

SHAIKH ‘ABD AL-QĀDIR AL-JĪLĀNĪ



A Concise Description of
Jannah & Jahannam
the Garden of Paradise and the Fire of Hell



Excerpted from
Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth
(*Al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibi Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*)

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Preface

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has decreed that in the next life man will be in one of two abodes: *Jannah* (the Garden of Paradise) or *Jahannam* (the Fire of Hell). The Garden of Paradise will be the resting place of all those who believe in Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and persevere in good, as well as those whom, although they have done wrong, the Prophets or *awliyā'* and *ṣāliḥūn* (the righteous) intercede for them and those whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) forgives out of His vast generosity. Those who did otherwise or whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) does not forgive will be cast into the Fire of Hell, and then out of His mercy and compassion, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will rescue any of the *mu'minūn* who have even an atom of *īmān* in their hearts. This essay discusses the Divine Wisdom in the creation of these two abodes.

This world is a testing ground. What happens here determines our situation in the life to come. The end of the *muḥsinūn* (people who do good), or even of penitent wrongdoers, cannot be the same as that of unrepentant *fāsiqūn* (transgressors). Were it so, it would render void the attribute of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) of *'adālah* (justice). Those who do have *īmān* and do good must of necessity be recompensed for their *īmān* and their actions. For this, the Garden of Paradise was created. It is everything that this world is not. The life of this world, its pains and its pleasures, is nothing more than the blink of an eye; the Garden of Paradise is everlasting. This world is transient; the next, eternal. The inhabitants of the Garden shall have whatever their hearts desire. They will know no pain or grief and will receive that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and which has never occurred to the mind of a human being. Ease and comfort is all that they will experience. This is the reward the Almighty has promised to those of His believing slaves who do good. Its reason for having been created is nothing more than to amply reward those who are successful.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is *ar-Raḥmān* (the Beneficent) and *ar-Raḥīm* (the Merciful), but He is also *al-ʿAdl* (Justice itself). So, just as the *muḥsinūn* must be rewarded, so too must those who do evil be punished. The harm they cause to other people and to themselves cannot go unpunished unless they turn in repentance to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) or unless Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) forgives them freely out of His vast generosity.

The Day of Judgement is also known as the Day of *Taghābun* (mutual recompense) because on that Day those who suffered at the hands of others will take from their good deeds as a form of recompense for the suffering they endured in this world. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is aware of all that unrepentant *kāfirūn* transgressors do, whether they conceal it or do it openly, and in the Hereafter He will exact retribution from them. They will be thrown on their faces into the Blazing Fire to abide therein forever. Every time they die they will be restored to life only to die again. They will know only agony. It is for this, the punishing of the *kāfirūn* (disbelievers) and *fāsiqūn*, that the Fire of Hell was created.

Allāh (Most Gracious) desires only good for his slaves. He does not wish to punish us, even though He has every right to do so. In His wisdom, He has therefore decided to convey to us some of the delights of the Garden of Paradise, so that we may be spurred on to good. The descriptions given in the Glorious Qurʾān about the Garden of Paradise are thus only that which is most beautiful and pleasing, that which would shake man from his lethargy to become of the *muḥsinūn*. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says: **“For them will be Gardens of Eternity; beneath them rivers will flow; they will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade: They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good the recompense! How beautiful a couch to recline on!”** (Qurʾān 18:31)

It is the nature of most men that they always want something in return for anything they may have to do. The knowledge of the Garden of Paradise is thus an assurance to them that they will not go unrewarded. They engage in those deeds which are pleasing to their Lord and try to abstain from those which are displeasing to Him, so that they may acquire the good of the next world.

“The promise of Allāh is true.” (Qur’ān 28:13) The believing servants know this, and when they read about what is promised to them of the pleasures of the Garden of Paradise in the Book of Allāh, it is an encouragement for them to do good. They submit themselves to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), knowing that the sufferings of this world are but a trifle compared to the joys of the Garden of Paradise.

Man is in a constant battle against his own desires. It is only through *taqwā* (God-consciousness) that he is able to overcome these desires. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has therefore informed us of the chastisement of the Fire of Hell in order to strike fear into the hearts of the believers. The Fire of Hell is thus described in the most frightening terms. One example is the *āya* of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He): **“And beyond him is Hell where he will be given pus to drink. He gulps at it but can hardly swallow it down. Death comes at him from every side but he does not die. And beyond him is relentless punishment.”** (Qur’ān 14:16-17) And there is also: **“But no! It is a Raging Blaze stripping away the limbs and scalp.”** (Qur’ān 70:15-16) It is a reminder to us, when we are tempted to sin, of the consequences of that action. The fear of the anger of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) thus prevents us from falling into error.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is *al-Baṣīr* (All-Seeing) and *al-‘Alīm* (All-Knowing). He is informed about everything which happens in the heavens and the earth. The actions of His slaves and the suffering they

endure are all known to Him. He therefore says: **“Their Lord responds to them: ‘I will not let the deeds of any doer among you go to waste, male or female – you are both the same in that respect. Those who emigrated and were driven from their homes and suffered harm in My Way and fought and were killed, I will erase their bad actions from them and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, as a reward from Allāh. The best of all rewards is with Allāh.’”** (Qur’ān 3:195) We learn from this āya that our sins will be blotted out as if they had never occurred, if only we bear with patience and fortitude the trials that active Muslims suffer in this world. We will become inhabitants of the Garden of Paradise. But the Garden of Paradise itself is not the ultimate achievement. There is a reward greater than it and that is to attain the pleasure of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Our fate will be determined by our *īmān* and our actions. There are angels assigned to each one of us to record what we do. They know and see all our commissions and omissions and do not fail in recording them. We therefore cannot escape from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Rather we should turn to Him in repentance before death overtakes us. We should strive our utmost to be of those who will enter the Garden of Paradise and should hate to become of the inhabitants of the Fire of Hell.

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Concerning the causes of entry into the Fire of Hell, and the causes of entry into the Garden of Paradise

You should know that entry into the Fire of Hell is the result of unbelief [*kufṛ*] and the multiplication of punishment, and that the allotment of the descending levels [*darakāt*] is determined by the scale of evil deeds and evil traits of character. Entry into the Garden of Paradise, on the other hand, is the result of faith [*īmān*] and the multiplication of blessed grace, while the allotment of the ascending levels [*darajāt*] is determined by the scale of righteous deeds and excellent traits of character.

You must also know that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) created the Garden of Paradise and filled it with blissful comfort, as a reward for those who are worthy of it, that He created the Fire of Hell and filled it with torment, as a punishment for those who deserve it, and that He created this world and filled it with disasters as well as blessings, as an ordeal and a trial. Then, when He created His human creatures, He made the Garden of Paradise and the Fire of Hell invisible to them, so that they could not see them directly with their ordinary eyes. The blessings and disasters that exist in this world are therefore meant to serve as the model [*unmūdhaj*] of the Hereafter, and as the means by which the taste of it can be experienced.

He also created kings from among His servants here on this earth, and He conferred on them an authority that would be potent enough to instil terror in people's hearts and to control their personal inclinations. This was meant to serve as a model [*unmūdhaj*] and an allegory [*mithāl*] of His planning and management, His dominion, and the effectiveness of His command and His way of dealing with things.

He therefore provided information about all of this by way of revelation [*tanzīl*]. He described the two abodes [the abode of this world and the abode of the Hereafter], and He described His dominion [*mulk*], His power [*qudra*], His planning and management [*tadbīr*], His gracious favour [*minna*], and His works [*ṣanā'ī*]. For this purpose He used the technique of coining similitudes [*amthāl*], then He said (Exalted is He):

wa tilka 'l-amthālu naḍribu-hā li 'n-nāsi wa mā ya'qilu-hā illa 'l-ālimūn.

**And as for these similitudes, We coin them for mankind,
but none will grasp their meaning except those who have
[the necessary] knowledge. (29:43)**

Those who are well versed in the knowledge of Allāh [*al-‘ulamā’ bi-llāh*] are therefore qualified to understand what Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) intends to convey by His similitudes, because a similitude is merely the depiction of something you have already witnessed with your own eyes, in order to let you see the characteristic features of that which is otherwise invisible to you. It is a device for enabling you to perceive what you cannot perceive with your ordinary eye, by causing the perceptive faculty of your heart to penetrate that which your eyesight is incapable of perceiving. Your heart can thus make sense of all the information that is being addressed to it – information about the Kingdom of Heaven [*al-Malakūt*], information about the two abodes [*ad-dārain*], and information about the King of kings [*Mālik al-mulūk*].

Concerning the words of Allāh
(Almighty and Glorious is He),
in which He has given us the
following description of the people
of the Garden of Paradise:

*fā-waqā-humu 'llāhu sharra dhālika 'l-yawmi wa laqqā-hum
naḍratan wa surūrā wa jazā-hum bi-mā ṣabarū jannatan wa ḥarīrā
muttaki'īna fī-hā 'ala 'l-arā'ik: lā yarawna fī-hā shamsan wa la
zamharīrā wa dāniyatan 'alai-him ṣilālu-hā wa dhullilat quṭūfu-hā
tadhliḷā wa yuṭāfu 'alai-him bi-āniyatin min fiḍḍatin wa akwābin
kānat qawārīrā qawārīran min fiḍḍatin qaddarū-hā taqdīrā wa
yusqawna fī-hā ka'san kāna mizāju-hā zanjabilā – 'ainan fī-hā
tusammā Salsabilā. wa yaṭūfu 'alai-him wildānun mukhalladūn:
idhā ra'aīta-hum ḥasibta-hum lu'lu'an manthūrā. wa idhā ra'aīta
thamma ra'aīta na'imān wa mulkan kabīrā. 'aliya-hum thiyābu
sundusin khudrun wa istabraq: wa ḥullū asāwira min fiḍḍa: wa
saqā-hum Rabbu-hum sharāban ṭahūrā. inna hādhā kāna la-kum
jazā'an wa kāna sa'yu-kum mashkūrā.*

Allāh has therefore warded off from them the evil of that day, and He has made them find cheerfulness and joy. And He has granted them, as a reward for all that they endured, a Garden [of Paradise] and silk attire. Reclining therein upon couches, they will experience there neither [the fierce heat of] a sun nor bitter cold. And close upon them is the shade thereof, while its clustered fruits bow down low. And goblets of silver are brought around for them, and vessels as clear as crystal, crystal-clear vessels made of silver, which they have measured exactly to the measure [of their own deeds]. And in it their thirst is quenched with a cup the mixture of which is *zanjabīl* [ginger], a fountain therein, named *Salsabīl*. And waiting on them are immortal youths whom, if you could see them, you would take for scattered pearls. And when you see, there you will see a state of bliss and a high estate. Their raiment will be fine green silk and gold brocade. They will be adorned with bracelets of silver, their Lord will slake their thirst with a pure drink. [And it will be said unto them]: “Behold, this is a reward for you. Your endeavour [upon earth] has found acceptance.” (76:11-22)

As for His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

fā-waqā humu 'llāhu sharra dhālika 'l-yawmi...

Allāh has therefore warded off from them the evil of that day... (76:11)

– what He means is that, on the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyāma*], He will spare them from having to experience the awful intensity of the Reckoning [*Ḥisāb*] and the dread terror of Hell [*Jahannam*].