

Examining the Existence of Heaven Before the Creation in Light of Reason and Faith

Analyzing the Existence of Heaven Before the Creation Based on the Quran, *Hadiths*, and Philosophical Arguments

From ancient times, the human being has pondered his existential truth and place in the universe. In this regard, one concept that has always captivated thinkers, scholars, and even ordinary people is the existence of heaven before the creation of the world. In Islamic teachings, the heaven is introduced as the human being's ultimate destination and the highest reward for devotion to God. However, questions arise regarding the existence of heaven and the truth of heaven, including:

- Is heaven merely a reward, we receive after death, or is it a perpetual truth older than the material world?
- Was the creation of heaven prior to the material world, in the hierarchy of creation?
- Did God merely have a plan for creating Heaven, or had it already existed before the creation of the world?
- Does the creation of heaven have a temporal reality, or has the heaven been created prior to this world?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to go beyond emotions and superficial understandings and delve into verses of the Quran, *hadiths* of the Infallible Imams

(Peace be upon them), and rational arguments oriented on *fitrah* (innate nature).

Many people consider heaven merely an ideal place to live in after death, unaware that this perspective overlooks a fundamental dimension of heaven's truth; its age and primacy!

Islamic thinkers and commentators, citing verses of Quran and *hadiths* of the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them), believe that the heaven was created before this world. For example, they refer to verses that speak of heaven being prepared for the righteous. This example is enough to prove the existence of heaven before the creation of the material world.

Alongside verses and *hadiths*, there are various *fitrah*-oriented and rational arguments through which we can realize the existence of heaven before the creation and the truth of the heaven. This reality suggests that knowledge of everything in the realm of creation can be extracted from the human soul and *fitrah*. In this lesson, we will examine the existence of heaven before the creation of the world, referring to several examples from the Quran, narrations of the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them), and rational and philosophical arguments.

Examining the Existence of Heaven Before the Creation of the World from a Transmitted (*Naqli*) Perspective

There are different opinions about the existence of heaven before the creation. Some consider heaven a reality pertaining to the hereafter, while others believe that it has existed before this world. The reason for this difference of opinion lies in the various interpretations people have of the verses and narrations about heaven.

The views of groups who believe that heaven has been existed before this world are divided into several categories. Some believe in temporal precedence, while others believe in the existential precedence. Here, the existential precedence means that the existence of something holds a higher position in terms of value and importance compared to something else. Considering this definition, heaven surpasses the material world in value and status and is, in a way, the cause of this world's existence. By reviewing the lessons "The First Creation," one can better understand the concept of existential precedence and its difference from temporal precedence. Below, by referring to several verses and hadiths, we will review examples of existing views regarding the history of heaven.

Examining the Existence of Heaven Before the Creation of the World from the Perspective of the Holy Quran

Some groups believe in the existence of heaven before the creation of the world. So, they hold that the heaven currently exists. These individuals cite Quran quotes such as "*ueidat lilmutaqin*" (prepared for the righteous) [1], "*ueidat liladhin amanuu bi Allah wa rusulih*" (prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers) [2], "*'aeada Allah lahum janaat*" (Allah has prepared for them gardens) [3], and "*aeada lahum janaat*" (and He has prepared for them gardens) [4]. This is because the words "*aeada*" and "*ueida*" refer to something that has been prepared beforehand. Therefore, in their view, according to the Quran the heaven has been prepared beforehand and existed before.

Among other verses used to argue about the existence of heaven before the world and its precedence over the world, are those related to the story of Prophet Adam's

(Peace be upon him) dwelling in heaven [5] and his expulsion from it [6]. Such verses emphasize that the heaven was created really. As a result, it was existed before the creation of this world. However, there have always been discussions among commentators regarding the essence of the heaven Prophet Adam's (Peace be upon him) dwelled in.

Examining the Existence of Heaven Before the Creation of the World from the Perspective of Narrations

The existence of heaven before the creation of the world is among the topics has been discussed in some hadith *Qudsi* (sayings of the Prophet revealed to him by Allah) and hadiths of the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them). One of the main aspects of this topic is the existence of heaven. Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) in a hadith regarding the importance of believing in the existence of heaven says, "He is not from our Shias who denies four things: *Miraj* (heavenly ascension of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and questioning in grave, and creation of heaven and hell and intercession [7]".

In a *Hadith Qudsi*, God refers to the indescribable blessings of heaven, saying: "I have prepared for My righteous slaves (such excellent things) as no eye has ever seen, nor an ear has ever heard nor a human heart can ever think of [8]". The noteworthy point in this *hadith* is that God did not say He "will" prepare the blessings in the future, but rather that they "were" prepared beforehand. The phrase "*aedadtu*" (I have prepared) directly refers to the objective and real aspect of heaven and, in a way, also refers to the existence of heaven before the creation of the world.

Some individuals consider heaven and hell merely places that will come into existence after the Day of Judgment and in the hereafter. However, Imam Reza (peace be upon him), in a question-and-answer session, referred to the existence of heaven and affirmed that its transcendence is beyond a merely destined creation [9]. A person asked the Imam (Peace be upon him): "O son of the Messenger of God, inform me about the heaven and hell, whether they are created and exist now?" The Imam replied: "Yes, and when the Messenger of God (Peace be upon him) ascended to the heavens, he entered the heaven and also saw the hell." Abu Salt (Imam Reza's companion) says: "I said, "A group says, the heaven and hell are destined, but not yet created." The Imam replied: "They are not among us and we are not among them, anyone who denies the existence of the heaven and hell, do not pay attention to the truthfulness of what Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and we speak. So, they will no gain a benefit from our guardianship."

The Existence of Heaven before the Creation of the World from the Perspective of the Law of Proportion

What is understood from verses and narrations is that the heaven is created before this world. Thus, the hereafter, heaven, and hell are not supposed to be created in the future, but rather existed before this world. Alongside this world, there is the hereafter which encompasses this world [10]. Therefore, when we speak of the heaven, we are in fact speaking of a real place whose existence precedes the existence of this world, and this world is the lowest manifestation of it.

Previously, in the discussion of the law of proportion, we referred to the relationship between this world and the hereafter. We said that the heaven is part

of the hereafter's reality. The relationship between this world and the hereafter is similar to the relationship between a mother's womb and this world.

Just as a fetus is in the mother's womb intends to return to this world, so too is this world within the hereafter. After living a short period of time in this world, humans return to the hereafter. The hereafter and heaven send something of their essence into the womb of this world, which is the Divine Breath. This Breath, after attaching to the body, prepares humans for their return to God. Based on this perspective, the heaven is not only an otherworldly reward but also the origin of this world's existence. Thus, by performing good deeds in this world, we can return to the heaven and the Absolute Perfection. This return is the realization of the perpetual and eternal purpose of our creation.

Using Philosophical and Rational Arguments to Prove the Existence of Heaven Before the Creation of the World

In examining the existence of heaven before the creation, considering the rational and philosophical dimension of this issue, one can engage in diverse and profound arguments, each illuminating different aspects of this truth. Is the heaven truly just a promise for after death, or does it encompass a perpetual and fundamental reality? Below, by referring to some key concepts such as the principle of teleology of creation, the divine innate human nature, and the issue of being Allah's deputy (on earth), we will examine reasons that show that the heaven has been existed before this world and it can be considered as the starting point and ultimate purpose of human creation.

The Principle of Teleology of Creation

One of the logical arguments to prove the existence of heaven before the world is the "principle of teleology of creation." According to this principle, the Wise God always has a specific purpose and purpose in creating anything; so, He does nothing in vain. The creation of the human being must also have a purpose beyond worldly life. This is because the worldly life, with all its ups and downs, is short and transient. If the human life is only limited to this world, his creation would be futile. The ultimate purpose of human creation is closeness to God, happiness, and reaching the Absolute Perfection.

The heaven, as a symbol of perfection and the human being's ultimate destination, is where servants get closer to God and achieve bliss [11]. Since God has been aware of the purpose of creation from the beginning of the creation to the eternity and has provided the necessary prerequisites, it can be concluded that the heaven existentially precedes this world. That is, God first selected the heaven as the ultimate goal for the human being and then created this world as a means to achieve that purpose.

Divine *Fitrah* (Human Innate Nature) and Inclination towards Perfection

One of the arguments to prove the existence of heaven before the creation, is divine *fitrah* (human innate nature) and their desire for perfection. The human being comes into this world with a divine innate nature [12].

This innate nature is a set of inherent tendencies, inclinations, and talents that guides him towards goodness, beauty, and perfection. One of the prominent

features of this innate nature is the desire for infinity. The human being always seeks to find bliss, peace, and the Absolute Perfection. He is never satisfied with his current status. The limitations of the material world do not fully satisfy his desire for infinity. Every pleasure in this world is accompanied by pain. No perfection is absolute and perfect; therefore, if the human being has an innate nature that drives him towards infinity, while the infinity is not found in the material world, there must be a place beyond the world to satisfy this desire and manifest the Absolute Perfection. This place is the very heaven; but why does the innate human nature testify the existence of the heaven before the world? Innate human nature can be considered a perpetual memory. It is as if the human once has experienced being in a perfect state, that is, heaven, and tasted absolute bliss and peace; then he descended to this material world and fell away from that position, but the memory of that perfection remained in his innate nature and always calls him to it.

As mentioned in previous lessons, if we have a desire for something, it means that thing existed before and we have enjoyed it. The one who seeks perfection and wants to enter the heaven must have tasted being there in the past. The human being always feels like he has lost something in this world and unconsciously seeks to find it. This lost thing is the perpetual heaven that he seeks in the depths of his soul. Based on this, it can be said that heaven is existentially prior to the world.

Human's Being Allah's Deputy on Earth

Considering human's being Allah's representative on earth opens a new window for examining the existence of heaven before the creation of the world. In the Holy Quran, the human being is introduced as God's deputy on earth [13]; that is, the

human being is God's representative and successor and must manifest the divine attributes in his being.

On the other hand, we know that heaven is a place where the divine attributes reach the peak of perfection. Mercy, justice, beauty and perfection are all fully manifested in heaven. As the deputy of God, the human being is obligated to strive to realize the divine attributes on earth. This means that he must strive to establish justice on earth, spread peace and kindness to the world, and develop the earth.

If the human being is God's deputy on earth and must manifest the divine attributes, and these attributes are fully manifested in heaven, then his effort to become the God's deputy on earth is in fact an effort to make the world a heaven. Now, why is the human being's effort in this regard considered a sign that proves the existence of heaven before the creation of the world? This is because this effort shows that human being's desired lifestyle is something beyond the material world. The human being unconsciously seeks to build a divine utopia on earth. This utopia is the very heaven that exists as perfection in the mind of human being and draws him towards itself.

In this lesson, we discussed the existence of the heaven before the creation of the world. We said that the heaven is not merely a reward we receive after death, but a perpetual truth rooted in human creation and existence. The heaven has an independent existence that precedes the material world. In fact, feeling of alienation and the desire for perfection in humans are considered signs of the existence of this truth. The principle of teleology of creation and human being's innate inclination towards perfection indicate that worldly life should be

considered a prelude to returning to the heaven and the Absolute Perfection. This truth that we must become God's deputy and manifest divine attributes on earth is a reason that the desire for entering the heaven, as an ideal and a higher goal, always exists within human nature. Therefore, the heaven should be considered an eternal reality and the ultimate purpose of human life.

Do you know of any other rational or transmitted (*Naqli*) arguments that help prove the existence of the heaven before this world?

References

- [1]. The Quran, 3:133
- [2]. The Quran, 57:21
- [3]. The Quran, 9:89
- [4]. The Quran, 9:100
- [5]. The Quran, 2:35
- [6]. The Quran, 20:117
- [7]. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. *Bihar al-anwar*. vol.8, 197
- [8]. al-Ahsa'i, Ibn Jumhur. *Awali al-Allali*. vol.4. 101
- [9]. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. *Bihar al-anwar*. vol.8, 284

[10]. Daylami, Hassan. *Irshad al-qulub*. vol.2, 309

[11]. The Quran, 3:185

[12]. The Quran, 30:30

[13]. The Quran, 2:30