

This World and the Hereafter: An Invaluable Connection

What Is the Relationship Between This World and the Hereafter? How Does the World Manifest the Hereafter?

Temporary world or the eternal hereafter?

The lowly world or the magnificent hereafter?

The limited world or the infinite hereafter?

We often consider this world and the hereafter as two opposing concepts, which is completely valid. However, many of us are unaware of the relationship between this world and the hereafter and the role the world plays as a manifestation of the hereafter. This world is in the hereafter and the hereafter is surrounding this world.¹ The clearest example that can clarify this matter is a mother's womb in the world. Just as we cannot deny the connection of a mother's womb with the world, we cannot ignore the relationship between this world and the hereafter. While we are in the mother's womb, we are also influenced by the world. Events in the world affect us, but at the same time, we are engaged in our own separate environment and system. We entered the world from the womb and after completing our developmental stages in the womb, we returned to the world and continued our lives. Life beyond the womb offers unparalleled authenticity, scope, beauty, and abundance.

¹. Imam Ali: "The world is in the Hereafter, and the Hereafter encompasses the world." (Dara Shikoh, *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, vol. 1, p. 270)

As a fetus developing within the mother's womb, we experience different biological conditions; our food is different; the pleasures we experience are different from those outside the womb, and our ability to influence the outside world is very limited. However, our life is dependent on the existence of the world. Without the world, we would not exist. In fact, we are in the world, but we are in a different environment! In the mother's womb, we experience the lowest levels of material life. Our nourishment comes from the mother's blood. A very narrow and dark environment surrounds us. We enjoy, feel the mother's love, affection, anger, and anxiety, but in a very limited way! In fact, in this environment, we are only preparing ourselves for life in the world that we are supposed to return to in a perfect form and make use of its blessings according to the tools we have brought with us.

The World: The Condensed Form of the Hereafter

The relationship between the mother's womb and the world is exactly like the relationship between this world and the hereafter. What we have and experience in the world is essentially a compact form of what exists in the hereafter. Therefore, the relationship between this world and the hereafter goes beyond what we might initially imagine. Knowledge, love, joy, intimacy, devotion, happiness, pleasure, all these truths are derived from their origin in the hereafter and have descended in accordance with worldly life. Worldly life is lower than the magnificent living conditions of the hereafter just as life in the womb was inferior to our life in this world. Therefore, the world is the lowest manifestation of the hereafter, and since

Heaven and Hell are manifestations of the hereafter, the world is the lowest manifestation of Heaven and Hell. But what exactly does this mean?

Indeed, our interaction with the world reveals our condition in the hereafter. We can only enjoy Heaven if we have previously enjoyed its small-scale model in this world. However, this does not mean that if we have been deprived of some pleasures or blessings in this world, we will also be deprived of them in the hereafter. Rather, it means that we can only enter Heaven if we have lived a peaceful and heavenly-like life in this world.

In fact, if we find happiness and inner peace in this life and are compatible with the qualities and livings conditions of Heaven, we will deserve entry into original Heaven. Just as if our stomach lacks the necessary enzymes to digest a very small portion of food, we certainly cannot digest a full meal. We cannot fully experience the original Heaven itself if we cannot find happiness in its earthly manifestation. Therefore, to be deserving of Heaven, we must also be happy with the small manifestation of Heaven in this world.

A Place for Manifesting the Hereafter

As previously discussed regarding the relationship between this world and the hereafter, just as the world is a manifestation of Heaven, it can also be a manifestation of Hell. This means that if we constantly experience discomfort, anger, irritability, fear, hatred, jealousy, etc., and align ourselves with the manifestations of Hell in this world, we become incompatible with Heaven and incapable of using its blessings. In fact, we have made ourselves worthy of hell, and just as we have subjected ourselves to hardship and constriction in this world, we

will also face pressure and hardship in the hereafter. Therefore, it is important how we view and define the world. Indeed, it is through our understanding of the relationship between this world and the hereafter that we determine the nature of our existence in the hereafter. It is obvious that when dealing with the world, we must understand how to face it. Otherwise, we cannot optimally benefit from it or may even be harmed.

However, the matter does not end here. After this world, we will return to a realm that is incredibly vast, rich, and great. The quality of life in the hereafter far exceeds that of our earthly existence, and consequently, the assets we require in the hereafter are far greater. These assets are acquired in the world through righteous deeds and their repetition. Since the environment of the world, much like the womb of a mother, has a very high constructive capability, it is the best opportunity to repeat righteous deeds and turn them into moral attributes and ultimately to assets. These assets will give us the opportunity to further enjoy Heaven, of which we have experienced glimpses in this world. On the other hand, the world has a very high capacity to compensate for the mistakes and bad deeds that have been ingrained in our soul through repetition. If we allow these negative actions and traits to accompany us into the hereafter, it is not known to what extent they will affect us.

In this article, we explored the relationship between this world and the hereafter from a different perspective. We stated that the world is a manifestation of the hereafter, and in fact, our interaction with it gives us an indication of our situation in the hereafter. In other words, in order to deserve Heaven, we must be happy in this world, which is a small manifestation of Heaven. Conversely, to avoid Hell fire,

we must steer clear of the world's hellish manifestations, such as anger, hatred, and envy. We also mentioned that due to its high constructive capability, the world is the best place to acquire assets for the hereafter and to eliminate any undesirable traits we may have acquired.

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