

A Description of the Hellfire from Quran and Sunnah



The Companions hoped from Allah, but they feared Him as well, for just as the Qur'an contained vivid descriptions of Paradise, so too did it contain rich and intense descriptions of the Hellfire. In addition to the Hellfire, the terrifying events concerned with the end of this world and the Day of Resurrection are also treated in the Qur'an - the destruction of the earth, the crumbling of the mountains, the scattering of the stars, etc. The terrors that the disbelievers will be subjected to are also detailed in the Qur'an - their humiliation, wretchedness, and painful torment. Many Verses of the Qur'an remind people that they will be accountable and will pay a heavy penalty for all of the wrongs they perpetrated against others; masters will be pitted against slaves, leaders against their citizens, murderers against those they murdered, disbelievers against Shaitaan - and even a person against his very own limbs, which will attest to the wrongs he did. The Qur'an informs us of how the disbelievers will enter the Hellfire, of how both hypocrites and believers will pass over As-Siraat (a bridge that is erected over the Hellfire), and of how only the believers will then be saved. All of these themes and topics had a profound effect on the souls of the Prophet's Companions. As for the

Hellfire and the punishments that will be meted out to people in it, the Qur'an provides a clear and rich description of both. Here are some of the things we learn about regarding the Hellfire from the Noble Qur'an:

1) The Food, Drink, and Clothing of Hell's Denizens

a) No one in this world can imagine just how vile the food is in the Hellfire; what is more, the denizens of the Hellfire will have no choice but to eat what is given to them. Allah said:

لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيعٍ لَا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنْ جُوعٍ

"No food will there be for them but a poisonous thorny plant, which will neither nourish nor avail against hunger." (Qur'an 88: 6, 7)

People eat food for nourishment and for pleasure, but the food of the Hellfire will neither nourish nor give pleasure; rather, it will be a form of torture and punishment. Other than a poisonous thorny plant, they will also have to eat from a tree called Zaqqum:

إِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الرَّقُومِ كَعَلَى الْحَمِيمِ

"Verily, the tree of Zaqqum, will be the food of the sinners, like boiling oil, it will boil in the bellies, like the boiling of scalding water." (Qur'an 44: 43-46)

Allah made reference to the Zaqqum tree in other Verses as well:

أَذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ نُزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الرَّقُومِ

"Is that (Paradise) better entertainment or the tree of Zaqqum (a horrible tree in Hell)?" (Qur'an 37: 62)

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَنتُمُ الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَذِّبُونَ لَا كِلُونَ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِنْ رَقُومٍ فَالِلُّونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ فَشَرِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ فَشَرِبُونَ شُرْبَ الْحَمِيمِ

"Then moreover, verily, - you the erring-ones, the deniers (of Resurrection)! You verily will eat of the trees of Zaqqum. Then you will fill your bellies therewith. And

drink boiling water on top of it. So, you will drink (that) like thirsty camels!"
(Qur'an 56: 51-55)

From these Verses we learn that the Zaqqum tree is indeed a most foul and vile thing; its roots are found in the bottom of the Hellfire, while its shoots and branches spread-out over all parts of the Hellfire. The fruits of Zaqqum are ugly to look at, which is why they are compared to the heads of devils. And although we haven't seen devils with our eyes, we, by our very nature, know them to be horribly ugly, just as we know angels to be beautiful. Despite the ugliness in appearance and foulness in taste of those fruits, the people of the Hellfire will become so hungry that they will be forced to eat them; in fact, they will fill their stomachs with the fruits of Zaqqum. When their stomachs are filled with the fruits of Zaqqum, the fruits will begin to boil like burning oil. The pain they will then feel is immense, beyond what we can now express in words. When they find themselves to be in this wretched state, they will hurry to Al-Hameem, boiling water that reaches the extreme of hotness, and they will drink from it like thirsty camels. Al-Hameem is so hot that it will cut up their bowels. Allah said:

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَّاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ 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 جَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ

"The description of Paradise which the Muttaqoon (the pious) have been promised (is that) in it are rivers of water the taste and smell of which are not changed, rivers of milk of which the taste never changes, rivers of wine delicious to those who drink, and rivers of clarified honey (clear and pure); therein for them is every kind of fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord. (Are these) like those who shall dwell forever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels?" (Qur'an 47: 15)

When the denizens of Hell eat the vile food described above, they will choke on it, because it is so foul and disgusting:

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنْكَالًا وَجَمِيمًا وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُضَّةٍ وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

"Verily, with Us are fetters (to bind them), and a raging Fire. And a food that chokes, and a painful torment." (Qur'an 73: 12, 13)

Another kind of food that the denizens of Hell will eat is Ghisleen:

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَهُنَا جَمِيمٌ وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِينَ لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِمُونَ

"So, no friend has he here this Day, nor any food except filth from the washing of wounds (Ghisleen). None will eat except the Khati'un (sinners, disbelievers, polytheists, etc.)." (Qur'an 69: 35-37)

In another Verse, Allah said:

وَاخْرُ مِنْ شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ

"And other (torments) of similar kind - all together!" (Qur'an 38: 58)

Ghassaaq in this last Verse and Ghisleen mean the same thing: the pus that flows from the wounded flesh of Hell's inhabitants. Some maintain that Ghisleen and Ghassaaq refer to the discharge that flows from the private parts of fornicating women and from the rotten flesh of the disbelievers. Al-Qurtubee said that they are *"the juices that (flow from the bodies) of Hell's denizens."*

b) They will have different kinds of drink: Al-Hameem, Al-Ghassaaq, Al-Muhl, and As-Sadeed. Allah said:

مِثْلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّهُمْ كَمَنْ هُوَ خَلِدٌ فِي النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُمْ

"The description of Paradise which the Muttaqoon (the pious) have been promised (is that) in it are rivers of water the taste and smell of which are not changed, rivers of milk of which the taste never changes, rivers of wine delicious to those who drink, and rivers of clarified honey (clear and pure); therein for them is every kind of fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord. (Are these) like those who shall dwell forever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels?" (Qur'an 47: 15)

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُقَالُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

"And say: "The truth is from your Lord. "Then whosoever wills, let him believe; and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve. Verily, We have prepared for the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.), a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them (disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah). And if they ask for help (relief, water, etc.) they will be granted water like boiling oil that will scald their faces. Terrible the drink, and an evil Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting, place, etc.).!" (Qur'an 18: 29)

مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيدٍ يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِغُهُ وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ

"In front of him (every obstinate, arrogant dictator) is Hell, and he will be made to drink boiling, festering water. He will sip it unwillingly, and he will find a great difficulty to swallow it down his throat, and death will come to him from every side, yet he will not die and in front of him, will be a great torment." (Qur'an 14: 16, 17)

هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَعَسَاقُ

"This is so! Then let them taste it, - a boiling fluid and dirty wound discharges." (Qur'an 38: 57)

These Verses mention four kinds of drinks that will be consumed by the denizens of Hell: First, Al-Hameem, which is boiling hot water that reaches the pinnacle of hotness; second, Al-Ghassaaq, which we discussed in the previous section about the food that Hellfire's denizens will eat - so it is discussed as both a kind of food and a kind of drink; third, As-Sadeed, which refers to what flows from the meat and skin of disbelievers; and fourth, Al-Muhl, which is like burning oil: when one comes near to it, one's scalp falls off. c) As for the clothing that the denizens of Hell will wear, Allah said:

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ سُرَابِيلُهُمْ مِّنْ قِطْرَانٍ وَتَعْسَىٰ وُجُوهُهُمْ النَّارُ

"And you will see the Mujrimoon (criminals, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism, polytheists, disobedient to Allah, etc.) that Day bound

together in fetters; (Muqarranoon in fetters; mean: - with their hands and feet tied to their necks with chains.) Their garments will be of pitch (Qatiraan), and fire will cover their faces." (Qur'an 14: 49, 50)

Qatiraan, the clothing they will wear, means molten copper (or perhaps tar).

2) Punishment in the Hellfire

a) Varying degrees of punishment.

Just as the dwellers of Paradise will be at different levels, each enjoying a level of pleasure that is in accordance with his ranking and deeds, so too will the denizens of Hell be at various levels. Allah said:

النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ

"The Fire; they are exposed to it, morning and afternoon, and on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): "Cause Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!" (Qur'an 40: 46)

And Allah said:

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ زِدْنَاهُمْ عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يُفْسِدُونَ

"Those who disbelieved and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, for them We will add torment over the torment; because they used to spread corruption [by disobeying Allah themselves, as well as ordering others (mankind) to do so]."
(Qur'an 16: 88)

And the Prophet described the punishment of those who will be in the shallowest part of the Hellfire: "Verily, from the dwellers of Hell who will be least punished on the Day of Resurrection is a man who will have live coal placed on the sole of his feet, and as a result of that, his brain will boil."

Saheeh Bukhaaree, "The Book of Ragaaiq'; chapter, "The Description of Paradise and the Hellfire." Hadeeth number: 6561.

b) They will be gathered together on their faces, and the Hellfire will burn their faces. One of the ways in which Allah will humiliate the disbelievers is that He will

"gather them together on the Day of Resurrection on their faces - blind, dumb, and deaf." Allah said:

وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَى
وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمًى وَبُكْمًا وَصُمًّا قَالُوا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا

"And he whom Allah guides, he is led aright; but he whom He sends astray - for such you will find no Auliya' (helpers and protectors, etc.), besides Him, and We shall gather them together on the Day of Resurrection on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf, their abode will be Hell; whenever it abates, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire." (Qur'an 17: 97)

And then they will be thrown on their faces into the Hellfire:

وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكَتَبَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

"And whoever brings an evil (deed) (i.e., Shirk - polytheism, disbelief in the Oneness of Allah and every evil sinful deed), they will be cast down (prone) on their faces in the Fire. (And it will be said to them) "Are you being recompensed anything except what you used to do?" (Qur'an 27: 90)

Then, in the Hellfire, nothing will shield even their faces from the Hellfire:

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ

"The Fire will burn their faces, and therein they will grin, with displaced lips (disfigured)." (Qur'an 23: 104)

c) They will be dragged.

One of the punishments that the denizens of Hell will be subjected to is that they will be dragged on their faces in the Hellfire. Allah said:

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعْرٍ يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ ذُوقُوا مَسَـ

"Verily, the Mujrimoon (polytheists, disbelievers, sinners, criminals, etc.) are in error (in this world) and will burn (in the Hellfire in the Hereafter). The Day they

will be dragged in the Fire on their faces (it will be said to them): "Taste you the touch of Hell!" (Qur'an 54: 47, 48)

That they are chained with iron collars over their necks indicates that the pain they will feel from being dragged on their faces will intensify:

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَبِمَا أَرْسَلْنَا بِهِ رُسُلَنَا فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّ الْأَعْلَلَ فِي أَغْتَقِهِمْ وَالسَّلَاسِلَ يُسْحَبُونَ
فِي الْحَمِيمِ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُونَ

"Those who deny the Book (this Qur'an), and that with which We sent Our Messengers (i.e., to worship none but Allah Alone sincerely, and to reject all false deities and to confess resurrection after the death for recompense) they will come to know (when they will be cast into the Fire of Hell). When iron collars will be rounded over their necks, and the chains, they shall be dragged along. In the boiling water, then they will be burned in the Fire." (Qur'an 40: 70-72)

d) Their faces will be blackened.

In the Hereafter, Allah will cause the faces of Hell's denizens to turn extremely black, so that it will seem as if the darkness of the night has settled on their faces. Allah said:

وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ بِمِثْلِهَا وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ذِلَّةٌ مَّا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ كَأَنَّمَا
أَغْشَيْتَ وُجُوهَهُمْ قِطْعًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

"And those who have earned evil deeds, the recompense of an evil deed is the like thereof, and humiliating disgrace will cover them (their faces). No defender will they have from Allah. Their faces will be covered, as it were, with pieces from the darkness of night. They are dwellers of the Fire, they will abide therein forever." (Qur'an 10: 27)

e) The Hellfire will encompass them.

Since the sins of a disbeliever encompass him like a bracelet around a wrist, and since the reward should be appropriate to the deed, the Hellfire will encompass him from all directions. Allah said:

هُم مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ وَكَذَلِكَ تُجْزَى الظَّالِمِينَ

"Theirs will be a bed of Hell (Fire), and over them coverings of Hellfire. Thus, do We recompense the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.)." (Qur'an 7: 41)

What this means is that the Hellfire will encompass them from both beneath and above. Allah said in another Verse:

يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمْ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

"On the Day when the torment (Hellfire) shall cover them from above them and from underneath their feet, and it will be said: "Taste what you used to do." (Qur'an 29: 55)

And in yet another Verse, Allah said:

هُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظَلَلٌ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظَلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهَ بِهِ عِبَادَةً يَعَبَادُونَ فَأَتَقُونَ

"They shall have coverings of Fire, above them and covering (of Fire) beneath them; with this Allah does frighten His slaves: "O My slaves, therefore fear Me!" (Qur'an 39: 16)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, Allah made a more explicit mention of how the Hellfire will encompass the disbelievers, explaining that the Hellfire has walls that surround the disbelievers, so that they are not able to leave:

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَعِينُوا يُعَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

"And say: "The truth is from your Lord." Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve. Verily, We have prepared for the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.), a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them (disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah). And if they ask for help (relief, water, etc.) they will be granted water like boiling oil, that will scald their faces. Terrible the drink, and an evil Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting place, etc.).!" (Qur'an 18: 29)

f) The Hellfire will leap up over their hearts:

Allah said:

كَأَلَّا لِيُبَدَنَّ فِي الْخُطْمَةِ وَمَا أَدْرَنَكَ مَا الْخُطْمَةُ نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ الَّتِي تَطْلُعُ عَلَى الْأَفْنِدَةِ

"Nay! Verily, he will be thrown into the crushing Fire. And what will make you know what the crushing Fire is? The fire of Allah, kindled, which leaps up over the hearts." (Qur'an 104: 4-7)

g) The fetters, chains, and collars that will restrain them in the Hellfire.

Allah has prepared iron chains and collars for the people of the Hellfire:

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلًا وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَمِيرًا

"Verily, We have prepared for the disbelievers iron chains, iron collars, and a blazing Fire." (Qur'an 76: 4)

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنْكَالًا وَجَمِيمًا وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُضَّةٍ وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

"Verily, with Us are fetters (to bind them), and a raging Fire. And a food that chokes, and a painful torment." (Qur'an 73: 12, 13)

Iron collars will be placed around their necks:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَنْ تَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا وَأَسْرُوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَعْلَلَ فِي أَغْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"Those who were deemed weak will say to those who were arrogant: "Nay, but it was your plotting by night and day, when you ordered us to disbelieve in Allah and set up rivals to Him!" And each of them (parties) will conceal their own regrets (for disobeying Allah during this worldly life), when they behold the torment. And We shall put iron collars round the necks of those who disbelieved. Are they requited aught except what they used to do?" (Qur'an 34: 33)

إِنَّ الْأَعْلَلَ فِي أَغْنَقِهِمْ وَالسَّلَاسِلُ يُسْحَبُونَ

"When iron collars will be rounded over their necks, and the chains, they shall be dragged along." (Qur'an 40: 71)

Just as criminals are tied up in this world:

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنْكَالًا وَجَحِيمًا

"Verily, with Us are fetters (to bind them), and a raging Fire." (Qur'an 73: 12)

Criminals in the Hereafter will be tied up as well, except with sturdier, tighter, longer - and generally more terrifying chains. Allah said:

دَوْهُ ثُمَّ الْبَحِيمَ صَنُوهُ ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ

"(It will be said): 'Seize him and fetter him; then throw him in the blazing Fire. Then fasten him with a chain whereof the length is seventy cubits!'" (Qur'an 69: 30-32)

h) A disbeliever will be united in the Hellfire with the false deity that he worshipped and with his companion from the devils.

Allah said:

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَهَةً مَا وَرَدُوهَا وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

"Certainly! You (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell! (Surely), you will enter it. Had these (idols, etc.) been Aliha (gods), they would not have entered there (Hell), and all of them will abide therein." (Qur'an 21: 98, 99)

And in another Verse, Allah said:

وَمَنْ يَعْصُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ يَصُلُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَنَا قَالَ يَلَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بَعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِينُ وَلَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ إِن ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْكُمُ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ

"And whosoever turns away (blinds himself) from the remembrance of the Most Beneficent (Allah) (i.e., this Qur'an and worship of Allah), We appoint for him Shaitaan (Satan - devil) to be a Qarin (an intimate companion) to him. And verily, they (Satans/devils) hinder them from the Path (of Allah), but they think that they are guided aright! Till, when (such a one) comes to Us, he says [to his Qarin (Satan/devil companion)] "Would that between me and you were the distance of

the two easts (or the east and west)" - a worst (type of) companion (indeed)! It will profit you not this Day (O you who turn away from Allah's Remembrance and His worship, etc.) as you did wrong, (and) that you will be sharers (you and your Qarin) in the punishment." (Qur'an 43: 36-39)

i) Their grief, regret, and supplication.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَا فِتْنَتٌ بِهِ وَأَسْتَرْوَا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

"And if every person who had wronged (by disbelieving in Allah and by worshipping others besides Allah), possessed all that is on earth, and sought to ransom himself therewith (it will not be accepted), and they would feel in their hearts regret when they see the torment, and they will be judged with justice, and no wrong will be done unto them." (Qur'an 10: 54)

When the disbeliever looks at his scroll of deeds, when he sees in it the disbelief that qualifies him for eternity in the Hellfire, he will supplicate for his own destruction:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوا ثُبُورًا وَيَصْلَى سَعِيرًا

"But whosoever is given his Record behind his back, he will invoke (his) destruction, and shall enter a blazing Fire, and made to taste its burning." (Qur'an 84: 10-12)

Then again, when he is thrown into the Hellfire, he will invoke for his own destruction:

وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُقَرَّنِينَ دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُورًا لَا نَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُورًا وَاحِدًا وَادْعُوا ثُبُورًا كَثِيرًا

"And when they shall be thrown into a narrow place thereof, chained together, they will exclaim therein for destruction. Exclaim not today for one destruction, but exclaim for many destructions." (Qur'an 25: 13, 14)

When inside the Hellfire, he will scream loudly and wail pathetically, but he will also invoke his Lord, hoping that He will take him out of the Hellfire:

وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِحُونَ فِيهَا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُ النَّذِيرُ فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَصِيرٌ

"Therein they will cry: "Our Lord! Bring us out, we shall do righteous good deeds, not (the evil deeds) that we used to do."

(Allah will reply): "Did We not give you lives long enough, so that whosoever would receive admonition, - could receive it? And the warner came to you. So, taste you (the evil of your deeds). For the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.) there is no helper." (Qur'an 35: 37)

He will, at that time, fully acknowledge his disbelief, his foolish deeds, and the sorry use he made of his mind:

قَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

"And they will say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing Fire!" (Qur'an 67: 10)

But his excuses and pledges of reform will be too little, too late. His requests will be rejected with a sense of finality and severity that will cause all hopes of a better condition to vanish from his heart. He will be given an answer that shows him his true worth:

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ قَالَ اخْسَنُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ

"They will say: "Our Lord! Our wretchedness overcame us, and we were (an) erring people. Our Lord! Bring us out of this; if ever we return (to evil), then indeed we shall be Zaalimoon : (polytheists, oppressors, unjust, and wrongdoers, etc.)." He (Allah) will say: "Remain you in it with ignominy! And speak you not to Me!" (Qur'an 23: 106-108)

Because of his disbelief on earth, there is no return from the destination he will have reached: supplication will be useless and hope will never again be of any avail.

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَا نَتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هِدْنَهَا وَلَكِنَّ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا إِنَّا نَسِينَكُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

"And if you only could see when the Mujrimoon (criminals, disbelievers, polytheists, sinners, etc.) shall hang their heads before their Lord (saying): "Our Lord! We have now seen and heard, so send us back (to the world), we will do righteous good deeds. Verily! We now believe with certainty." And if We had willed, surely! We would have given every person his guidance, but the Word from Me took effect (about evildoers), that I will fill Hell with jinn and mankind together. Then taste you (the torment of the Fire) because of your forgetting the Meeting of this Day of yours, (and) surely! We too will forget you, so taste you the abiding torment for what you used to do." (Qur'an 32: 12-14)

He and the other denizens of Hell will no longer address Allah, but will instead implore the custodians of Hell to help them, to intercede on their behalf, so that Allah will reduce for them their punishment.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِنَ الْعَذَابِ قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ تَكُ تَأْتِيكُمُ رُسُلُكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَالُوا فَادْعُوا وَمَا دُعَتُوا الْكَافِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ

"And those in the Fire will say to the keepers (angels) of Hell: "Call upon your Lord to lighten for us the torment for a day!" They will say: "Did there not come to you, your Messengers with (clear) evidences and signs? They will say: "Yes." They will reply: "Then call (as you like)! And the invocation of the disbelievers is nothing but in error!" (Qur'an 40: 49-50)

They will then invoke Maalik, the custodian of Hell, asking for their destruction, so that, if their situation cannot improve as long as they remain alive, at least their punishment will come to an end. But Maalik's answer will only confirm their worst fear:

وَنَادُوا يَمْلِكُ لِيَفْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مَكْتُونَ لَقَدْ مِثْنُكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَرِهُونَ

"And they will cry: "O Maalik (Keeper of Hell)! Let your Lord make an end of us." He will say: "Verily you shall abide forever." Indeed, We have brought the truth

(Muhammad with the Qur'an), - to you, but most of you have a hatred for the truth." (Qur'an 43: 77,78)

By choosing disbelief over belief, the disbelievers lose their own selves and their families. Allah said:

قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخَسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

"Say (O Muhammad): "The losers are those who will lose themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, that will be a manifest loss!" (Qur'an 39: 15)

As we have seen from the previous two sections, Makkan Verses of the Qur'an trained Muslims to hope for Allah's reward and to fear His punishment. Like the eternal bliss of Paradise, the punishment of Hell is real, both in the physical and mental sense. Based on the descriptions they found in the Qur'an and heard from the Prophet, the Companions constantly pictured the gardens of Paradise and the pits of the Hellfire; needless to say, such constant visualization had a profound effect on their characters. They made preparations for death, knowing fully well that it is an inevitable end for all human life in this world, that they will all be questioned as individuals, and that the grave is either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a pit from the pits of Hell. When a given Companion reflected on these realities, he feared Allah in his heart, and he went about his daily activities with the knowledge that Allah has full knowledge of all his doings. This knowledge would prompt openly and secretly, asking him to invoke Allah, openly and secretly, asking Him to honour him with the companionship of the Prophets, the truthful ones, the martyrs, and the righteous ones. These days, those who are striving to improve the state of our nation need to understand with the same intelligence and visualize with the same clearness the realities of the Hereafter - of Paradise and Hell. It is only then that the Muslim nation can regain its honour and status among the nations.

Taken from the Noble Life of the Prophet PBUH by Dr Ali Muhammad As-Sallabi.