



Can I ask about *Jahannam* and *Jannah*?

Jahannam is commonly known in English as ‘Hell’ or ‘Hellfire.’ It is a place of incredible pain, suffering and humiliation. It is a permanent home for those who broke Allāh’s commandments, rejected His Messengers or denied Him altogether. Another name for *Jahannam* is *an-Nār* (the Fire).

Jannah is known in English as ‘Heaven’ or ‘Paradise.’ It is a garden of bliss made ready for those who lived their lives in obedience to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. It is the ultimate reward for those who remained constantly aware of Him, living in fear of His Punishment and in hope of His Mercy.

Both of these places have already been created.



How do we know that?

Allāh tells us,

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

*And fear the Fire, which has been **prepared**¹ for the disbelievers.*

Sūrah Āli Imrān, 3:131



سَابِقُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

Race toward forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who believed in Allāh and His messengers.

Sūrah al Hadīd, 57:21

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم told us,

“By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if you had seen what I saw, you would laugh little and cry much.” They said, “What did you see, O Messenger?” He said, “I saw Paradise and Hell.”

Muslim as reported from Anas رضي الله عنه

Generally, the scholars are agreed on this point. To quote Sheikh Tahāwi, “*Paradise and Hell have already been created. They will never come to an end or cease to exist. Allāh created Paradise and Hell before the rest of creation and He created inhabitants for each of them.*”²



How will people enter *Jahannam*?

Angels, speaking words of scorn will receive them,

¹ Author’s emboldening. It is described in the past tense.

² Al Āqeedah as Salafīyyah as quoted by Al Ashqar.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا فَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَىٰ الْكَافِرِينَ قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَىٰ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ

And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups until, when they reach it, its gates are opened and its keepers will say, "Did there not come to you messengers from yourselves, reciting to you the verses of your Lord, and warning you of the Meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say, "Yes, but the Decree of Punishment has come into effect upon the disbelievers." (To them) it will be said, "Enter the gates of Hell to abide eternally therein, and wretched is the residence of the arrogant"

Sūrah az Zumār, 39:71-72

Sinners will be crammed through seven gates, each layered one above the other, with no opportunity for escape. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى warns us,

وَأِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُومٌ

And indeed, Hell is the promised place for them all. It has seven gates, for each of those gates is a (special) class (of sinners) assigned.

Sūrah al Hijr, 15:43-44



And what of the reception for the people of *Jannah*?

Angels will receive them with some of the most beautiful words imaginable,

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ

But those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it while its gates have been opened, and its keepers say, "Peace be upon you; you have become pure; so enter it to abide eternally therein, (they will enter)"

Sūrah az Zumār, 39:73

They will enter through eight gates, categorised in accordance with their deeds.

Sahl Ibn Sa'd said that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "There are eight gates to Paradise. One of them is a gate called *Al Rayyān* and none shall enter except those who observe fasting." Bukhāri



You mentioned that there is no escape from *Jahannam*. Is it guarded?

Yes, it is, according to the Qur'ān and ahadith, by nineteen angels,

عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ

Over it are nineteen (Sūrah al Muddaththir, 74:30)

The inhabitants of the Fire will be tied with chains and fetters [40:71], and they will make futile attempts at escape,

وَلَهُمْ مَقَامِعٌ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ

And for (striking) them are maces of iron. Every time they want to get out of it, from anguish, they will be returned to it, and (it will be said), "Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire!"
Sūrah al Hajj, 22:21-22



How big is Hellfire?

Well, consider just these two facts:

1. If you dropped a huge rock into Jahannam, it would take seventy years to reach the bottom.

Hakim reports from Abu Hurayrah, (and Tabarāni from Mu'adh and Abu Ummamah) that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "if there was a huge stone as big as seven Khalfāt stones, and it was thrown from the edge of Hell, it would fly through it for seventy years before it reached the bottom."

Sahih al Jāmi' as-Sagheer with sahih isnād

2. It will be filled with every deserving sinner that has ever lived, each one, himself, being gigantic.³

Abu Hurayrah narrates that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The distance between the shoulders of the *kāfir* in Hell will be like three days' travelling for a fast rider."

Muslim



And what about the size of Paradise?

Huge also. A simple description of its gates alone, demonstrates this.

Utbah Ibn Ghazwān narrates, "We are told that the distance between the gate panels of one of the gates of Paradise is like the distance of forty years walking, but there will come a time when it is very crowded indeed."

Reported in Muslim and Ahmed



What do the people of Jahannam eat and drink?

Their food

Ad Dari: Ibn Abbas says this is "a low growing thorny plant." Qartadah says: "it is one of the very worst types of food."

As Zaqqūm: The fruit of a tree mentioned in the Qur'an,

أَدْلِكَ خَيْرٌ نَزَلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الرَّقُومِ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ
طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَآكِلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِئُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ

³ Some commentators have noted that the greater the body size, the greater is the surface area of skin that feels the fire of Hell. According to An-Nawāwee, "all of this is in order to intensify the suffering and all of this is possible for Allāh". (Sharh al Nawāwee 'alā Muslim 17/186).



Is that (i.e., Paradise) the better accommodation or the Tree of Zaqqoom? Indeed We made it a torment for the wrongdoers. Indeed it is a tree issuing from the bottom of Hellfire, its emerging fruit are like the heads of devils. And indeed, they will eat from it and fill with it their bellies.

Sūrah as Sāfāt, 37:62-68

Al Ghislīn: This is the filth that emanates from bodies, for example after washing wounds,

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَاهُنَا حَمِيمٌ وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غَسْلِينَ

Nor any food except from the discharge of wounds; none will eat it except the sinners.
Sūrah al Hāqqah, 69:35-36

An Nār:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ۖ وَسَيَصْلُونَ سَعِيرًا

Indeed those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming into their bellies fire. And they will be burned in a Blaze.

Sūrah an Nisā', 4:10

Their drink

Drink

Al Hamīm: A scalding water described numerous times in the Qur'ān,

لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا جِزَاءً وَفَاءً

They will not taste therein (any) coolness or drink except scalding water and (foul) dirty discharges, an appropriate recompense

Sūrah an Naba', 78:24-26

DRINK

Al Ghassāq & as-Sadīd: Ghassāq is also mentioned in the above verse. Ghassāq and as-Sadīd are filthy pus like fluids that ooze from the very bodies of the people of Hell,

مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَىٰ مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيدٍ يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسَبِّغُهُ وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ ۖ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ

Before him is Hell, and he will be given a drink of festering water. He will gulp it but will hardly (be able to) swallow it. And death will come to him from everywhere, but he is not to die. And before him is a massive punishment

Surāh Ibrāhim, 14:16-17

Al Muhl: A boiling oil

وَأَن يَسْتَعْنِفُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجوهَ ۚ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَقًا

"They will be relieved with water like murky oil which scalds their faces. Wretched is the drink and evil is the resting place."

Sūrah al Kahf, 18:29

From Abu Saīd Khudri رضي الله عنه, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "it is like boiling oil, and when it is bought near a person's face, the skin of the face falls off into it." Ahmed & Tirmidhi



What food do the people of *Jannah* eat and drink?

Insha'Allāh anything that their hearts desire. It will be food delicious to taste and without any of the ill effects of eating that we often face on earth, for example, visits to the bathroom, bloating, weight gain and so on.

As for drink, one of the drinks available there will be wine! Yes, you did hear that correctly, wine! Again, it will be a wine free of the side effects, complications and negative consequences associated with wine on earth. It will be pure to taste and will not dull the senses,

يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقَ وَكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزِفُونَ وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ

There will circulate among them young boys made eternal with vessels, pitchers and a cup (of wine) from a flowing spring – No headache will they have therefrom, nor will they be intoxicated. And fruit of what they select and the meat of fowl from whatever they desire
Sūrah al Wāqī'ah, 56:17-21



That sounds amazing. Does everyone get the same in *Jannah* or are there different rewards?

There are different levels of *Jannah*, with the highest being *al Firdaws*.⁴ The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

Paradise has one hundred levels which Allāh has reserved for the *Mujāhideen* who fight in His cause, and the distance between each of the two grades is like the distance between the heavens and the earth. So, when you ask Allāh for something, ask for *al Firdaws* which is the best and highest part of Paradise." I (narrator) think he said "Above it (*al Firdaws*) is the Throne of the Most Merciful, and from it originates the rivers of Paradise.

Bukhari as reported by Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه



So, I would imagine, the punishments in *Jahannam* must differ also?

Jahannam has many levels, with the lowest reserved for the *munafiqīn* (hypocrites),

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَعْدَائِكُمْ ۗ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ نَصِيرًا

Indeed the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire; and never will you find for them a helper

Sūrah an Nisā', 4:145



How long will *Jahannam* and *Jannah* last?

Forever! Neither place will ever cease to exist. This is the opinion of the most reliable scholars. To cite Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah, 'The *Salaf* (first generation) and *imāms* (leaders) of this *ummah*, and the *Ahl As sunnah Wa al Jammah*, agreed that there are created entities that will never come to an end at all, like Paradise, Hell, The Throne and so on.'⁵

⁴ In fact, the highest 'position' in *Jannah* is *Al Waseela*. Inshā'Allah that will be attained by one person only, Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.

⁵ Majmā' Fatāwā 18/307. 'Ahl As Sunnah wa al Jammah describes those righteous people upon the way of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and staying with the congregation of believers. The *ummah* is described as the international community of Muslims



Okay. So, if those places exist forever, will people stay in them forever?

For the disbelievers and idolaters, Hell is described in the Qur’ān as an ‘abode’, i.e. a permanent home. It will not be a temporary halting point, a place of transit. According to the Qur’ān it will be eternal,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنظَرُونَ



Indeed those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers – upon them will be the curse of Allāh and of the angels and of the people, all together, abiding eternally therein. The punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved.
Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:161-162

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ لَوْ كَانَ هُوَآءِ إِلَهَةً مَا وَرَدوها ۗ وَكُلٌّ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Indeed, you⁶ and what you worship other than Allāh are the firewood of Hell. You will be coming to (entering) it. Had these (false deities) been (actual) gods, they would not have entered to it, but all are eternal therein.
Sūrah al Anbiyā’, 21:98-99



What of disbelievers who did good in their lives?

It depends what you mean by ‘good’? The Qur’ān alone is our guide in determining what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘bad’.⁷ A person may be kind and charitable, honest and trustworthy. However, if all those tremendous actions are encompassed by disbelief (*kufr*) or by the act of associating partners with Allāh (*shirk*), then those deeds are worth nothing. They are like a mirage in the desert.



So, such deeds from such people won’t be rewarded at all?

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is Just. If He wills, He will reward all disbelievers for their good deeds. However, that reward may well be received in the world only, the same world that they love and cherish so much. They will be deprived of the rewards of the Hereafter because, once again, all the good they did was surrounded by the most heinous sins of *kufr* and *shirk*.



And what of those adherents to Islām and *tawhīd*, who committed evil?

All believers will eventually go to *Jannah*. If they committed sins, they may well enter *Jahannam* for a period known only to Allāh. It may be a very long time. However, eventually, they will be admitted to Paradise. All those who, in the main, submitted to the Will of Allāh and avoided associating partners with Him, will be sent to *Jannah*. Having said that, let’s pray that we don’t even spend a nanosecond in *Jahannam*, and that we are far, far away from any of its effects. May Allāh have Mercy on all believers.

⁶ Addressing disbelievers who associate partners with Allāh

⁷ One of the names of the Qur’ān is *Al Furqān* (The Criterion).



And once in Paradise, do you stay there forever?

Yes. Allāh encourages us,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا جَوْلًا

Indeed those who have believed and done righteous deeds, - they will have the Gardens of Paradise, as a lodging, wherein they abide eternally. They will not desire from it any transfer
Sūrah al Kahf, 18:107-108

They will be young, happy and healthy,

Abu Hurayrah narrates that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever enters Paradise is blessed with a life of joy, he will never feel miserable, his clothes will never wear out and his youth will never fade away."

Muslim

From Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal, the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The people of Paradise will enter Paradise hairless, looking as if their eyes are ringed with *khol*, aged thirty-three."
Ahmed and Tirmidhi

The inhabitants of Paradise will never be forced to leave it, and neither will they die. They will experience its pleasures for all eternity.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ

Indeed, Allāh will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearl, and their garments therein will be silk

Sūrah al Hajj, 22:23

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا خِدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِدَابًا

Indeed for the righteous is attainment, Gardens and grapevines and full breasted (companions) of equal age, and a full cup. No ill speech will they hear therein or any falsehood

Sūrah an Naba', 78:31-35

On that happy note we end our discussion on Paradise and Hellfire. May Allāh admit all his devoted servants to Paradise.

The Last Day [part c]

Questions

1. What are the Arabic words for Hellfire and Paradise?
2. Have Hellfire and Paradise already been created?
3. How many levels does *Jannah* have?
4. Which group of people will be sent to the lowest level of *Jahannam*?
5. How old will the inhabitants of *Jannah* be?
6. Give two categories of people who will remain in Hellfire forever?
7. Will *Jahannam* or *Jannah* ever come to an end? Explain.
8. How many gates do Hellfire and Paradise each have?
9. How many angels are guarding Hellfire?
10. What are *Ghislīn*, *Zaqqūm*, *Hamīm* and *Ghassāq*?



Two boys, Fes, Morocco