21365 - The meaning of the verse, “They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills” [Hood 11:107]

the question

I would like an explanation of the meaning of this passage, and the most correct interpretation of it. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):
“As for those who are wretched, they will be in the Fire, sighing in a high and low tone.
They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Verily, your Lord is the Doer of whatsoever He intends (or wills).
And those who are blessed, they will be in Paradise, abiding therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills: a gift without an end.”
[Hood 11:106-108] May it be understood from this that whoever enters Paradise may be expelled from it if Allaah wills? Have these verses been abrogated by anything in the Qur’aan, since they appear in a Makkan soorah?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

These verses have not been abrogated, rather they are clear. The scholars differed as to the meaning of the phrase “except as your Lord wills”, but they are agreed that the delight of the people of Paradise will be everlasting and eternal; it will never cease or come to an end, and they will never be expelled from it. Hence after that Allaah says, “a gift without an end”, to refute what some people may imagine, that some may be expelled from Paradise. For they will abide therein forever and this gift is without an end, i.e., it will never cease. In other verses this meaning is explained further. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Truly, the Muttaqoon (the pious) will be amidst Gardens and water-springs (Paradise).

(It will be said to them): ‘Enter therein (Paradise), in peace and security’”

[al-Hijr 15:46]

Allaah states that they will be secure – safe from death, safe from expulsion, safe from sickness, grief and all kinds of hardship. Then Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We shall remove from their hearts any deep feeling of bitterness (that they may have). (So they will be like) brothers facing each other on thrones.

No sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave it”

[al-Hijr 15:47-48]

So Allaah states that they will abide therein forever and will never be expelled from it.

And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, the Muttaqoon (the pious), will be in place of Security (Paradise)

Among Gardens and Springs,

Dressed in fine silk and (also) in thick silk, facing each other,

So (it will be). And We shall marry them to Hoor (fair females) with wide lovely eyes.

They will call therein for every kind of fruit in peace and security;

They will never taste death therein except the first death (of this world), and He will save them from the torment of the blazing Fire,

As a bounty from your Lord! That will be the supreme success!”

[al-Dukhaan 44:51-57]

So Allaah tells us that the people of Paradise will be in a place of security where they will never be exposed to fear and where the blessing will never be taken away from them. They will also be safe, and they will not face the danger of death, sickness, expulsion, grief or any other hardship, and they will never die. What this means is that the people of Paradise will abide therein forever, for eternity.

Some of the scholars said that the phrase “except as your Lord wills” refers to the extent of their stay in the grave, for the believer will be in one of its gardens and delights. But that is not Paradise itself, rather it is a part of Paradise, for a door will be opened from Paradise for the believer in his grave, and some of its fragrance, goodness and blessings will reach him. Then after that he will be transferred to Paradise which is high above the heavens.

Some of the scholars said that what is meant by the words “except as your Lord wills” is the length of their standing in the place of resurrection, for the Reckoning and the reward or punishment, after they have been brought forth from their graves; then after that they will go to Paradise. And some of the scholars said that the meaning includes both things, the time that they spend in their graves and the time that they spend in the place of standing (on the Day of Judgement), and their passage across the Siraat. During all of these times they are not in Paradise, but they will move from these places to Paradise.

The phrase “except as your Lord wills” means, except for the time spent in the grave, and except for the time when they stand on the Day of Judgement, and except for the time spent crossing al-Siraat, because at those times they will not be in Paradise, but they will be moving towards it. Hence we know that the matter is clear and there is nothing unclear or doubtful in it, praise be to Allaah.

The people of Paradise will be blessed therein and will abide therein forever. There will be no death, no sickness, no expulsion, no hardship, no grief, no menstruation, no nifaas (post-partum bleeding), no kind of hurt forever, rather they will be in everlasting delight and goodness.

Similarly, the people of Hell will abide in it forever; they will not exit it and it will not be destroyed.

Rather it will abide and they will abide therein. It was said that the phrase “except as your Lord wills” refers to the time they will spend in their graves, or the time they will spend standing on the Day of Resurrection, as mentioned above concerning the people of Paradise. After that they will be driven to Hell, where they will abide for eternity. We ask Allaah to keep us safe from that. Allaah says in Soorat al-Baqarah (interpretation of the meaning):

“Thus Allaah will show them their deeds as regrets for them. And they will never get out of the Fire”

[al-Baqarah 2:167]

And Allaah says concerning the kaafirs in Soorat al-Maa'idah (interpretation of the meaning):

“They will long to get out of the Fire, but never will they get out therefrom; and theirs will be a lasting torment”

[al-Maa’idah 5:37]

Some of the salaf said that the Fire would come to an end after thousands of years and many ages have passed, and that they would die or be brought forth from it. But this view does not count for anything according to the majority of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa’ah, rather it is false and is refuted by a great deal of evidence from the Qur’aan and Sunnah, as stated above. The view of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah is that Hell will abide for eternity and that its people will never come forth from it, and that it will never be destroyed, rather it will remain forever, according to the apparent meaning of the Qur’aan and of the Sunnah as proven from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The evidence for that, apart from what has been mentioned above, is that Allaah says concerning the Fire (interpretation of the meaning):

“whenever it abates, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire”

[al-Isra’ 17:97]

And Allaah says in Soorat al-Naba’, addressing the people of Hell (interpretation of the meaning):

“So taste you (the results of your evil actions). No increase shall We give you, except in torment”

[al-Naba’ 78:30]

We ask Allaah to keep us safe and sound from that and becoming among its people.

See Majmoo’ Fataawa al-Maqaalaat al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz, vol. 4, p. 361

Other verses which clearly indicate that the people of Hell will abide therein forever include the following (interpretation of the meanings):

1 – “Verily, those who disbelieve and did wrong; Allaah will not forgive them, nor will He guide them to any way — (Tafsir Al-Qurtubî).

Except the way of Hell, to dwell therein forever; and this is ever easy for Allaah”

[al-Nisa’ 4:168-169]

2 – “(Mine is) but conveyance (of the truth) from Allaah and His Messages (of Islamic Monotheism), and whosoever disobeys Allaah and His Messenger, then verily, for him is the fire of Hell, he shall dwell therein forever”

[al-Jinn 72:23]

3 – “Verily, Allaah has cursed the disbelievers, and has prepared for them a flaming Fire (Hell).

Wherein they will abide for ever, and they will find neither a Wali (a protector) nor a helper”

[Al-Ahzaab 33:64-65]

And Allaah knows best.