

## **Heaven and Hell in Real Life: Every Choice We Make Shapes Our Eternal Destiny**

### **Strategies for a Better Life or Knowing the Manifestations of Heaven and Hell in Real Life**

Life, for a wise person, is a meaningful journey, and every choice, action, and thought plays a critical role in determining the path of this journey. But how can we discern the right path and move toward bliss? Answering this question requires a deep understanding of the concept and signs of heaven and hell in real life. How well do we truly understand the nature and reality of heaven and hell? Are these merely abstract concepts tied to theology and the hereafter, or is it possible to understand and experience heaven and hell in real life?

Traditionally, heaven and hell have been presented as destinations in the hereafter, often described with various rewards and punishments. Yet, could these concepts also be realities we shape through our daily choices and experience in this very world? Can we identify instances of heaven and hell in real life?

The concepts of heaven and hell are not just metaphysical destinations; they are tangible realities reflected in our everyday decisions. All individuals are building their own heaven or hell in this world through their daily lives. Believing in the presence of heaven and hell in real life encourages us not to overlook our decisions, relationships, behaviors, and thoughts. Everyday qualities and actions, such as kindness, gratitude, and open-heartedness, allow us to taste heaven in this world.

In contrast, jealousy, anger, irritability, and ingratitude bring the experience of hell into our lives.

Recognizing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life can profoundly impact the quality of our lives, making it essential to gain a deep understanding of them. Addressing these questions helps us develop a deeper insight into the concepts of heaven and hell and recognize their heavenly and hellish examples in the world around us.

In this lesson, we explore the importance of recognizing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life and introduce some examples of these manifestations.

### **The Importance and Effects of Knowing the Manifestations of Heaven and Hell in Real Life**

Many of us seek a purposeful, meaningful, and peaceful life. One of the most significant ways to achieve this goal is to understand the connection between our daily choices and our eternal destiny. Through our daily actions and thoughts, we are building the heaven or hell we experience both in this world and in the eternal life to come. Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) highlights this in describing the characteristics of the pious, stating: “To them, Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its bliss. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering from its punishment [1].”

Knowing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life is important for several reasons and has remarkable effects, some of which are outlined below:

#### **Improving Personal and Spiritual Journey**

Knowing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life is an effective way to improve personal and spiritual journey. When a person understands how their actions, behaviors, and intentions align with a particular path or destiny, they strive to adjust their behavior to gain divine approval, enter heaven, and avoid hell. The benefit of paying attention to the worldly manifestations of heaven and hell is that, through everyday actions, we can experience the taste of heaven or hell and become aware of their nature.

### **Worldly Affairs Are Systematic**

Our lives as human beings are eternal, and each of our choices leaves a lasting impact on this eternity. Believing in eternity and understanding heaven and hell brings order to our lives and helps us move toward the right path with planning and purpose. If we know our destination clearly, we choose the tools for our journey accordingly. When we understand that every action has an eternal consequence, we strive to cultivate the factors that create heaven in this world and avoid those that lead to hell. This requires familiarity with the manifestations of heaven and hell in daily life. For example, if we know that patience and perseverance in facing difficulties are among the factors that build heaven [2], we strive to be patient and steadfast during hardships, avoiding despair and hopelessness.

### **Assessing the Amount of Health and Spirituality of Life**

Knowing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life helps us identify true values. All factors that contribute to the health or sickness of the heart can be considered manifestations of heaven and hell in real life, as the primary criterion for entering heaven or hell is the soundness of the heart.

Qualities such as good character, honesty, kindness, and gratitude are heavenly attributes that reflect a healthy heart. In contrast, jealousy, sorrow, aggression, and irritability are manifestations of hell, indicating spiritual poverty and inner sickness. Recognizing these manifestations is the key to understanding which behaviors and lifestyles are healthy and which are dangerous or harmful.

### **Preparation for Eternal Life**

Knowing the manifestations of heaven and hell in daily life not only helps us live better in this world but also prepares us for eternal life in heaven. This world is a training ground for becoming familiar with the manifestations of heaven [3]. This perspective encourages us to view life in this world as an opportunity for spiritual growth and development. By practicing heavenly behaviors in this world, we prepare ourselves for eternal life in heaven.

### **Understanding the Relationship Between the World and the Hereafter**

According to the Law of Proportion, there is a close relationship between the world and the hereafter; what we sow in this world, we reap in the hereafter. Knowing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life helps us understand this connection in a concrete and tangible way, enabling us to make the right choices and shape a blessed future. Belief in the hereafter, heaven, and hell motivates us to strive in this world.

### **Manifestations of Heaven and Hell in Real Life**

Understanding the concepts of heaven and hell extends beyond mere belief; it requires knowing their manifestations within the fabric of daily life. This understanding begins with the realization that heaven and hell are not merely

places beyond this world but are existential states reflected in our thoughts, behaviors, and emotions.

The manifestations of heaven and hell in real life consist of a series of small and large decisions that, over time, shape our destiny. These choices—encompassing various actions, thoughts, and feelings—reveal whether we are on the path to heaven or hell.

In the following sections, we outline a collection of heavenly and hellish actions, thoughts, and emotions. Awareness of these elements, which we all encounter in daily life, helps us choose the best behaviors, thoughts, and emotions at critical moments and avoid harmful, hellish ones.

### **Manifestations of Heaven**

- **Charity and Donation:** Giving from one's wealth to meet the needs of others.
- **Patience and Tolerance:** Enduring hardships, tolerating difficulties, and forgiving others' mistakes.
- **Openness of Heart:** Having a broad capacity to handle challenges and accept differing opinions.
- **Restraining Anger:** Controlling rage, restraining impulsive reactions, and avoiding outbursts.
- **Maintaining Family Ties:** Cherishing one's family and fostering a joyful, warm, and close-knit environment for them.
- **Gratitude:** Appreciating divine blessings, expressing thanks to others, and focusing on what one has.
- **Forgiveness:** Pardoning others, letting go of their errors, and freeing oneself from resentment and hatred.

- **Service to Others:** Helping fellow humans, supporting the needy, and even aiding animals.
- **Sincere Love:** Loving others without expectation and cherishing God's creations.
- **Good Character and Warmth:** Displaying kindness, respect, and friendliness while avoiding harshness.
- **Optimism:** Maintaining a positive outlook on life, hoping for a bright future, and focusing on the positive aspects of every situation.
- **Pursuing Noble Goals:** Aspiring to humane purposes and concentrating on matters that impact eternal destiny.

### Manifestations of Hell

- **Arrogance and Boasting:** Believing oneself superior, flaunting possessions, and belittling others.
- **Suspicion and Pessimism:** Viewing others negatively and misinterpreting their actions.
- **Humiliation and Mockery:** Degrading others and displaying arrogance toward them.
- **Ill-Temper and Aggression:** Causing distress to others, whether through words or actions.
- **Worldly Regret:** Clinging emotionally to material things and lamenting their loss.
- **Anger:** Losing control, reacting impulsively, and engaging in verbal or behavioral aggression.

- **Jealousy:** Wishing for others' blessings to vanish, resenting their success, and seeking to undermine them.
- **Gossip, Slander, and Lying:** Spreading falsehoods, circulating rumors, and falsely accusing others.

Reflecting on these behavioral, intellectual, and emotional signs reveals that heaven and hell do not result from extraordinary or miraculous deeds. Rather, through simple actions and behaviors in this world, we can create them in our daily lives. By recognizing these signs and striving to cultivate heavenly behaviors while avoiding hellish ones, we can experience a life filled with peace, happiness, and spirituality, ultimately attaining eternal heaven. In other words, the choice between heaven and hell in real life rests with us!

In this lesson, we explored the impact of knowing the manifestations of heaven and hell in real life. Our goal is to provide practical guidance for building heaven and avoiding hell through the thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and relationships we encounter in everyday life. What are your thoughts on the presence of heaven and hell in real life?

#### References

- [1]. "Sermon 193." *Nahj al-balagha*.
- [2]. "And will reward them for their patience with a Garden and silk." (Quran, 76:12)
- [3]. "Sermon 28." *Nahj al-balagha*.