27075 - Degrees and Levels of Paradise and Hell

the question

How many heavens and hells are there? How do these levels differ? And what do you need to do to get into each level?

Summary of answer

1- With regard to numbers, there is one Hell and one Paradise, but each of them has degrees and levels. The levels of Hell differ according to the extent of their inhabitants' disbelief in this world. The hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell. We know of no limit to the number of degrees and levels in Paradise. It was said that their number is equal to the number of verses in the Quran.
2- The Sunnah describes the position of those who do certain actions. For example: 1- Faith in Allah and in the Messengers, 2-Jihad, 3-Those who sincerely desire martyrdom, 4- giving out in charity, 5- Doing wudu properly, and 6- Memorizing Quran

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Number of Paradise and Hell

With regard to numbers, there is one Hell and one Paradise , but each of them has degrees and levels.

Paradise is sometimes mentioned in the plural in the Sunnah, but this does not mean that there are several types of Paradise; rather this is indicative of its greatness and the various degrees and levels in it, or it is indicative of the greatness of the reward of the one who enters it.

Anas ibn Malik narrated that Umm al-Rubayyi' bint al-Bara , who was the mother of Harithah ibn

Suraqah, came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: O Prophet of Allah, will you not tell me about Harithah?" – who had been killed at the battle of Badr by a stray arrow. "If he is in Paradise I will bear it with patience but if it is otherwise then I shall weep long and hard for him." He said: "O Umm Haritha, there are gardens in Paradise – according to another report: many gardens – and your son has attained the highest Firdaws ." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2809)

Levels of Hell

The levels of Hell differ according to the extent of their inhabitants' disbelief in this world. The hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell, as our Lord has told us (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depth (grade) of the Fire; no helper will you find for them." [Al-Nisa 4:145]

Least severe level of Hell

The least severe (in torment) of its levels – from which we seek refuge with Allah – was mentioned by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the Hadith reported by al-Nu'man ibn Bashir who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The least severely punished of the people of Hell will be a man who has two shoes and shoelaces of Fire – according to another version: two live coals will be placed on the soles of his feet – because of which his brains will boil as a pot boils. He will not think that anyone is being punished more severely than him, but he will be the one who is punished most lightly." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6562; Muslim, 212)

The person is named specifically in a report narrated by Muslim, where it says that this is Abu Talib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), for whom Allah will reduce the punishment because of the role he played in protecting Islam at the beginning.

Number of degrees and levels in Paradise

We know of no limit to the number of degrees and levels in Paradise . It was said that their number is equal to the number of verses in the Quran, based on the Hadith of ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Amr, who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “It will be said to the companion of the Quran: ‘Recite and rise in status as you used to recite in the world, and your position will be at the last verse you recite.’” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 1646; al-Tirmidhi, 2914; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud)

Al-Mundhiri said in al-Targhib: al-Khattabi said:

“It said in the report that the number of verses in the Quran is the number of degrees or levels of Paradise in the Hereafter, and it will be said to the reader: ‘Rise through the levels to the extent that you used to read the verses of the Quran. Whoever recites all of the Quran, will reach the highest degree of Paradise in the Hereafter, and whoever recites part of it will reach a level commensurate with that, and the limit of his reward will match the limit of his reading.” (Al-Targhib wa’l-Tarhib, 2/228)

But this idea is subject to further discussion, because the Hadith speaks of the manazil (status, position) of those who memorized Quran, not of their darajat (degrees, levels).

The darajah (degree or level) varies according to their efforts in this world, just as there are other acts of faith in which people vary in status, such as sincere faith, jihad and others. So we cannot say that the one who memorized the entire Quran will be in the highest degrees of Paradise in absolute terms.

Highest degree of Paradise

The highest of the degrees of Paradise is al-Firdaws, as it was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “… When you ask of Allah, ask Him for al-Firdaws, for it is in the middle of Paradise and is the highest part of Paradise, and above it is the Throne of the Most Merciful, and from it spring

forth the rivers of Paradise.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2637; Muslim, 2831)

What is meant by the “middle of Paradise” is the best of it, as when Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Thus We have made you a just (and the best) nation (lit. a middle nation).” [Al-Baqarah 2:143]

Position of those who do certain actions in Paradise

The Sunnah also describes the position of those who do certain actions. For example:

- **Faith in Allah and belief in the Messengers**

Abu Sa’id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The people of Paradise will be able to see the people in the apartments above them as you see the shining stars on the horizon in the east and the west, because of the differences in their status.” They said: “O Messenger of Allah, is that the status of the prophets which no one else will reach besides them?” He said: “No, by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, they are men who had faith in Allah and believed in the Messengers.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2082; Muslim, 2831)

- Jihad for the sake of Allah

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “In Paradise there are one hundred degrees which Allah has prepared for those who strive in jihad for the sake of Allah. The distance between each two degrees is like the distance between the heavens and the earth.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2637.

- **The one who sincerely desires martyrdom may also attain that**

Sahl ibn Hanif narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever asks Allah sincerely for martyrdom, Allah will cause him to reach the status of the martyrs even if he dies in his bed.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1909.

- **Spending for the sake of Allah**

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The poor came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: “The rich people have taken all the highest positions. They pray as we pray, and they fast as we fast, but they have surplus wealth with which they perform Hajj and strive in jihad and give in charity…” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 807; Muslim, 595)

- Doing wudu properly even when it is difficult, taking many steps towards the mosque and waiting for prayer after prayer.

Abu Hurayrah narrated the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Shall I not tell you of something by means of which Allah erases sins and raises you in status?” They said: “Yes, O Messenger of Allah.” He said: “Doing wudu well even when it is difficult, taking many steps to the mosques and waiting for prayer after prayer. That is (equivalent) to guarding the frontier.” (Narrated by Muslim, 251)

- Memorizing Quran

‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Amr narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “It will be said to the companion of the Quran: ‘Recite and rise in status as you used to recite in the world, and your position will be at the last verse you recite.’” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 1646; al-Tirmidhi, 2914; classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud)

The one who is keen should set his sights on the highest position in Paradise and strive to earn the pleasure of Allah and enter the Paradise of al-Firdaws, which is the highest that Allah has promised.

And Allah knows best.