boil over with a swell" (Qur'an, 81:3-6).

Notice the verse saying: "And when the wild beasts are gathered together" which indicates that the Day of Gathering will not be confined to humans but also to animals as well: All those who, without a justifiable cause, harmed these animals will have to account for their sins on that horrific Day, and this proves to you how Islam cares so much not only about humans but also about animals. One can write a book about "animal rights in Islam" and compare these rights with the abuse these servants of the Almighty receive at the hands of either ignorant or selfish humans, but let us not get into that now.

As for the last verse, No. 6, the one referring to the oceans "boiling over with a swell", I think it is a weak translation of what should be something like this: "And when the oceans are set ablaze." The earth will be flattened in order to make room for all billions of humans and animals and perhaps birds as well; it will be like a thin disk. Mentor al-Kulayni, as cited on p. 197, Vol. 7 of Bihar al-Anwar, quotes Imam al-Baqir (as) as saying: "Allah, the most Blessed and the most Exalted One, will send on the Judgment Day people out of their graves: Their hands are tied to their necks to the extent they cannot take an iota of anything in their hands. The angels will be with them chastising them harshly and saying: "These (folks) prevented the doing of small acts of goodness while plenty was at their disposal. These are the ones whom Allah granted out of His boons, yet they did not pay what belonged to Allah from their wealth." In the same reference and on the same page, mentor as-Saduq quotes the Messenger of Allah (P) as saying the following in a lengthy tradition: "If one drives a wedge between two persons, Allah sends a fire in his grave that burns him till the Judgment Day. Once he gets out of his grave, Allah will send on him a black snake that will tear his flesh apart till he enters hell." The Prophet (P) is also quoted in the same reference as having said: "If one fills his eyes with looking at a stranger woman, Allah will gather him on the Judgment Day nailed with nails of fire till Allah judges among the people. He will then rule to throw that man into the fire of hell." He (P) is also quoted on the next page of the same reference as having said the following: "One who drinks wine will be gathered on the

Judgment Day with a black face, his eyes are dark and slanted, his mouth twisted, saliva pouring down his mouth and his tongue sticking out of his back." Sheikh as-Saduq, as stated on p. 198 of the same reference cited above, has quoted Imam as-Sadiq (as) as saying: "If one removes the worry and the agony of another believer, Allah will remove from him the worries and the agonies of the Hereafter, and he shall come out of his grave with a happy and cooled heart." Both al-Kulayni and as-Saduq, as stated in the same reference, narrate a lengthy tradition from Sadeer, the money exchanger, citing Imam as-Sadiq (as) saying: "Allah gathers a believer, once he is out of his grave, in the company of an image and a like form. Whenever the believer sees horror in the Hereafter, the image says to him, "Do not worry and do not grieve, for you have the glad tidings from the most Merciful One." He keeps telling him such glad tidings till he takes his place for the judgment. Allah will then be easy on him as He judges him. He will order him to be lodged in Paradise.

The image will still be standing in front of him, so the believer will ask it, "May Allah have mercy on you! You have been a good companion to me: You came out with me from the grave and continued to give me glad tidings of happiness and honor from Allah Almighty till this became a reality for me; so, who are you?!" The image will answer him saying, "I am the pleasure which you entered into the heart of your believing brother in the temporary life, and Allah created me so I may inform you of the continuous happiness and incessant pleasure." On p. 168, Vol. 7 and p. 380, Vol. 74 of the same reference, mentor al-Kulayni narrates saying that Imam as-Sadiq (as) has also said: "One who gives his believing brother an outfit for the winter or for the summer obligates Allah to clothe him from the outfits of Paradise, removes the hardships of death from him, expands his grave for him and the angels convey the glad tidings to him when he comes out of his grave as referred to in this sacred verse: 'The angels welcome them saying: This is your Day which Allah promised you!' (Qur'an, 21:103)."

Al-Mizan: The Scales of Deeds

It is one of the terrifying stages/stages of the hereafter; the Almighty says the following in Surat al-A'raf: "And truly We shall recount their whole story with knowledge, for We were never absent (at any time or place). The balance that Day will be (absolutely) true: Those whose scales (of good deeds) will be heavy will prosper" (Qur'an, 7:8-9).

Following is Surat al-Qari'a, Chapter of the noise and clamor that announce the reckoning: In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. The (Day) of noise and clamor: What is the (Day) of noise and clamor? And what will explain to you what the (Day) of noise and clamor is? (It is) a Day on which men will be scattered about like moths, and the mountains will be like carded wool. It is then that one whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy, he will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction. But if one's balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light, he will have his home in a (bottomless) pit (of hell). And what will explain to you what this (pit) is? (It is) a fiercely blazing Fire" (Qur'an, 101:1-11).

It is called so because it hammers on the hearts with fear and terror. We read the following on p. 64 of al-Qummi's book Manazil al-Akhira: Be informed that perhaps there is nothing that tilts the scales of good deeds due to its weight like blessing the Venerable Prophet and his righteous progeny, peace and blessings of Allah be with them all, and like good manners. On p. 49, Vol. 2 of Safeenat al-Bihar, we read the following: "The person who narrated this tradition asked Imam as-Sadiq (as): 'How should we bless Muhammad and his progeny?' The Imam (as) said, 'You should say: Blessings of Allah, of His angels, prophets and messengers and all creation be with Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad; greeting upon him and upon them, the mercy of Allah and His blessing.' The narrator said, 'I asked the Imam (as): What is the reward of one who thus blesses the Prophet (P)? The Imam (as) said: Its reward is one coming out of his transgressions and sins, that is, he will be purged of them as though he has just been born.'" On p. 443, Vol. 4 of the Tafsir book by Sheikh Abu al-Fitoh ar-Razi, we read the following text: Sheikh Abu al-Fitoh ar-Razi has quoted the Messenger of Allah, peace and salutation of Allah be with him and his progeny, saying, "In the Ascension Night, when I reached the heavens, I saw an angel having a thousand hands. In each hand he had a thousand fingers. He was counting with his fingers. I asked Gabriel about his name, function and job. Gabriel said, 'He is an angel in charge of counting the drops of water that fall to the ground.' I asked the angel, 'Do you [really] know the number of rain drops that fall on the earth since Allah Almighty created the earth?' The angel answered saying, 'O Messenger of Allah (peace and salutation of Allah be with him and his progeny), by the One Who sent you in truth as a Prophet to the creation, I know the number of the rain drops that fall from the sky to the earth, all of it. I also know those that fall in the seas, on the deserts, on inhabited areas, on farms, on salty land and on the grave sites.'

The Prophet (peace and salutation of Allah be with him and his progeny) said, 'I was amazed

at his intelligence and memory in calculation.' The angel, therefore, said, 'O Messenger of Allah (peace and salutation of Allah be with him and his progeny), but despite all the hands, fingers, memory and intelligence, I am unable to count one thing.' I said to him, 'What is it?' He said, 'If some members of your nation gather together, mention your name and bless you, it is then that I am unable to calculate how many rewards they will receive for having blessed you.'" Also, al-Kulayni, the mentor, articulated the following after having performed the prayers ritual in the afternoon of a Friday: Lord! Send Your peace upon Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad, the wasis, the pleased ones, bless them with the best of Your blessings, peace be with him and with them, the mercy of Allah and His blessings. Anyone who recites this supplication seven times will be rewarded by Allah with rewards the number of which equals that of all of His servants; his good deeds will be accepted on the Judgment Day, and he will come out on the Judgment Day with noor (celestial light) shining between his eyes." On p. 49, Vol. 2 of Safeenat al-Bihar, we read the following text:

روي أنه من قال بعد صلاة الصبح والظهر: اللهم صلي على محمد وآله وعجل فرجهم واحشرنا معهم وارزقنا شفاعتهم، فإنه لا يموت
(الا و مدرك القانم من آل محمد (عليهم السلام)

"One who recites the following after the morning and afternoon prayers will not die before seeing al-Qa'im [al-Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance] from among the progeny of Muhammad, peace with them all: 'Lord! Bless Muhammad and his progeny, speed up their ease, gather us in their company and grant us their intercession.'"

Al-Hisab: The Reckoning

It is one of the most terrifying of all stages/stages of the hereafter, so much so that the hereafter is often referred to, as a whole, as "the Day of Reckoning". Numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an refer to it, emphasizing its significance and urging the faithful to prepare themselves for it with good deeds and acts of adoration, the latter cannot be accepted if the former are not. Some of the verses which refer to reckoning and to the fact that people take it lightly are these: "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Mankind's reckoning comes closer and closer: Yet they do not heed, and they turn away. (Nothing) ever comes to them of a renewed message from their Lord except that they listen to it as in jest, their hearts toying with trifles. The wrongdoers conceal their private counsels (saying), 'Is this more than a man like your own selves? Will you yield to witchcraft with your eyes open?'

Say: 'My Lord knows (every) word (spoken) in the heavens and the earth: He is the One Who hears and knows (all things).' 'No,' they say, '(these are) medleys of dreams! No, he forged it! No, he is (but) a poet! Then let him bring us a Sign like the ones that were sent to (Prophets) of old!' (As for those) before them, not one of the populations which We destroyed believed: Will these believe?" (Qur'an, 21:1-6).

Another reference is this: How many generations that insolently opposed their Lord's command and (that) of His Prophets did We call to account, to a severe account? And We imposed on them an exemplary punishment. Then they tasted the evil result of their conduct, and the end of their conduct was perdition. Allah has prepared a severe punishment for them (in the hereafter).

So fear Allah, O you men of understanding who have believed, for Allah has indeed sent down a message for you, a Prophet who rehearses God's Signs to you, containing clear explanations, so that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of darkness into the light. And those who believe in Allah and do righteous deeds He will admit into gardens beneath which rivers flow to dwell therein forever: Allah has indeed granted a most excellent provision for them" (Qur'an, 65:8-11).

Just as there are numerous references to reckoning in the Holy Qur'an, there are also numerous references to it in the Sunnah of the Prophet (P): Many traditions warn the believers about its woes and perils. On p. 258, Vol. 7 of Bihar al-Anwar, we read the following: Sheikh as-Saduq (may Allah have mercy on him) has narrated through the path of Ahl al-Bayt (peace with them) saying that the Messenger of Allah (peace and salutation of Allah be with him and his progeny) said: "The feet of a servant of Allah do not move before he is asked about four things: his lifespan and how he spent it, his youth and what he did during it, his wealth and where he found it and how he spent it and about love for us, we Ahl al-Bayt (as)." On p. 267 of the same reference, we read the following: Sheikh at-Tusi (may Allah have mercy on him) has narrated from Imam al-Baqir (peace with him) saying: "The first thing about which a servant of Allah is questioned is prayer. If it is accepted, everything else is accepted." On p. 274 of the same reference, we read the following: "Sheikh as-Saduq has narrated saying that the creditor comes on the Judgment Day and complains. If the borrower has good deeds, they (some of them if not all) will be taken away and given to the creditor. But if he has no good deeds, some of the sins of the creditor will be taken and

added to those of the borrower." On p. 82 of *Manazil al-Akhira*, we read the following: "Be informed that some critics have said: Nobody is spared the perils of reckoning and the precisions of the scales except one who holds himself to account in the short life and tests his person according to the scales of the Islamic Shari`a, applying the same to his actions, statements, deeds, sins, looks, motion and stillness, for they have said: Hold yourselves to account before you yourselves are held to account."

Tasleem Safeet al-A`mal: Delivering the Book of Deeds

It is another terrifying stage of the Judgment Day when the list of deeds is delivered to the one it belongs to. The Almighty has made a number of references to this book of deeds; here are some of them: When the scrolls are laid open" (Qur'an, 81:10); and also these verses: "He who is given his book in his right hand, soon his account will be taken by an easy reckoning, and he will turn to his people, rejoicing! But whoever is given His record behind his back, He will soon cry for perdition, and he will enter a blazing Fire" (Qur'an, 84:7-12).

On p. 314, Vol. 7 of *Bihar al-Anwar*, al-Ayyashi quotes Imam as-Sadiq (as) saying: When it is Judgment Day, everyone will be handed over his list of deeds, and it will be said to him, 'Read!' Allah will remind him of all his deeds through looking at this tablet, and the same applies to his statements, steps and everything else, as if he said, did or treaded them instantly. People will say, 'Woe unto us! Why does this book not leave out the recording of anything, be it small or big?!'" (Qur'an, 18:49).

Ibn Qawlawayh has quoted Imam as-Sadiq (as) as saying: "If one visits the gravesite of Imam al-Hussain (as) during the month of Ramadan and dies during his trip to visit al-Hussain (as), he will not be exposed to anything, nor will he be held to account, and it will be said to him, "Enter Paradise, you shall not fear." `Allama al-Majlisi, may Allah have mercy on him, has quoted Imam ar-Ridha (as) through two reliable isnads as saying: "If one comes from a distance to visit my gravesite, I shall go to him on three occasions: on the Judgment Day to save him from its woes, when the books of the doers of good are flown to their right hands, when the tablets of the criminals are flown to their left, on the Sirat [path between Paradise and Hell] and at the Mizan (scales of deeds)." In the book titled *Al-Haqq al-Yaqeen*, it is indicated that al-Hussain ibn Sa'eed has quoted Imam as-Sadiq (as) as having said: "If Allah wants to hold a believer to account, he gives him his book [of deeds] in his right hand and judges him between Himself and the believer without anyone seeing it. He will then say to him, 'My servant! You have done this and that.' The servant will say, 'Lord, I have done it.' Allah Almighty will say, 'I have forgiven you and change it into good deeds.' People will say, 'Blessed be Allah! This servant of Allah did not commit a sin, nor did he do anything contemptible!' This is the meaning of the verse of the Almighty: Then whoever is given his record in his right hand, soon his account will be taken by an easy reckoning, and he will turn to his people, rejoicing!" (Qur'an, 84:7-9).

The narrator asked, 'What is meant by his people (his family)? Does the believer accompany his folks who used to be with him in this life?' Imam as-Sadiq (as) said, 'If Allah wants something bad to afflict His servant [on account of the latter's deeds], He will try him before all creations, complete His argument against him then gives him his book in his left hand as Allah Almighty has said: Truly he thought that he would not have to return (to Us)!' (Qur'an, 84:14).

This points towards the hands of the unbelievers and hypocrites being tied and chained and their tablets delivered on their left side. It is to both these conditions that the supplications related to ablution refer: 'Lord! Give me my book in my right hand and my eternity in Paradise on my left; do judge me easily and do not give me my book on my left or behind my back, and do not tie my hands to my neck.'

As-Sirat al-Mustaqeem: The Straight Path

It is also one of the most terrifying stages/stages of the Hereafter if not the very most. It is described in both Holy Qur'an and authentic Sunnah in numerous verses and traditions due to its significance, so much so that the faithful are reminded of it ten times a day in their obligatory daily prayers and in all optional ones, nawafil, when they recite Surat al-Fatiha, the Opening Chapter to the Book of Allah, the Qur'an. Following is a good deal of more information about this Sirat; so, keep reading.

On pp. 103-105, Vol. 46 of *Bihar al-Anwar*, we read detailed descriptions of this Sirat, and additional text is indicated on pp. 69-71 of the same reference. Here is some of the text on the latter pages: "It is a bridge extended over Hell: Nobody enters Paradise without successfully passing over it. Traditions indicate that it is thinner than hair, sharper than the sword and hotter than fire. Sincere believers cross over it like lightning that snatches the eyes. Some of them pass over it with difficulty but they pass it and are thus saved, whereas

others fall into Hell from one of the obstacles on this Sirat.

It is a sort of this life's As-Sirat al-Mustaqeem where true faith, the path of the wilaya, is to follow in the footsteps of the Commander of the Faithful and the Purified Imams (peace of Allah be with all of them): Anyone who swerves from this worldly path and leans towards falsehood by speech or by action, the obstacle of the Hereafter's Sirat will shake under his feet, causing him to fall into hell. As-Sirat Al-Mustaqeem which you find in Surat al-Hamd in the Holy Qur'an points out to both Sirats: the one in this life and the one in the hereafter."

In his book titled Al-Haqq Al-Yaqeen, where he quotes Al-'Aqa'id by Sheikh as-Saduq, may Allah have mercy on his soul, al-Majlisi states the following: "We believe that each of the obstacles along the path to the Gathering represents the name of one of the obligations, i.e. what the Almighty has commanded or prohibited. If someone reaches an obstacle bearing the name of an obligation, and if he had fallen short of performing that obligation, he will be stopped at it and will be required to pay what he owes Allah Almighty. If he can get out of that obstacle through the good deeds which he had done, or there may be mercy from Allah which will include him, he will get out and pass that particular obstacle. The time period of keeping anyone at each of these obstacles is a thousand years.

The obstacles continue, following each other; questions go on and arguments are pursued about what each station represents: the obligations and the commandments. If one answers duly, he will pass by the last station to the abode of eternity and will be released most beautifully: He will live a perpetual life where there is neither death nor loss, and he will taste happiness where there is neither misery nor destruction.

He will live beside the mercy of his Lord with the prophets, the Signs of Allah, the Truthful Ones, the ones who can intercede on behalf of others, the righteous ones whose company is truly the very best. But if he is asked at one of the obstacles and required to make up for falling short of performing it during his lifetime, if he did not offer an act of righteousness to make up for that shortcoming, and if he is not saved through mercy from Allah Almighty that rescues him from that obstacle, his feet will slip in that area and he will fall from it into the abyss and into Hell, we seek refuge with Allah against this.

All these obstacles are on the Sirat. One of them is called the wilayat (mastership of or loyalty to the Imams from among the Ahl al-Bayt

#65225;)): All people will be stopped at it and asked about the wilayat of the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib and the Pure Imams after him

#65225;). If one was observing this wilayat, adhering to it, he will pass this obstacle; otherwise, he will fall into Hell. Allah Almighty has said "But stop them, for they must be asked" (Qur'an, 37:24).

And the most important of these obstacles is the Mirsad: "For your Lord is (as a Guardian) on a watch-tower" (Qur'an, 89:14).

Allah Almighty says: "By My Honor and Greatness (do I swear) that no oppression committed by an oppressor escapes My knowledge." Another obstacle is called the kinship obstacle. Another is called amana, trust (something entrusted for safe keep to someone), another is called salat, prayer, and so on: Each obligation—what is commanded and what is prohibitive—has an obstacle at which the servant of Allah is stopped to answer about his responsibility towards it."

On p. 65, Vol. 8 of Bihar al-Anwar, we read the following: "So you would see people on the Sirat falling like scattered butterflies while others are holding to

it with their hands or feet or even with one foot fearing they would fall down as the angels around them stand, call upon the Almighty and plead to Him saying: 'O Clement Lord! Forgive these people, overlook them through Your favor and generosity, let them safely pass on the Path and cross it.'

Whoever passes the Path does so through wide mercy from Allah and says, 'Praise to Allah and through a blessing from Allah that good deeds are sealed and blessed actions grow, and I praise Allah Who saved me from you through

His favor and boon after I had lost all hope; surely our Lord forgives the servants' [sinful] deeds, appreciative [of good deeds]'. On p. 410, Vol. 22 of

the same reference, we are also told that the great sahabi Abu Tharr al-Ghifari, Allah is pleased with him, has cited the Messenger of Allah (P) saying: "Kinship and trust are at both ends of the Path: Whoever maintains good relations with his kinsfolk and returns the trust safely will pass over the Path, for both ends of the Path shall protect him against falling into the Fire."

In another narrative, Imam al-Baqir (as) said: "If one who severed his ties and betrayed the trust reaches the Path, his good deeds will not avail him so long as both these characteristics were in him, and they will cause him to fall into the Fire (of hell)."

May the Almighty have mercy on us in this life and the life to come and enable us to keep our feet firm on His Straight Path and admit us into His Paradise, Allahomma Ameen.

Good deeds that make the passage on the Sirat easy: According to p. 639 of the book *الأعمال إقبال* by Ibn Tawoos, one who offers 21 rek'as after the sunset prayers in the eve of the first of the month of Rajab in each rek'a of which he recites both Surat al-Hamd (Chapter 1) and Surat at-Tawhid (Chapter 112), then he recites the tasleem after each couple of prostrations will be protected by the Almighty, and his family, wealth and children will be protected, too, and he will be granted security from the torment in the grave. Moreover, he will pass over the Sirat without any questioning like lightning.

On p. 136 of *Thawab al-A`mal*, we are told that one who fasts six days during the month of Rajab will be secure on the Day of Reckoning and will pass over the Sirat without being asked any questions.

Ibn Tawoos also narrates that one who performs ten rek'as during the 29th eve of the month of Sha'ban, reciting in each rek'a Surat al-Hamd once and

at-Takathur (Chapter 102) ten times, in addition to both Chapter 113 and Chapter 114 ten times each and Surat at-Tawhid (Chapter 112), he will be granted by the Almighty rewards of those who exert their utmost in learning the creed and in teaching it, making his scale of good deeds heavier and easing for him to pass over the Sirat like lightning.

On p. 102, Vol. 34 of Bihar al-Anwar, we are told that one who performs the ziyara of Imam ar-Ridha (as) despite his grave being so far, the Imam will visit him at three places on the Judgment Day in order to save him from their horrors, and one of these horrors is the Sirat.

What will happen after all of these stages/stages? The answer is very simple:

One will be led either to eternal happiness in Paradise or to damnation in hell. And surely Allah knows best.