363285 - How did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) see some people being punished in Hell on the night of the Isra’ and Mi`raj?

the question

How did our noble Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) see some people being punished in Hell on the night of the Isra’ and Mi`raj (Night Journey and Ascent to Heaven), if all souls are waiting until the Day of Resurrection for the reckoning and punishment?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is soundly narrated in the authentic hadiths that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw some people being punished on the night of the Mi`raj. In fact, it says in these reports that he looked into Hell and saw some of them there.

Ahmad (13340) and Abu Dawud (4878) narrated that Anas ibn Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “On the night on which my Lord took me up (into heaven), I passed by some people who had nails of copper with which they were scratching their faces and chests. I said: Who are these people, O Jibril? He said: They are the ones who consumed the people’s flesh (i.e., gossiped) and impugned their honour.” Classed as authentic (sahih) by al-Albani and Shu`ayb al-Arna’ut.

Ahmad (12211) and Ibn Hibban (53) narrated that Anas ibn Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “On the night on which I was taken on the Night Journey, I passed by some people whose lips were being cut with scissors of fire. I said: Who are these people? They said: Preachers from among the people of this world who used to instruct the people to do righteous deeds, but forget to do them themselves, and they would recite the Quran

but they did not understand it.

Classed as authentic (sahih) by al-Albani in *As-Silsilat as-Sahihah*, no. 291; and by Shu`ayb (al-Arna'ut) in *Tahqiq al-Musnad*.

There is nothing in these reports to indicate that he saw them in Hell. It may be that he saw them being punished during al-barzakh (the period between death and the Day of Resurrection), as we shall see below:

But Ahmad (2324) narrated from Ibn `Abbas in the story of the Isra': "… Then he went on and was met by a respectable, dignified old man, who welcomed him and greeted him with salaam, and all of them greeted him with salaam. He said: 'Who is this, O Jibril?' He said: This is your father Ibrahim. Then he looked into Hell and saw people consuming corpses. He said: 'Who are these people, O Jibril?' He said: These are the ones who consume people's flesh (i.e., gossip). And he saw a man who looked red and blue, of stocky build and dishevelled. He said: 'Who is this, O Jibril?' He said: This is the one who hamstrung the she-camel."

This hadith was classed as authentic (sahih) by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* and Ahmad ash-Shakir in *Tahqiq al-Musnad*. It was classed as weak (da`if) by Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut. Al-Albani said in *Al-Isra' wal-Mi`raj* (p. 74): Ibn Kathir said regarding it: It is authentic, and as-Suyuti agreed with him in *Al-Khasa'is*, 1/397. But they are clearly lenient in their evaluation, because there are some reservations about Qabus – who is ibn Abi Zubyan – as he said in *At-Taqrib*. End quote.

This seeing may be understood in one of two ways:

The first way is: that Allah showed him images of those who were being punished, depicting how they will be in the Fire after the resurrection.

This is similar to what Allah showed him of images of Hell and Paradise when he was offering the eclipse prayer, and he saw some people being punished in the Fire, when it is known that they had not yet entered the Fire of the hereafter; rather it was a depiction of what will happen to them. In the hadith of Jabir it says: The sun was eclipsed at the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings

and peace of Allah be upon him) on the day when Ibrahim, the son of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), died, and the people said: It has become eclipsed because of the death of Ibrahim. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stood up and led the people in prayer… And in this hadith it says that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There is nothing that you have been promised but I saw it during this prayer of mine. Hell was brought and that is when you saw me stepping backwards for fear that its flames might touch me. I saw therein the owner of the curved staff, dragging his intestines in the Fire; he used to steal from the pilgrims with his curved staff, and if he was discovered he would say, 'It got caught on my curved staff,' but if he was not noticed then he would keep it. And I saw therein the woman who had a cat which she tied up and did not feed, and she did not let it eat from the vermin of the earth, until it died of starvation. Then Paradise was brought to me, and that is when you saw me move forward until I was back in my place. I stretched out my hand and I wanted to pick some of its fruits so that you could see them, then I thought that I should not do that. And there is nothing that you have been promised but I saw it during this prayer of mine." Narrated by Muslim, 904. Also narrated in shortened form by al-Bukhari in several places.

The second way is that this is their punishment during al-barzakh (in their graves), which Allah showed to his Prophet, and the grave is the first stage of the hereafter, in which the disbelievers are exposed to the Fire. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{and a terrible punishment overwhelmed Pharaoh's people:

the fire, to which they are exposed morning and afternoon. And on the day when the Hour begins [it will be said]: Admit the people of Pharaoh to the severest punishment}[Ghafir 40:45-46].

Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: {and a terrible punishment overwhelmed Pharaoh's people } namely drowning in the sea, then being transferred from there to Hell. For their souls are exposed to the Fire morning and afternoon, until the onset of the Hour. Then when the Day of Resurrection comes, their bodies and souls will be together in the Fire. Hence Allah says: {And on the day when the Hour begins [it will be said]: Admit the people of Pharaoh to the

severest punishment} That is, the most painful and grievous of torment. This verse is the main evidence quoted by Ahl as-Sunnah to prove that there is punishment during al-barzakh in the graves, specifically the phrase {the fire, to which they are exposed morning and afternoon}.

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 7/146.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar said, commenting on the lengthy hadith of Samurah ibn Jundub which speaks of the Prophet's dream: Among the things that we learn from this hadith is that the Night Journey happened several times, both when he was awake and in his dreams, at various times. And we learn that some of the sinners are punished during al-barzakh. End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari*, 12/445.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about the hadith of the Isra' and Mi`raj in which it was narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw some people being punished.

Question: Will there be any punishment before the Day of Resurrection other than the punishment in the grave?

He replied: This may be understood as meaning that these people were depicted to him being punished because of their reprehensible evil deeds, or it may be understood as meaning that this punishment is for them in this world, or it may be understood as being a depiction of the punishment that will happen on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw in his dream two angels who took him by the hand and showed him some of those who are being punished: those who consume riba, the men and women who commit zina, those who sleep and miss the prayer, until the sun rises and they have not prayed, and those who memorise the Quran but do not act in accordance with it. So it may be interpreted in two ways: the first of which is that this punishment is happening to them in the grave, and is happening to their souls during al-barzakh; it is a punishment that has been hastened for them. Or it may be that what is meant by that is that this was showing the type of punishment that will happen to them on the Day of Resurrection, and this is some of the punishment that they will be subjected to

on the Day of Resurrection in Hell – We ask Allah to keep us safe and sound.

Whatever the case, this is a stern warning to be cautious and avoid these evil deeds, whether that punishment will happen during al-barzakh or in the hereafter. What is most likely to be the case – and Allah knows best – is that it will happen during al-barzakh – we ask Allah to keep us safe and sound.

End quote from the website of Shaykh Ibn Baz.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was also asked: How did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) see the condition of the people of Paradise and the condition of the people of Hell on the night of the Isra' and Mi`raj, even though the Hour has not yet begun?

He replied: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has told us about that, and he told us that he saw Paradise and Hell, and he saw some people being punished and some people enjoying bliss. Allah knows best how he saw that, because matters of the unseen cannot be comprehended by human faculties. If such matters are narrated to us, we are obliged to believe in them as they were narrated, and not discuss how that happens.

End quote from *Majmu` Fatawa Ibn `Uthaymin*, 2/53.

Conclusion:

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw those who are being punished as they were being punished during al-barzakh, or it was depicted to him how these people will be punished when they enter Hell after the reckoning.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 89813.

And Allah knows best.