

## **The Role of Spiritual Awakening and Remembering the Hereafter in Inner Improvement**

### **Examining the Connection Between Spiritual Awakening and Remembering the Hereafter and Their Role in Reshaping One's Lifestyle**

In previous lessons, we discussed awakening of the heart (*Yaqza*) and its relationship with negligence and insight. In this lesson, we aim to explore the connection between spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter. We will examine how the longing for Heaven and the fear of Hell manifest in a person's thoughts and actions, and why these two are considered signs of an awakened heart.

The awakened heart is the starting point for any real journey toward human growth, and one of its first signs is a change in a person's perspective on the hereafter. When the awakened heart hears about Heaven, it fills with hope and tranquility. Such a heart no longer sees Heaven as an imaginary picture or seeks happiness in temporary pleasures; instead, it recognizes Heaven as a real destination promised by God.

In contrast, a person who is still living in negligence has no real reaction to the mention of the hereafter. To them, death feels like something strange and worrying. This very difference reveals the profound connection between spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter. This is because an awakened heart,

through its longing for Heaven and fear of Hell, reveals signs of the spirit's life and wakefulness within itself.

When someone with an awakened heart thinks of the blessings of Heaven, they are filled with hope, and when remembering the torment of Hell, a kind of awareness and alertness is stirred within them. This awareness is the prelude to a change in their behavior and lifestyle. After any slip, the awakened heart immediately thinks of making amends and correcting itself. The fear of Hell for an awakened person is not a morbid or despairing fear, but rather an understanding of the reality of sin that encourages them to return and repent.

Spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter are intertwined. A person attached and devoted to this world never reaches the stage of vigilance and awakening. However, those who feel longing for Heaven and the fear of Hell find the strength to do good deeds and avoid wrong through their genuine faith. Attention to the hereafter is one of the first steps in self-improvement, and it pulls a person out of negligence and leads them nearer to God.

### **Longing for Heaven: A Sign of an Awakened Heart**

One of the first signs of an awakened heart is longing for Heaven. Instead of seeking happiness in transient pleasures and unstable worldly possessions, the awakened heart seeks it in the true promise of God. This longing is a sign of a sound heart. A heart believes in eternal life, is freed from attachment to the world, and feels a constant sense of joy in the hope of meeting God.

Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) says: “The Almighty Allah has created a house in Heaven as well as in Hell for each and every creature. When the people of Heaven and Hell go to their respective houses, a call will be given out: ‘O people of Heaven! Look down.’ When the people look down they will see their houses in Hell. They will be told: ‘You would have been given those had you disobeyed Allah’” [1].

This belief is a source of hope, motivation, and steadfastness. If we believe in our eternal station, we can walk the path of purity with more patience and motivation. Conversely, someone who has not yet awakened is neither excited by Heaven nor fears Hell; the reality of the hereafter has not touched their heart.

We can see an example of this truth in daily life. Just as someone endures hardships to attain a beautiful home, a comfortable life, or reach a big goal, an awakened person sees the hardships of this world as a means to reach the true destination. They consider Heaven their true asset and see every suffering as an opportunity to grow and get closer to God.

When spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter come alive within us, resentment, envy, and petty sorrows have no room in our hearts. We do not take worldly competitions seriously and find our peace in God's pleasure. Imam Ali (Peace be upon him), says: “Fill yourselves with desire for the bounties of Heaven, [and] you will love death and loathe [this worldly] life” [2].

On the other hand, a person who ignores the hereafter becomes sad and restless with the slightest deprivation or failure, because they have forgotten their true wealth.

Spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter revive our souls and rescue us from negligence; they become a source of hope, tranquility, and motivation on the path to becoming close to God.

### **Harmony Between Fear and Hope in an Awakened Heart**

Our lives always move between two feelings: the hope of reaching the destination and the fear of falling. Longing for Heaven is the driving force, and the fear of Hell is the guardian of our path. When spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter are present in a person, these two feelings, like two wings, maintain our spiritual and moral balance. Without fear, hope turns into arrogance and negligence; without hope, fear leads to despair and weakness.

The Quran says: “But as for he who feared the station of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, Heaven will be [his] refuge” [3]. This verse reminds us that a conscious fear of being held accountable by God and divine presence is an inner force for controlling low desires and inclinations and finding lasting spiritual peace.

In the view of an awakened person, the fear of Hell does not mean fruitless anxiety and worry; instead, it is a sign of being aware of the consequences of one’s deeds. They know that every small deed affects their eternal destiny. When the memory of the hereafter takes root in their heart, they see even minor anger or envy as a warning sign to be more careful. They know that ignoring these feelings can divert them from the path of bliss.

We can compare the fear of Hell to everyday experiences. Just as the fear of the law or one's conscience prevents us from doing wrong, remembering the hereafter encourages us to watch our behavior and improve ourselves. The difference is that worldly punishments are temporary and limited, but the results of deeds in the hereafter are everlasting.

One of the signs that spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter are alive within us is the change in the quality of our worship. The awakened heart does not perform worship out of habit or repetition. Rather, it engages in it with presence of heart and awareness. Such worship is a force for repentance, growth, and inner reconstruction. Spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter keeps us balanced between fear and hope, a state where fear and hope together become a stable force for movement, peace, and elevation.

### **The Role of Spiritual Awakening and Remembering the Hereafter on the Path of Spiritual Growth**

The longing for Heaven and the fear of Hell are not the end of our spiritual journey; rather, they are the beginning of awakening. The awakened heart uses these two feelings to move away from negligence and pays attention to its eternal destiny. However, the goal of the awakened heart is to reach higher levels of *ma'rifa* of God and conscious servitude.

Ethics scholars say there are seven levels of sincerity. It starts with seeking worldly benefits, fearing punishment, and hoping for rewards. But as we grow, it leads to higher stages like feeling modesty before God, gratitude, love, and ultimately,

nearness to God. Longing for Heaven and the fear of Hell are the initial foundations of this path.

If someone does not feel this longing or fear, it means their faith in eternal life has not fully formed or become strong yet. But when the memory of the hereafter comes alive in our souls, these two feelings become the engine for moving toward repentance, reform, and returning to our divine *fitrah*.

Imam Sajjad (Peace be upon him) says: “You should know that he whoever longs for Heaven dashes to good deeds and forgets the passions. Whoever is concerned about the Fire (of Hell) takes the initiative to repent to God from sins and stops committing forbidden acts” [4]. Longing for Heaven draws us toward goodness and righteous deeds, and the fear of Hell protects us from missteps. Under the shadow of these two, the heart is prepared for higher levels of faith and sincerity, where worship is performed out of love and *ma’rifa*, rather than just fear or greed.

Longing for Heaven and the fear of Hell are like two lamps at the beginning of a road. A road that leads us out of the darkness of neglect and toward Divine Light. The awakened heart steps onto the path of growth with a balance of hope and fear, and this balance is the secret to steadfastness in the human journey.

To what extent do you experience spiritual awakening and remembering the hereafter in your daily life? Has longing for Heaven or the fear of Hell ever changed your behavior or a decision you made? Share your experience with us.

## References

- [1]. Shaikh Saduq, *Thawāb al-A'māl wa 'iqāb al-A'māl*. Trans. Sayed Athar Husain Rizvi & Sayed Maqsood Athar. Book 3, Chapter 99.
- [2]. Abd al-Wahid ibn Muḥammad Al-Amidi, *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim: Exalted Aphorisms and Pearls of Speech*. Qom: Ansariyan Publications, 2012, p. 840.
- [3]. Quran, 73: 40,41
- [4]. Hasan ibn Ali ibn Shu'bah, *Tuhaf al-Uqul: The Masterpieces of the Intellects*. Qom: Ansariyan Publications, 2001, p. 203.