

Translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's:

# The Response to Those Who Say Heaven & Hell Will Pass Away

*(Al-Radd 'ala man qala bi-fana' al-janna wa al-nar)*

Translation: Hassan Radwan

## Translator's Forward

In 1995 Muhammad al-Simhari edited and published a manuscript by Ibn Taymiyyah titled: "Response to Those Who Say Heaven and Hell Will Pass Away and Clarification of Opinions Regarding That." (*Al-Radd 'ala man qala bi-fana' al-janna wa al-nar wa bayaan lil-aqwaal fi thaalik.*<sup>1</sup>) It was Ibn Taymiyyah's final composition before his death while imprisoned in the citadel of Damascus.<sup>2</sup> The first part of the treatise is devoted to refuting heterodox views, in particular, those of Jahm ibn Safwan<sup>3</sup> and his followers, *al-Jahmiyyah*, who believed that *both* Heaven and Hell would pass away. In the second part of the treatise, Ibn Taymiyyah presents arguments for and against the eternity of Hell.

Al-Simhari's published edition is 120 pages in length of which Ibn Taymiyyah's treatise occupies 47 annotated pages in the central portion of the book (p.41 to p.87). Ibn Taymiyyah states at the outset that he will address three positions:

1. The passing away of *both* Heaven and Hell.
2. The eternity of *both*.
3. The eternity of Heaven but passing away of Hell.

However the latter two discussions overlap and therefore the treatise can be divided into two parts:

**FIRST PART:** 10.9 pages. (p.41 - p.52) A refutation of the view that *both* Heaven and Hell will pass away focussing on countering the philosophical arguments of the *Jahmiyyah* that created things cannot be eternal.

**SECOND PART:** 34.1 pages. (p.52 - p.87) Arguments for and against an eternal Hell.

At first glance, both the title and the way the treatise is presented appears to suggest it is aimed at disproving the annihilation of Heaven and Hell. However the first part only deals with refuting the argument that Heaven will pass away. It does not deal with the question of whether Hell will pass away. It is in the second part that we proceed to a discussion of whether Hell will pass away and this part takes up 75% of the treatise, indicating that it is the real focus of the treatise.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-radd 'ala man qala bi-fana' al-janna wa al-nar*, ed. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Simhari (Riyadh: Dar al-Balansiyya, 1995). It is available in several places online as a downloadable PDF.

<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion on this see the excellent papers by Jon Hoover: "*Islamic universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Salafi deliberations on the duration of Hell*," Muslim World, 2009, and the dissertation by Mohammad Hassan Khalil: "*Muslim Scholarly Discussions on Salvation and the Fate of Others*," University of Michigan. 2007

<sup>3</sup> An 8th century Muslim theologian accused of holding heretical views (executed 746 ce).

This is supported by the reference in *Shifa' al-'Alil* (Healing of the Sick) by Ibn Qayyim stating that he had asked Ibn Taymiyyah about the eternity of Hell and sent him a narration from 'Umar that appeared to contradict its eternity. Ibn Qayyim then adds: "Then he (Ibn Taymiyyah) wrote his famous work about it."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore the arguments Ibn Taymiyyah presents in the first part had already been dealt with in previous works<sup>5</sup>, something he himself refers the reader to several times, which again suggests that this wasn't the main reason behind the treatise.

However the most revealing evidence as to the motive behind the treatise is found in how Ibn Taymiyyah presents his arguments. In the first part Ibn Taymiyyah cites evidence for the eternity of Heaven, while the evidence for the eternity of Hell is conspicuous by its absence. He then spends the rest of this section countering the philosophical arguments of the *Jahmiyyah* and others regarding their theology of *Hudooth al-Ajsaam*.<sup>6</sup>

It is in the second part of the treatise that Ibn Taymiyyah deals with the subject of Hell and contests the evidence for its eternity at every stage. He argues that Qur'anic verses such as *khalideena feha abadan* do not imply the eternity of Hell itself but refer to the absolute inescapability of the decreed punishment and are not in reference to the endlessness of the punishment itself. He then points out how verses on Heaven and Hell differ in a critical way with the Qur'an making it explicit that the Garden and its provisions will never expire, whereas verses about Hell never make such an explicit statement. On the contrary he highlights evidence in both Qur'an and Sunnah that reveal the punishment of Hell will pass away.

Perhaps even more intriguing is that apart from providing textual evidence for a finite Hell, Ibn Taymiyyah presents a more deductive argument that God's Wise-plan and Mercy must necessarily preclude an eternal Hell stating that eternal punishment completely contradicts Wisdom and Mercy. He then concludes the treatise with four carefully worded sentences that support the astonishingly progressive notion of Universal Salvation.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifa' al-'Alil fi Masa'il al-Qada' wa al-Qadar wa al-Hikma wa al-Ta'lil*, ed. Al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Sayyid and Sa'id Mahmud (Cairo: Dar al-hadith, 1414/1994 pp. 564–65)

<sup>5</sup> i.e. "minhaj as-sunnah an-nabawiyyah," "dar' ta'arud al-'aql wal-naql," "al-Safadiyyah" and others.

<sup>6</sup> *Hudooth al-Ajsaam* (The Emergence/Origination of Bodies.) This was a principle employed by the *Jahmiyyah* and others such as the *Mu'tazilah* and *Ash'ariyyah*. It evolved as a response to philosophers who argued the universe was infinite. It sought to prove that it was created by arguing it was composed of bodies (*ajsaam*) that have qualities (*sifaat*), incidental phenomena (*a'raad*) and events/occurrences (*hawaadith*) that must be contingent and thus created since it was impossible to have an infinite regress. Therefore there must be a Creator outside this chain of events. This was the basis of the Kalam/Cosmological argument. However because their argument hinged on the premise that there cannot be an infinite regress, they reasoned this must also be true of any future eternal existence of created things and so denied the future eternity of any creation such as Heaven and Hell. (They also argued that God's attributes such as speech and actions were created because attributes (*sifaat*) belong to bodies (*ajsaam*) and are therefore created and cannot be eternal. However they did accept the eternity of some attributes which they regarded as unique to God, such as Will, Creation and Power. The negation of Divine attributes is known as *Ta'teel*.)

Given that the eternality of Hell was considered a matter of consensus (*ijma'*) by the vast majority of orthodox Sunni Scholars of his day, Ibn Taymiyyah would certainly have anticipated the controversy his treatise would provoke, and it's easy to see why he sought to soften the blow by presenting it as a polemic against heretical groups, as Mohammad Hassan Khalil points out:

*“One can thus conjecture that the Jahmite denial of the eternality of both Heaven and Hell was superficially presented as the focus of al-Radd so as to camouflage what Ibn Taymiyyah recognized as being the truly controversial nature of the non-eternal Hell position.”*<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah's caution was well-founded as indeed that controversy came almost immediately from his contemporary, the chief Qadi of Damascus, Taqi al-Din al-Subki, who wrote an emphatic refutation of the treatise pointing out, amongst other things, that such views would mean that Satan and Pharaoh would eventually enter Heaven and enjoy its delights for eternity. He labelled such views as a *“grave and ugly innovation (bid'ah)”*<sup>8</sup> accusing those who hold them of *kufir* - though he refrained from explicitly labelling Ibn Taymiyyah as such:

*“The doctrine of the Muslims is that the Garden and the Fire will not pass away. Abu Muhammad ibn Hazm has transmitted that this is held by consensus and that whoever opposes it is an unbeliever by consensus.”*<sup>9</sup>

Much later, the Yemeni scholar, al-San'ani also accused Ibn Taymiyyah of holding the view of a finite Hell in his own refutation on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

One reason why this has been particularly controversial in Ibn Taymiyyah's case is that many regard him as a champion of the correct *'aqidah* (creed) and defender of orthodoxy against heretical views. The very idea that he would oppose the *ijma'* of the Sunni scholars on such a crucial issue is unthinkable for many traditionalists, particularly within the Salafi community where he is regarded as a *mujadid* (renewer), someone who restored Islam to its pristine purity. As a result, some within the Salafi community, remain extremely reluctant to attribute this position to him, either arguing it wasn't his final position,<sup>11</sup> or that the treatise has been wrongly attributed to him.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *“Muslim Scholarly Discussions on Salvation and the Fate of Others,”* Mohammad Hassan Khalil, University of Michigan. 2007

<sup>8</sup> *al-i'tibar bi-baqa' al-janna wa al-nar*, Taqi al-Din al-Subki.

<sup>9</sup> As quoted by Jon Hoover in *“Islamic universalism.”*

<sup>10</sup> *raf' al-astar li-ibtal adillat al-qa'ilin bi-fana' al-nar*, edited and commented on by al-Albani.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Albānī, in his edition of al-San'ani's treatise, expressed the view that it was written before Ibn Taymiyyah gained a full understanding of the religious sciences.

<sup>12</sup> This view was articulated by the Saudi scholar 'Ali al-Harbi in: *kashf al-astar li-ibtal iddi'a' fana' al-nar al-mansub li-shaykh al-Islam ibn taymiyya wa tilmidhihi ibn qayyim al-jawziyya*

Al-Simhari, who edited the treatise from manuscript, accepts that the treatise was authored by Ibn Taymiyyah, but refrains from accusing him of opposing orthodoxy. Instead he says that if he did favour the position of a finite Hell, then he had a special dispensation as a *mujtahid*<sup>13</sup> to conduct a thorough analysis of the various opinions and to favour one over another. However, he warns that this privilege is not open to ordinary Muslims who must affirm the eternity of Hell:

*“It is obligatory upon the Muslim to uphold the view that the Book of God, Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) and the majority of the Salaf of the ummah affirm, which is that the Fire will never pass away nor perish, ever. The position that it will pass away after remaining a long time is a weak view (marjuh) and if some eminent scholars, with their position of authority in the religion of Islam, exercise ijtiḥad in an issue like this and the ijtiḥad stems from good intention, sound objective and contemplation of the Divine evidences, free from desires and bias, then if he made a mistake, he would be rewarded for his ijtiḥad.”*<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps due to the controversial nature of this treatise, it has not been widely circulated nor has it been translated into English. However, its relevance in our day and age is perhaps greater than ever as the concept of eternal Hell has been increasingly challenged by sections of the Muslim community and so the deliberations of this significant classical scholar deserve to be more widely accessible and will, at the very least, allow readers to form their own opinion on this contentious issue.

I have not translated the first part of the treatise as this is only concerned with refuting the philosophical arguments that created things cannot be eternal. However I have fully translated the second and much longer part as this deals with the question of a finite Hell. I have opted for a fairly literal translation so as to remain as close to the Arabic original as possible. This means leaving in place grammatical and sentence structures that can sound somewhat awkward in English. I would be happy to receive feedback which could inform any possible future edits.

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London,  
December, 2020.

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<sup>13</sup> A scholar certified as an authority in Islamic law with licence to exercise *ijtiḥad* i.e. independent juridical reasoning to derive legal rulings based on evidence from Qur’an and Sunnah.

<sup>14</sup> p.28 *al-radd ‘ala man qala bi-fana’ al-janna wa al-nar*, Ibn Taymiyya, ed. Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Simhari (Riyadh: Dar al-Balansiyya, 1995).

# “The Response to Those Who Say Heaven and Hell Will Pass Away”

**As for the view that the Fire will pass away:** There are two known views from the Salaf and the Khalaf<sup>15</sup> and the controversy about that is known from the Tabi'in and those after them and this is one of the two positions regarding the eternity of the punishment upon those who enter it.

So those who say their punishment has a limit at which it will cease and it is not eternal like the bliss of the Garden is eternal, they may say: 'It may pass away' and they may say: 'They will come out of it so that no one remains in it', but by that, it could be said they don't mean they will come out while its punishment remains upon no-one, rather, that the punishment will pass away and that is the meaning of its *fana'* (passing away.)<sup>16</sup>

This view has been narrated on the authority of 'Umar (ibn al-Khattab), ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurairah, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and others.

'Abd b. Hamid<sup>17</sup> - one of the most eminent scholars of Hadith - related in his renowned tafsir, that Sulayman ibn Harb reported that Hammad ibn Salamah reported on the authority of Thabit on the authority of al-Hasan al-Basri that he said that Umar (ibn al-Khattab) said: *“Were the People of the Fire to remain in the Fire like the amount of sand of 'Alij<sup>18</sup> they would have - despite that - a day in which they will come out.”*

And he ('Abd b. Hamid) said: Hajjaj ibn Minhal reported on the authority of Hammad ibn Salamah on the authority of Hamid on the authority of al-Hasan (al-Basri) that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said: *“Even if the People of the Fire remained in the Fire like the number of (grains of) sand of 'Alij, they would have a day in which they will come out.”*

He ('Abd b. Hamid) mentioned that (narration) in his tafseer of God's saying (T<sup>19</sup>):

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<sup>15</sup> i.e. Later generations.

<sup>16</sup> i.e. two ways of articulating the same thing; cessation of punishment.

<sup>17</sup> According to Al-Dhahabi's *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalaa* (Lives of Eminent Figures): *“He is the Imam, the Hafiz, the Hujjah, widely travelled, Abu Muhammad 'Abd bin Hamid bin Nasr Al-Kissi, also pronounced al-Kishi.”*

<sup>18</sup> A large desert on the way to Mecca, according to Yāqūt's “Mu'jam ul-Buldān.”

<sup>19</sup> I will use the following abbreviations for the honorific phrases: (T) *Ta'ālā* (Exalted is He.) (S) *Subhanuhu* (Glorified is He.) (SWT) *Subhanahu wa Ta'ālā* (Glorified and Exalted is He) (AWJ) *'Azza wa Jalla* (Mighty and Majestic.) (SAW) *Sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam* (“May God send blessings and peace upon him)

**“They remain in it for ages<sup>20</sup>.” (78:23)**

This makes it clear that the likes of this great Sheikh (‘Abd b. Hamīd,) who is amongst the scholars of Hadith and Sunnah, relates from the likes of those religious authorities of Hadith and Sunnah, such as Sulayman ibn Harb who is one of the most eminent scholars of Sunnah and Hadith and the likes of Hajjaj ibn Minhal, in their account from Hammad ibn Salamah with his eminence in knowledge and Sunnah and which is related through two routes of narration, from the path of Thabit and from the path of Hamīd, this (narration) from al-Hasan al-Basri of whom it is said he is the most knowledgeable of those who remain of the Tabi’ in his time, relating it from ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, even though al-Hasan only heard it from some Tabi’ in<sup>21</sup>, it makes no difference whether it was memorised directly from Umar or not, as such a hadith was circulated between these leading religious authorities without any of them rejecting it and they used to reject anyone who deviated from the Sunnah such as the Khawarij, the Mu’tazilah, the Murji’ah<sup>22</sup> and the Jahmiyyah.

And Ahmad ibn Hanbal used to say: *“The hadiths from Hammad ibn Salamah are a thorn in the throat of the innovators.”*

So these are amongst the greatest authorities of Ahlul-Sunnah who would repudiate innovations of much less consequence, had this saying, in their view, been amongst the innovations that contradict the Qur’an, Sunnah and consensus (ijma’) as some people think.

‘Abd b. Hamīd mentioned this (narration) in the tafsir of His (T) saying: **“They remain in it for ages.”** (78:23) in order to corroborate the view of those who say: *ahqaab* (ages) has a limit at which it expires and is unlike the sustenance (of Paradise) that has no point at which it expires. There is no doubt that amongst those who expressed that saying - the saying of Umar and those who transmitted it from him - that they meant by that the genus of the people of the Fire who are deserving of it.<sup>23</sup>

As for those people marred by sins.<sup>24</sup> Due to them coming out from it (the Fire), these (scholars) and others were already aware they wouldn’t remain in it like the amount of sand of ‘Alij, nor anything close to that.

Al-Hasan used to relate hadith about intercession for the people of Tawheed<sup>25</sup> and al-Bukhari and Muslim have cited them on his authority. Likewise Hammad ibn Salamah collected them and narrated them and so did Sulayman ibn Harb and the likes of him.

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<sup>20</sup> *ahqaaba* - a discussion of this will follow.

<sup>21</sup> i.e. unnamed Tabi’ in. Ibn Taymiyyah is preempting the objection that the isnad (chain of authority) is incomplete because the specific Tabi’ in were not named.

<sup>22</sup> An early theological school that argued judgment of sin and who is a Muslim should be left (irjaa’ = lit. postponing) to God alone.

<sup>23</sup> i.e. those who rejected Islam as opposed to sinful Muslims who will be taken out of the Fire.

<sup>24</sup> i.e. sinful Muslims.

<sup>25</sup> i.e. so wouldn’t have confused the previous narration with them.

So in their view, what is said regarding this (the reprieve by intercession of People of Tawheed), is not referring to the likes of this (the narration about sands of ‘Alij).

Plus the expression; ‘People of the Fire’ (*Ahl al-Nar*), does not refer to the people of Tawheed, on the contrary it refers to other than them as the Prophet (SAW) said: “*As for the People of the Fire who are deserving of it (ahluhaa), indeed they will not die in it not will they live.*”

His (‘Umar’s) saying (in the narration about sands of ‘Alij): “*they will come out*” means they will come out of Jahannam after its punishment passes away and expires. For they will never come out of it<sup>26</sup> - meaning Jahannam - rather, they will abide in Jahannam just as God (SWT) has conveyed. But when its appointed time comes to an end and it has passed away just as this world will pass away, there will no longer be a punishment remaining in it.

That is because the world will not become non-existent and Jahannam is within the earth<sup>27</sup> and the earth will not become completely non-existent, but its passing away<sup>28</sup>(means) by changing its state its transformation from one state to another just as God (T) said:

**“Everyone upon the earth will perish.”** (55:26)

Yet they (the people on it) will not become non-existent. No! They will only die and be destroyed as God (T) said:

**“What is with you expires, but what is with God remains.”** (16:96)

Because when a man consumes it then it has expired, though it has not become non-existent, rather it has gone from one state to another.

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In the tafseer of Ali bin Abi Talhah Al-Walibi on the authority of ibn ‘Abbas - who is renowned and acclaimed and the vast majority of mufasssirun who cite chains of authority in tafsir, transmit from him, such as ibn Jarir al-Tabari and ibn Abi Hatim and ‘Uthman ibn Sa’id al-Darimi and al-Bayhaqi, as well as those who cite abbreviated chains such as al-Tha’alibī and al-Baghawī and those who don’t cite chains, such as al-Māwardī and ibn al-Jawzī. He said: His saying: **“The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally,**

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<sup>26</sup> i.e. while it exists.

<sup>27</sup> There are several narrations regarding this i.e., ‘Atiyah narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas, who said: “*Paradise is in the seventh heaven and Hell is in the seventh earth.*” Narrated by Abu Nu‘aym.

<sup>28</sup> *fana’uhaa* - In Ibn Taymiyyah’s view *Fana’* (passing away) doesn’t mean complete non-existence, but rather passing away from one state into another.

**except for what Allah wills. Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing.”** (6:128) He (Ibn ‘Abbas) said about this verse: *“No one has the right to judge on behalf of God regarding His creatures nor assign them to Heaven or Hell.”*

Al-Tabari said: *“It is related from ibn ‘Abbas that he used to deduce from this exception that God (T) has made the extent to which He will punish those people, subject to His Will.”*

Abdullah (ibn Salih) narrated that Muawiyah (ibn Salih) narrated on the authority of ‘Ali (ibn Abi Talha) from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said (regarding): **“The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally, except as God wills.”** (6:128) he said about this verse: *“No one has the right to judge on behalf of God regarding His creatures nor assign them to Heaven or Hell.”*

The threat in this verse does not refer to the People of the Qiblah,<sup>29</sup> for He said:

**“And The Day when He will gather them together; “Oh company of jinn, you amassed many of mankind.” Their allies among mankind will say; ‘Our Lord, we profited from each other, but now we have reached our term, which you appointed for us.’ He will say; ‘The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally, except as God wills. Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing.’ Thus We make the evildoers friends of one another for what they have earned.”** (6:128-129)

So, **“Their allies among mankind,”** is an expression that unequivocally applies to the *kuffar*, because they are more rightly designated as their allies than disobedient Muslims.

And God (T) said<sup>30</sup>: **“He (Satan) has no power over those who believe and put trust in their Lord. His power is only over those who take him as an ally and those who ascribe partners unto Him.”** (16:99-100)

And He (T) said: **“We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.”** (7:27)

And He (T) said: **“Indeed, those who fear Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight. But their brothers (the devils) increase them in error; then they do not stop short.”** (7:201-202)

And He (T) said: **“On the day when He will gather them all together, He will say unto the angels: Did these worship you? They will say: Be Thou Glorified. Thou (alone) art our ally, not them! Nay, but they worshipped the jinn; most of them were believers in them.”** (34:40-41)

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<sup>29</sup> *Ahlul-Qiblah*, i.e. Muslims - in this case, the reference is to sinful Muslims.

<sup>30</sup> This and following verses are presented to emphasise that *“allies of Satan”* unequivocally refers to intractable disbelievers and not sinful Muslims. Which means the sentence: *‘The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally, except as God wills.’* (6:128) refers to the former and not the latter.

And He (T) said: **“Do you take him (Satan) and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you? Wretched it is for the wrongdoers as an exchange.”** (18:50)

And He, (T), has said: **“So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan is ever weak.”** (4:76) Thus it has been ordered to fight the allies of Satan - and they are the *kuffar*.

And He said: **“Satan has overcome them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah. Those are the party of Satan. Unquestionably, the party of Satan - they will be the losers.”** (58:19)

And He (T) said: **“And indeed do the devils inspire their allies to contend with you. And if you were to obey them, indeed, you would be *mushrikun*.”** (6:121) He conveyed that they (the devils) inspire their allies amongst men to contend with you (the believers).

So these (verses) and their like make it clear that the *kuffar* are the allies of the devils. For they are more rightly the ones referenced in His saying: **“Their allies among mankind will say; ‘Our Lord, we profited from each other, but now we have reached our term, which you appointed for us.’ He will say; ‘The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally, except as God wills.’ Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing.”** (6:128)

Ibn Abi Talha said on the authority of ibn ‘Abbas: *“Indeed this verse requires that no one has the right to judge on behalf of God regarding His creatures nor assign them to Heaven or Hell.”*

So in his view it shows that this exception<sup>31</sup> requires distancing the punishment from them and this is the implication of the verse. It is because of this verse one must suspend (judgment) and not judge on behalf of God regarding His creatures nor assign them to Heaven or Hell.

And this contradicts those who say (“*Except as God wills*”) means except what He wills of different types of punishment or (“*Except as God wills*”) means the amount of time they await before entering (the Fire) from the moment they were resurrected up to when they entered (the Fire).<sup>32</sup> Because it’s already known that before entering it, they are not in it. As for those who say it means the people of the Garden,<sup>33</sup> it is explicit that it refers to the *kuffar*.

However al-Baghawi mentions: Ibn ‘Abbas said: *“The exception refers to a people that God already knew would accept Islam and so will come out from the Fire,”* without mentioning

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<sup>31</sup> “Except as God wills.”

<sup>32</sup> These are two explanations adduced by those who maintain that the *kuffar* will suffer punishment eternally.

<sup>33</sup> Sinful Muslims who will eventually enter the Garden.

who related this from ibn ‘Abbas. However if that means; those who accepted Islam in this life, then that is not the case. Because the dialogue is directed at those who are the allies of Satan and the Jinn who listen to each other. While those (who accepted Islam in this life) are from the body of Muslims and God already knew that all those who accepted Islam would do so. It is as though the one who holds this view thinks this dialogue (in 6:128) is with the living (in this world), but that is not the case, on the contrary, this dialogue is taking place with them on the day of Judgment. As for if it means that they will accept Islam in Jahannam and then come out of it, this is contrary to what the Qur’an tells us in several places.

Furthermore it is related from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud that he said: *“There will come a time upon Jahannam when there will be no one in it and that will be after they have remained in it for ages (ahqaaba.)”* And they are the kuffar - and a similar narration is related on the authority of Abu Hurairah.

However al-Baghawi said: *“According to the Ahl al-Sunnah its meaning, if accurate, is that none of the People of Faith will remain in it.”*

**So it is said** (in response) that this is not what they<sup>34</sup> meant, because they said *after* they have remained in it for ages and those (who remain it for ages) are the *kuffar* mentioned in His saying (T):

**“Indeed, Hell has been lying in wait. For the transgressors, a place of return. In which they will remain for ages. They will not taste therein [any] coolness or drink. Except scalding water and [foul] purulence. An appropriate recompense. Indeed, they were not expecting an account. And denied Our verses with [emphatic] denial.”** (78:21-28)

This is a description of those who deny the verses of God **“with [emphatic] denial”** meaning outright disbelief - an unequivocal disbelief in the very foundation and I haven’t found any accepted narration from any one of the Sahaba that contradicts this. On the contrary Abu Sa’id (al-Khudri) and Abu Hurairah both narrated the hadith about death being slaughtered<sup>35</sup> and the hadiths of intercession and *Ahlul-Tawheed* coming out (of the Fire)<sup>36</sup> and other than them and have said regarding the passing away of the Fire the same as they said (here.)

And al-Baghawi transmitted that al-Suddī narrated on the authority of Murrah from ‘Abdullah (ibn Mas’ud) that he said: *“If the People of the Fire knew that they will remain in the Fire for the amount of pebbles in the world, they would rejoice.”*

It has been abundantly elucidated from more than one of the Salaf that “Age” (*huqb*) is a limited amount of time and ages (*ahqaab*) is the plural of age. For example ibn Abi Hatim

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud and Abu Hurairah.

<sup>35</sup> Reference to the Hadith from Bukhari that on the Day of Judgment, Death will be brought in the form of a ram and slaughtered. Then it will be said: *“Oh people of Paradise! Eternity for you and no death. Oh people of Hell! Eternity for you and no death.”*

<sup>36</sup> i.e. so they knew the difference between those reprieved by intercession from those remaining in it for ages.

transmitted on the authority of ‘Atiyah from ibn ‘Abbas who said regarding His saying (T): **“Remaining in it for ages.”** He said: “*Years.*”

On the authority of Abu Salih al-Samman from Abu Hurairah regarding: **“Remaining in it for ages,”** he said: “*al-Huqb is 80 years with each year being 360 days and a day is like a thousand years. One day of it is like all (time in) this world.*”

Ibn Abi Hatim said it’s narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas and Hilal al-Hajari and al-Dahāk and Thakwān and al-Hasan and Sa‘id ibn Jubayr and Qatāda and ‘Amr ibn Maymun that they said: “*al-Huqb is 80 years.*”

On the authority of Hisham from al-Hasan al-Basri that he was asked about His saying (T): **“Remaining in it for ages,”** and so said: “*God knows best about ages (ahqaab) for it does not have a number apart from khulud (abiding eternally),<sup>37</sup> nevertheless it has reached us that one age (al-huqb) is seventy thousand years and each day is like a thousand years by your reckoning.*”

On the authority of Hisham from al-Hasan that he said: “*Ages (ahqaab) no one knows what that is, but one age (al-huqb) is seventy thousand years, each day of it is like a thousand years in your reckoning.*”

His saying; ‘*God knows best about ages (ahqaab) and no one knows what that is,*’ means they must have a number that God knows best what it is. For if they did not have a number then everyone would know that it has no number to it.

And that which al-Hasan transmitted from ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, mentioned previously,<sup>38</sup> supports the saying of al-Hasan that: “*It does not have a number apart from abiding eternally (khulud),*” which is true also, because they will be abiding eternally in it and not getting out of it as long as it remains. So the sayings of al-Hasan corroborate each other. As for their abiding eternally in the Fire, it is true, as God has informed us.

On the authority of al-Suddi (regarding): **“Remaining in it for ages,”** he said: “*Seven hundred huqb, each huqb is seventy years and each year is 360 days and each day is like a thousand years by your reckoning.*” And on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr he said: “*A Huqb is forty years.*”

People differ regarding *ahqaab*, whether they are a quantitative and limited, in two ways:

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<sup>37</sup> i.e. *khulud* (abiding eternally) is equated with *ahqaaba* (ages) which is defined as a limited period.

<sup>38</sup> i.e. the narration about the sands of ‘Alij.

**(The First View):**<sup>39</sup> In the view of al-Suddi and others, it is limited and quantitative and this is the view of al-Zajjāj and others. However al-Zajjāj said: *“The meaning of them remaining in it for ages is; not tasting coolness or drink.”*<sup>40</sup> al-Zajjāj said *“The explanation of that is that ages (ahqaab) is a limit to their punishment with scalding water and pus. So when the ages have come to an end, they will be punished with other forms of punishment.”*

But what al-Zajjāj said is *shaath*<sup>41</sup> and contrary to the opinion of the first generation and those who came after and is contrary to what the Qur’an attests to. Because this necessitates that after remaining in it for ages, they will taste cold and drink, and that is categorically false. If they taste cold and drink then that is a blessing, so how are they being punished in it after that?

Some say this verse is abrogated.<sup>42</sup> And it is said: *“It refers to Ahlul Tawheed.”*

‘Abd al-Haq ibn ‘Atiyyah said in his tafsir: *“There are people who recognise that by (God) mentioning ahqaab the length of the punishment is restricted and ends, so they resort to ta’weel.”*<sup>43</sup> Muqatil ibn Hayyan said: *“Huqb means seventeen thousand years but it is abrogated by His saying (T): “So taste (the penalty) and never will We increase you except in torment.” (78:30) He said: However we have mentioned the error of this view.”*

Others say: The ones who are described as staying for ages are; sinful believers. He (‘Abd al-Haq) said: *“This also is weak because the following verses negate it.”*

Others say: **“Remaining in it for ages,”** means not ‘tasting cold nor drink’ (for ages). So in this case they remain for ages (not tasting cold nor drink), then the punishment continues for eternity with them drinking the (other) drinks of Jahannam.

**The second view:** Is that it (*ahqaab*) isn’t quantitative. They say: This doesn’t denote a cutoff point. Because each time an age passes it will be followed by another age. Had He (God) said ‘remaining in it for ten ages’ or ‘five ages’ then that would denote a cutoff point. This is the view of ibn Qutaybah and others.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn Taymiyya presents two views of *ahqaab* utilised by those who defend eternal Hell. Those who accept it is a limited period but argue it either refers to different types of punishment or to sinful Muslims. The Second view is that it’s not a limited period. Ibn Taymiyyah, notably, refutes both.

<sup>40</sup> i.e. The punishment of not tasting coolness or drink, will last for “ages” then a different type of punishment will be inflicted and so on for eternity.

<sup>41</sup> Strange/Irregular/Weak

<sup>42</sup> i.e. Muqatil bin Hayyan, as related in several Tafsirs such as al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi and others

<sup>43</sup> *Ta’weel* has different meanings depending on context. It can be somewhat synonymous with *tafseer* i.e. ‘understanding’ or ‘profound understanding’, as when the Prophet prayed Ibn Abbas be granted the *ta’weel* of the Qur’an. A similar meaning is; ‘revealing the true reality of something’ as the Qur’an says: *“Do they await except for its ta’weel” (7:53)* However it can also have the somewhat negative meaning of interpreting in a way that deviates from the plain and apparent meaning and that is the meaning its given here. This type of *ta’weel* is generally disapproved of and is an accusation often directed towards *batiniyyah* (esoteric) sects.

Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi said: *“This is the view of ibn Qutaybah and the majority. Its explanation is that time, for the People of the Garden and Fire, is represented as a quantity such as His saying: **“morning and evening,”** (19:62). An example of this is that God’s words are represented as a quantity even though they are infinite.”*

**It is said** (in response): This is impermissible. For that which is infinite cannot be represented as a quantity. Only that which has a determined amount and is calculable can be represented as a quantity. However, if a part of its whole is taken into consideration, then it can be represented as a quantity such as ‘morning and evening.’ Because this is a measurement of one of the days in the Garden which can be known by light appearing to them to increase more than usual by which they can recognise morning and evening, just as the sun appears to the people of this world, although there will be no darkness in the Garden.<sup>44</sup>

His (Ibn al-Jawzi) saying: “God’s words are represented as a quantity” is impermissible. Only a part of its whole can be put into numbers, such as the revealed verses. If not, then how can that which is infinite be counted? Everything that can have a quantitative measurable amount, is something that has a limit. Every number man can determine with his tongue and mind, has a limit. But that which is infinite cannot have a measurable quantity - not in his mind nor by his tongue.

As for His saying - (T): **“Abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Surely your Lord does whatever He wills.”** (11:107)

Ibn Abi Hatim said: It is mentioned on the authority of Ja’far ibn Sulayman from al-Jarir that he said: I heard Abu Nadrah say: *“The whole of the Qur’an comes down to this verse:”* **“Surely your Lord does whatever He wills.”**

Harb al-Kirmānī and Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqī narrated on the authority of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri and from Qatadah regarding His saying: **“As for the wretched, they shall be in the Fire wherein there shall be for them moaning and sighing. Abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills.”** *“God knows best about His exception regarding what will happen.”*

Al-Tabari narrated on the authority of Yunus that ibn Wahb informed us that Ibn Zaid informed us regarding His saying:

**“Abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Surely your Lord does whatever He wills. As for those who will be glad they will be in the Garden, abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure except as your Lord wills: A gift not cut short.”** (11:107-108)

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<sup>44</sup> Al-Tabari said regarding *“morning and evening”*(19:62): *“It does not mean that there will be night and day there but they will have times that come and go and they will recognise them by certain types of lights.”*

*“He (God) told us what he wills for the People of the Garden by saying: “A gift not cut short,” but He didn’t tell us what He wills for the People of the Fire.”*

And on the authority of al-Suddi: **“Except as your Lord wills.”** *“The day this verse was revealed (people) hoped they would come out.”*

As for His saying: **“Abiding in it forever (*khalideena fiha abadan.*)”** (4:169) (33:65) (72:23) Al-Baghawi mentioned on the authority of ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd that he said: *“God Most Glorified and High, told us what He wills for the People of Paradise, for He said: “A gift not cut short,” but He didn’t tell us what He wills for the People of the Fire.”*<sup>45</sup>

And the scholars of Sunnah and Hadith have related many reports about this from the Sahaba and the Tabi’een such as that narrated by Harb al-Kirmani and Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi and Abu Ja’far al-Tabari and others on the authority of the Sahaba, regarding this.

In the Musnad of al-Tabarani, he mentioned: *“Watercress will grow in it (Hell.)”*<sup>46</sup> but then he employs Qur’an, Sunna and sayings of the Sahaba, to argue against it passing away - even though those who take the view of its eternality do not have the support of the Book, nor the Sunnah nor the sayings of the Sahaba.

**Regarding this:** That which was narrated by Harb and al-Bayhaqi that Harb al-Kirmani said: *“I asked Ishaq about His saying (T): “Abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills.” He said: This verse applies to every threat in the Qur’an.”*

Ishaq said: ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Mu’ath informed us that Mu’tamar ibn Sulayman informed us, that he said: My father told me that Abu Nadrah informed us on the authority of Jabir or Abu Sa’id or some of the companions of the Prophet (SAW) that he said: *“This verse applies to the whole Qur’an: “Except as your Lord wills. Surely your Lord does whatever He wills.”* Mu’tamar said my father said: *“He meant every threat in the Qur’an.”*<sup>47</sup>

Abu Ja’far ibn Jarir al-Tabari narrated in his tafsir, he said al-Hasan ibn Yahya informed us that ‘Abd al-Razzaq informed us that ibn al-Taymi informed us on the authority of his father from Abu Nadrah from Jabir or Sa’eed or from a man from the companions of the prophet (SAW) regarding His saying (S): **“Except as your Lord wills. Surely your Lord does**

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<sup>45</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah stated previously he regards *eternally therein* to mean *eternally therein as long as the Fire exists*. However one could argue “*eternally*” cannot refer to a finite period. This passage and following passages appear to be a response to that. Since he emphasises God’s promise of eternal felicity will “*not be cut short,*” but the threat of eternal punishment is qualified by “*Except as God wills.*” i.e. he makes a distinction between God’s promise (*wa’d*) and His threat (*wa’eed*.) The former will never be broken but the latter can be, as it is qualified by “*Except as God wills*” which as he mentions later, applies to all of God’s threats.

<sup>46</sup> Implying Hell will one day no longer be a place of punishment as vegetation will start growing in it.

<sup>47</sup> Related by al-Bayhaqi in *al-asmaa’ wa al-sifaat*

*whatever He wills,”* he said: *“This verse applies to the whole Qur’an and so he says wherever; “Abiding in it” is found in the Qur’an, it applies to it.”*

Ibn Jarir said I was informed on the authority of ibn Al-Musayyib from one who mentioned it from Ibn ‘Abbas: *“Abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills,”* he said: *“God (AWJ) made an exception.”* He (Ibn ‘Abbas) said: *“He will order the Fire to consume them.”*<sup>48</sup>

He (Al-Tabari) said: Ibn Mas’ud said: *“There will come upon Jahannam, a time when its gates will fail and there will be no-one in it. That will be after they have remained in it for ages.”*

And he said Muhammad ibn Hamīd al-Razi informed us that Jarir informed us on the authority of Bayan<sup>49</sup> from al-Sha’bi that he said: *“Jahannam is the quickest of the two places to be inhabited and the quickest to be destroyed.”*<sup>50</sup>

Harb al-Kirmānī said on the authority of Ishaq ibn Rahwayh that ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Mu’ath informed us that my father informed us that Shu’bah informed us on the authority of Abu Balaj that he heard ‘Amr ibn Maymun narrate from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr that he said: *“There will come a day upon Jahannam when it’s gates will slam shut and there will be no-one in it.”* And that will be after they stay in it for ages.

Ishaq said, ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Mu’ath informed us that my father informed us that Shu’bah informed us on the authority of Yahya ibn Ayyub from Abu Zar’ah from Abu Hurairah that he said: *“As for what I say: Indeed a day will come upon Jahannam that no one will remain in it,”* then he recited: *“As for the wretched, they shall be in the Fire; for them sighing and wailing in it. Abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills.”* (11:106-107)

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### **Those who Insist the Fire is Eternal**

**I said:** Those who insist the Fire is eternal have four approaches.

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<sup>48</sup> *ta’kuluhum* lit. eat them i.e. ‘finish them off’ as opposed to repeatedly re-creating their skins.

<sup>49</sup> Bayan ibn Bishr al-Ahmasi.

<sup>50</sup> Related by al-Tabari and al-Suyuti

**First:** Is that it is considering it to be *ijma*'<sup>51</sup>. Many people believe this is agreed upon by consensus with no disagreement about it amongst the Salaf and if disagreement occurred, then it is from the statements of the People of *bid'ah*.

**Second:** That the Qur'an has categorically proven this. For it has related that they will remain in it eternally (*khuludihim fi al-nar abadan*) in more than one place.

**Third:** The copious amount of traditions relating that those with an atom's weight of faith will come out of the Fire to the exclusion of the *kuffar* who will never come out.<sup>52</sup>

**Fourth:** The view of those who say: The Prophet indicated this to us and we came to know it after him by necessity, while not arguing on the basis of any specific text. And the common people say: We know this from what we've been told. While some take a strange position and claim that reason leads to the eternity of the *kuffar* (in the Fire.)

**As for *ijma*':** Firstly it is unknown.<sup>53</sup> These matters have not been definitively decided upon by consensus. Yes, it is presumed that there is consensus upon it, but that's before being aware of the disagreement. For indeed the disagreement was known past and present. In fact up to now I do not know of any Sahaba who said: "*It will never pass away!*" Instead the evidence transmitted from them contradicts that. But the Tabi'un related such and such<sup>54</sup> from them.

**As for the Qur'an.** Whatever the Qur'an confirms, is the truth. And there is nothing in the Qur'an that confirms it (the Fire) won't pass away. On the contrary, what the Qur'an explicitly confirms, is that they will abide in it eternally as God (SWT) has conveyed in more than one place.<sup>55</sup> And He has conveyed that they will seek death and (seek) to get out of it and seek that the punishment be eased off them, but they will get no response, not for this nor that. He has conveyed that they will remain in it. And conveyed that: **"They shall neither be finished off and die, nor shall its punishment be eased off them."** (35:36) And He said (T) **"They will shriek out therein."** (35:37) **"Oh our Lord, take us out from it, and if we return [to evil], we would indeed be wrongdoers. He will say: Be gone in it and don't speak to me!"** (23:107-108)

He said (T): **"Indeed, the criminals will be in the punishment of Hell, abiding eternally."**

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<sup>51</sup> The Prophet said: "*God will not let my Ummah agree upon error.*" (Tirmidhi) Therefore once consensus was reached on a matter, it was considered binding.

<sup>52</sup> i.e. hadiths about intercession (*shafa'ah*).

<sup>53</sup> Although later scholars may have agreed upon this matter, Ibn Taymiyyah considers the early generations to be the only basis for consensus and argues that there was no consensus amongst them on this matter.

<sup>54</sup> i.e. conflicting reports.

<sup>55</sup> Here and in the following passages, Ibn Taymiyyah is responding to the second argument that; many verses of the Qur'an categorically state the Fire is eternal. He quotes those very same verses to show that they never state that the Fire itself is eternal but only that the disbelievers will *abide in it* eternally - and he sees no contradiction between abiding in it eternally and its eventual passing away.

**It will not be allowed to subside for them, and they will be in utter despair therein. We did not wrong them, but it was they who were the wrongdoers. And they will call: Oh Malik, let your Lord put an end to us! He will say: Indeed, you will remain! We brought you the Truth, but most of you have hatred for the Truth.”** (43:74-78)

And His saying: **“put an end to us!”** means; ‘cause us to die’ and that is what the *mufassirūn* say, such as al-Suddi, ibn Zayd and others.

Al-Suddi said: *“Put an end to us with; death.”* Ibn Zayd said: *“Finishing (qadaa’) here means; death.”* All the other *mufassirūn* say likewise. And this is like His saying (T): **“They shall neither be finished off and die, nor shall its punishment be eased off them.”** (35:36)

On the authority of al-Farrā’ regarding His saying (T): **“But as for him who is given his record in his left hand,”** up to; **“Oh, would that it had been death!”** (69:25-27) That is because *qadaa’* means completion and culmination. A concluded matter is that which has passed and finished. And man’s life comes to an end with death.

And He said (T) **“And those in the Fire will say to the keepers of Hell: Supplicate your Lord to lighten for us the torment for a day. They will say: Didn’t your messengers come to you with clear proofs? They will say: Yes! They will reply: Then make your own supplication, but the supplication of the disbelievers is nothing but futility.”** (40:49-50)

And He said (T): **“Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - upon them will be the curse of Allah and of the angels and the people, all together, abiding eternally therein. The punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved.”** (2:161-162)

And He said (T): **“As for the unbelievers, they shall have the fire of Jahannam; they shall neither be done with and so die, nor shall its chastisement be lightened for them. Thus do We recompense every ungrateful one. They will shriek out therein; 'Our Lord, bring us forth, and we will do righteousness, other than what we have done.' 'What, did We not give you a long life, enough for whoever would remember therein to remember? And the warner had come to you? So taste [the punishment], for there is not for the wrongdoers any helper.”** (35:36-37)

And He said (T): **“If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire and will say, "Oh, would that we could be returned [to life on earth] and not deny the signs of our Lord and be among the believers. But what they concealed before has [now] appeared to them. And even if they were returned, they would return to that which they were forbidden; and indeed, they are liars.”** (6:27-28)

So these texts and their like in the Qur'an make it clear that they will be in Jahannam eternally, neither dying nor living and they will plead for this and that but will receive no response.

This necessitates their abiding eternally in Jahannam - the abode of punishment - as long as that punishment remains. They will not get out of it while it remains and its punishment remains, as the People of Tawheed will get out (while it remains.) For they (people of Tawheed) will get out with or without intercession while it (Jahannam) remains, just as some people get out of prison where there is punishment, while both the prison and its punishment remain for those who haven't come out.

And this is what the the Prophet (SAW) said in a Sahih Hadith - Sahih Muslim: On the authority of Abu Sa'id from the Prophet (SAW) that he said:

*“As for the People of Hell, who are deserving of it<sup>56</sup>, they will neither die nor live therein. But there are some people who will be punished with the Fire due to their sins. So God will cause them to die completely, until they have become like coal, when intercession will be permitted. They will be brought group by group and scattered on (the banks of) the rivers of Paradise. Then it is said: ‘Oh people of Paradise, pour (water) on them.’ Then they will sprout forth like shoots of seeds in silt born by a flood.”*

It is related in *al-Sahihayn*<sup>57</sup> on the authority of Abu Hurairah in a long hadith which recounts passing over the *Sirāt*<sup>58</sup> and intercession. He said in it: “...until when God has finished the accounting between the slaves, He will take out some of the people of the fire from whomever He wills by His mercy. He will order the angels to remove from the Fire those who did not associate anything with God from whomever He wills to show mercy to from amongst those who say: There is no god but God. They will recognise them by the traces of prostration. The Fire will consume the sons of Adam without traces of prostration so they will come out of the Fire having been burnt. Then the water of life will be poured on them so they sprout forth in it, like seeds sprout forth in silt born by a flood. Then God completes the accounting between the slaves and there will remain one man who will approach with his face towards the fire and he will be the last of the people of Paradise to enter the Garden and so he will say: Oh Lord avert my face away from the Fire.” - He recounts averting him from the Fire, then his being advanced towards the Garden, then up to its gate, then his admission into the Garden and that He gave him what he hoped for and the like of it. It was narrated by Abu Sa'id that he said: “Ten times the like of it.”

Likewise in *al-Sahihayn* from the hadith of Abu Sa'id that he said: “...until when the believers are freed from the Fire. For I swear by the One in whose hand is my life, there is none among you who is more ardent in imploring God to exact fully the right of their

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<sup>56</sup> As mentioned previously it means the *kuffar* as opposed to sinful Muslims.

<sup>57</sup> Bukhari and Muslim.

<sup>58</sup> The bridge people must pass over on the Day of Judgment in order to enter Paradise.

brothers who are in the Fire, than the believers are (in imploring) God on the day of Judgment, saying: Oh our Lord they used to fast with us and pray and make pilgrimage. It will be said: Take out those whom you recognise, for their bodies will be forbidden for the Fire. So they will bring out a great multitude who the fire had taken hold of up to half their legs and knees. They would then say: Oh our Lord no-one from amongst those you commanded us about remains in it. Then He will then say: Go back and anyone you find who has a Dinar's weight of good in his heart, bring him out. So they will bring out a great multitude." Up to when he said: "Then He will say: Go back and anyone you find who has an atom's weight of good in his heart, bring him out. So they will bring out a great multitude..."

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri used to say: "If you don't believe me regarding this hadith, then, recite, if you wish: **"Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, [even] as much as an atom's weight; while if there is good, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward."** (4:40)

"...So God will say:<sup>59</sup> The angels have interceded, the prophets have interceded, the believers have interceded and nothing is left except the Most Merciful of the Merciful. And so He will take a handful from the Fire and bring out a people who never did any good at all. They will have become charcoal, then throw them in a river at the portals of the Garden called the 'river of life.' They will then emerge like seeds emerging in silt born by a flood. He said: They will emerge like pearls with seals upon their necks by which the People of the Garden will recognise them. These are the freedmen of God who God has admitted to the Garden despite not having performed any good deeds nor having displayed any good virtue. Then He said: They are admitted to the Garden so whatever you see, is for you. So they will say: Oh our Lord, you have given us that which you have not given to anyone in the world. So He will say: I have with me something better than that for you. They will say: Oh our Lord what can be better than this? He will say: My good pleasure. For I will never be angry with you again."

In one narration it says (atom's weight) "of faith" instead of saying (an atom's weight) "of good" He<sup>60</sup> said in it: "Al-Jabbar<sup>61</sup> says: What remains is My intercession. So He will take a handful from the Fire and bring out people who have been burnt, then throw them in a river at the portals of the Garden..." To the end of the hadith, but didn't say: "who never did any good."

And in *al-Sahihayn* on the authority of ibn Mas'ud from the Prophet (SAW) that he said: "Verily I know the last of the People of the Fire to get out from it and the last of the People of the Garden to gain admission to the Garden. A man who will emerge from the Fire crawling. God will say to him: 'Go and enter the Garden.' So he will come to it but it will appear to him as if it is full." - up to when he said: "Allah will say to him: 'Go, for indeed you shall have ten times the like of the world - or - indeed you shall have the world and ten times its

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<sup>59</sup> This is a continuation of the narration from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri.

<sup>60</sup> Abu Sa'id al-Khudri.

<sup>61</sup> *al-Jabbar The Compeller - one of God's names.*

*like.” And in the narration of Muslim: It will be said to him: “Make your wish. So he will make his wish. It will be said to him: You shall have what you wish and ten times over.”*

This corresponds with the hadith of Abu Sa’id in two ways. Likewise in Muslim from the hadith of Jabir: *“The like of the world and ten times its like,”* as it is in the earlier wording in the hadith of ibn Mas’ud.

And in the hadith of Jabir in *al-Sahihayn* that the Prophet (SAW) said: *“Indeed God (T) will bring a people out from the Fire and admit them into the Garden.”*

And in a narration: *“Indeed God will bring a people out from the Fire due to intercession.”*

And in Muslim from the hadith of Jabir who said: The prophet (SAW) said: *“Indeed a people will be brought out of the Fire who will be burnt in it apart from the periphery of their faces and then enter the Garden.”*

In al-Bukhari on the authority of ‘Imran ibn Husain from the prophet (SAW) that he said *“A people will come out of the Fire due to the intercession of Muhammad (SAW) and they will enter the Garden. They will be named the Jahannamiyin.”* Also in Bukhari on the authority of Anas from the Prophet (SAW) that he said: *“A people will come out of the Fire after being charred by it and they will enter the Garden. They will be named the Jahannamiyin.”*

The hadiths of intercession for those who will come out from the Fire are plentiful. Many will come out of the Fire. A number of them are hadiths from *al-Sahihayn*.

And in a hadith of Anas: In it he (the Prophet) mentions intercession time after time and at the end he (SAW) said: *“So I will say: Oh My Lord give me permission (to intercede) for those who declared: There is no god but God. So He (AWJ) will say: By my might, glory, greatness and pride I shall verily take out those who say: There is no god but God.”* In a version from Muslim: *“That is not for you - or - to you.”*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> i.e. they declared belief in one God but not the prophethood of Muhammad and so aren't of his Ummah.

## The Difference Between the Continuance of the Garden and the Fire

The difference between the continuance of the Garden and the Fire according to Divine Law and Reason.

As for Divine Law, (the difference) is from various perspectives.

**First:** In more than one place in His book, God has conveyed the continuance and eternity of the Garden's bliss and that it will never be exhausted nor cut short, just as He has conveyed that the people of the Garden will never come out of it. As for the Fire and its punishment, He has not conveyed its continuance. Rather, He has conveyed that its people will never get out of it.

**Second:** He has conveyed that which demonstrates that it (punishment) isn't eternal, in a number of verses.

**Third:** Nothing mentioned about the Fire demonstrates its perpetuity.

**Fourth:** He has set a limit to the Fire by saying: "**Remaining in it for ages**" (78:23) and saying: "**Forever in it, except as God wishes.**" (6:128) and saying: "**As long as the Heavens and Earth endure, except as your Lord wishes.**" (11:108) These three verses signify something temporary or conditional. While that one (the Garden) is eternal and unrestricted and is not temporary or conditional.

**Fifth:** It is confirmed some will enter the Garden who will be brought forth for it in the afterlife<sup>63</sup> and (others) who first entered the Fire, will enter it<sup>64</sup> and offspring<sup>65</sup> will (also) enter it by the deeds of their fathers. Plus it has been established that those who never did any

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<sup>63</sup> i.e. "...the Garden will remain spacious enough to accommodate more people until Allah will bring forth some people and let them dwell in the ample space of the Garden." (Bukhari and Muslim)

<sup>64</sup> i.e. such as the people who were reprieved, as mentioned in the previous narrations.

<sup>65</sup> Reference to: "As for those who believe and whose offspring follow them in faith, We shall unite them with their offspring and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds." (52:21)

good will (also) enter the Garden. As for the Fire, no one will be punished for anything other than their sins, so this (the Fire) can't be compared to that (the Garden).<sup>66</sup>

**Sixth:** The Garden is a requirement of His Mercy and Forgiveness while the Fire is from His punishment. He said: **“Inform my servants that I am indeed the Oft-forgiving the Merciful and that it is My punishment which is the painful punishment.”** (15:49-50) And He said: **“Know that Allah is severe in punishment, but that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”** (5:98) And He said: **“Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.”** (6:125) The Bliss (of Paradise) flows necessarily from His names which are intrinsic to His essence and so must be eternal along with the eternality of His names and attributes. As for punishment, it is only one of His creations, and that which is created can have an end just like the *dunya* and other such things - particularly a creation that was created for a wise purpose pertaining to other than itself.<sup>67</sup>

**Seventh:** He has conveyed that His Mercy encompasses everything<sup>68</sup> and that He has: **“Decreed upon Himself mercy,”** (6:12) and He said: *“My Mercy outstrips my anger,”*<sup>69</sup> and *“My Mercy overcomes my Anger.”*<sup>70</sup> These are general and unrestricted.<sup>71</sup> Because if punishment was deemed to have no end, then there wouldn't be any Mercy at all.<sup>72</sup>

**Eighth:** It is established that apart from the fact His Mercy is all-encompassing, He is also All-Wise and the All-Wise only creates according to His overall wise purpose. Just as His wise purpose is mentioned in several places. For so long as it is understood that He punishes those He punishes for a wise purpose, then is this possible.<sup>73</sup> In this world, there is a wise purpose behind Divinely ordained punishments. Likewise, there are profound wisdoms behind what He decrees of calamities. Amongst them; cleansing of sins, purification of souls, deterring the perpetrator as well as others in the future and in it lies a cautionary lesson. And the Garden is pure and no one enters it except the pure.<sup>74</sup>

For this reason he said in the Sahih hadith:<sup>75</sup> *“After they have crossed the sirat they will be confined at a bridge between the Garden and the Fire. Then when they have been cleansed and purified they will be permitted to enter the Garden.”*

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<sup>66</sup> i.e. People will enter Hell only because of what they've done to deserve it. As for Heaven, people will enter it even though they've done nothing to deserve it.

<sup>67</sup> i.e. So when its purpose has been achieved its continued existence becomes redundant.

<sup>68</sup> *“My mercy encompasses all things.”* (7:156)

<sup>69</sup> *hadith qudsi* related in Bukhari and Muslim.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *'umoom* and *itlaaq*. In Qur'an Sciences (*'ulūm al-qur'an*) verses and rulings can be classified in different ways i.e. *'aam* (general) and *mutlaq* (unrestricted) as opposed to *khaas* (specific) and *muqayyad* (restricted.) Ibn Taymiyyah argues these statements are the former and not the latter as some argue.

<sup>72</sup> i.e., because if punishment is eternal, then it would be impossible for Mercy to 'encompass', 'outstrip' or 'overcome' it.

<sup>73</sup> i.e. if punishment has no purpose then this would contradict the fact God creates everything according to a wise purpose.

<sup>74</sup> i.e. therefore the wise purpose of the Fire is to purify sinners so they can enter the Garden.

<sup>75</sup> Bukhari.

Evil and unjust souls - who if returned to this world before the punishment, would simply go back to what they were forbidden - are unfit to dwell in the Abode of Peace which is incompatible with lies, injustice and evil. However if when they are punished thoroughly by the Fire, their souls are cleansed of that evil, then this is rationally consistent with wise purpose, just as is the case with suffering of this world. Creating those who have evil in them that is eliminated by means of punishment, is perfect wisdom.

But as for creating souls who commit evil in this world, while in the Hereafter they will only exist in torment, this is a contradiction, in which appears a contradiction of wisdom and mercy that does not appear in anything else.

For this reason, when Jahm saw that, he denied that God is the Most Merciful of the Merciful and said; rather He does whatever He wills.<sup>76</sup> And those who followed his path, such as al-Ash'arī amongst others, hold the opinion that, in reality, there is no Wisdom or Mercy, but He has Knowledge, Power and Will with no preponderance given to any one of the two aspects (of Wisdom and Mercy). For that reason when they are asked to acknowledge that He is Wise, they interpret it as He is Knowing or Powerful or Supporting - but none of these three things require Wisdom. However when it is proven that He is All-Merciful and All-Wise and the falseness of Jahm's view is known, then it is obligatory to affirm the requirements of Mercy and Wisdom.

The views of the Mu'tazilah are also false and the views of Qadariyyah,<sup>77</sup> the Mujbirah<sup>78</sup> and those who deny His Wisdom and Mercy are false. Amongst the major things that completely undermines them is their position of endorsing Jahm, because that obligates what they say and the iniquity of the incumbent necessitates the iniquity of the obligated - and God (S) knows best.

### **As For The Verses of the Garden's Continuance.**

**First:** Such as His (T) saying: **“Its fruit is perpetual, and its shade.”** (13:35) He conveyed that it is perpetual, while that which ends is not perpetual.

**Second:** Such as His saying: **“Indeed, this is Our provision; it will never run out.”** (38:54) That which ends, runs out.

**Third:** His saying (T) **“Whatever you have will run out, but what is with God lasts.”** (16:96) He has conveyed that whatever bounty there is in this world, will run out, but what is

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<sup>76</sup> i.e. without regard to Mercy or Wisdom. Ibn Taymiyyah is referring to the extreme position Jahm took regarding God's Will due to his rejection of *sifat*, such as Wisdom and Mercy, which led Jahm to argue that wise purposes or merciful intentions cannot be attributed to God, but instead one must simply say; He wills it.

<sup>77</sup> Those who upheld absolute freewill and rejected predestination (*qadar*)

<sup>78</sup> Those who believed humans were forced (*mujbar*) i.e. Determinists

with God remains and never runs out. So if what God possesses of bounty, were to have an end then it would run out like the bounty of this world runs out and would not be lasting and inexhaustible.

**Fourth:** Such as His saying (T) in the two verses: **“Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds - for them is a reward uninterrupted.”** (41:8) **“Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds. For them is a reward uninterrupted.”** (84:25) Likewise He said: **“And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted.”** (68:3)

The majority of mufassirun said (it means): *“never cut short nor ever reduced,”* and they mention on the authority of ibn ‘Abbas that he said (it means): *“Never cut short,”* and on the authority of Muqatil: *“Never reduced,”* also. The majority of mufassirun say: *“never cut short nor ever reduced,”* just as He said: **“And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted.”** (68:3)

They say - *“Fate dealt him death,”*<sup>79</sup> because it cuts short the life of man.

On the authority of Mujahid (it means): *‘incalculable’* and this agrees with that (previous tafsir), because that which ends is quantifiable and calculable, in contrast to that which is eternal because it is incalculable.

Some people have taken a strange/irregular (*shaath*) opinion and said that *ghayr mamnūn* is in the same category as in His saying: **“They consider it a favour (yamunnūna) to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, "Do not consider your Islam a favour (tamunnu) to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favour (yamunnu) upon you that He has guided you to the faith.”** (49:17)<sup>80</sup>

But this view not only contradicts the Salaf and the majority, it is a mistake for several reasons. One of them is that God favours us with every blessing He bestows on us. Even faith and good deeds. God (T) said: **“They consider it a favour to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, "Do not consider your Islam a favour to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favour upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful.”** (49:17) and He (T) said: **“Certainly did Allah confer a favour upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves.”** (3:164)

And the People of the Garden said that which God (T) has conveyed in His saying: **“And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other. Saying: Lo! of old, when we were with our families, we were ever anxious. So Allah conferred favour upon us and protected us from the punishment of the Scorching Fire.”** (52:25-27)

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<sup>79</sup> This is an explanation of the root meaning of the verb *manna* from which *ghayru mamnūn* is derived.

<sup>80</sup> i.e. So they interpret *ghayr mamnūn* in (41:8), (84:25) and (68:3) as: “Not favoured,” meaning that the reward of those who believe and do good, is not a favour but their right.

This is like His saying: **“Praise to Allah , who has guided us to this; for we would never have been guided if Allah had not guided us.”** (7:43)

And His saying: **“If not for the favor of my Lord, I would have been of those brought in [to Hell].”** (35:57)

And it has been confirmed in Sahih (Bukhari) from the Prophet (SAW) that he said: *“No one will enter the Garden on account of his deeds.” They said: Not even you Oh prophet of God? He said: “Not even me, unless God encompasses me with His Mercy and Favour.”*

And God (T) has mentioned in more than one place His blessings, goodness and favours upon His servants and commands them to bring them to mind and be grateful for them.

And the servant - when giving charity - has been forbidden from doing it as though he is granting a favour, in His (T) saying: **“Do not invalidate your charities by reproachfully reminding the recipient of your favour or by injury.”** (2:264) Because in reality, the one who gives charity is doing good to his own soul not to the recipient of charity. For if he did not get some benefit, reward and recompense for it, he wouldn't give charity to him. He is like one who serves the Mamluks<sup>81</sup> in return for a wage from their chief, not as a favour to them.

Also it is God who is the one who is giving charity. He is the one who bestows favour upon him with that which enables him to do good to his own soul and for that he must thank God (T) and recognise that it is God who is actually doing good to him.

For if we consider the act itself, then it is God who created it and if we consider his intention, then he is doing it to seek reward and recompense from God and if we consider the one who is doing good, he is doing good to his own soul and God has favoured him by making him someone who does good to his own soul and not oppressing it.

For that reason, his reminding someone of a favour is injustice that nullifies his charity. It is God who is, in reality, bestowing upon His servants the favour and gratitude for it, if He aids them to thank Him and makes them grateful for His blessing and for the reward of gratitude.

All that is a (pure) generosity and favour from Him without there being any recompense that He receives in return for that, from anyone. Not from the recipient of favour nor from anyone else. For He is truly the one who bestows blessings - even though there is a wise purpose to the bestowal of blessings that He approves of and is pleased with. For this wisdom is from Him and no one does him a favour. He alone is the Benevolent. He is the Sublime whom none are like.

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<sup>81</sup> The ruling authority at the time of Ibn Taymiyyah.

People have different theories about generosity and philanthropy and those who do things for a particular wisdom and purpose - is he generous or not generous? Or differentiate between one who seeks recompense from another because he needs something from another and so his generosity is by way of getting a favour in return and between one who needs nothing from another, rather he is generous according to blessings and wisdoms, as detailed elsewhere.

And because of what He (T) said: **“We have certainly created man in the best of forms, then We return him to the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds.”** (95:4-6) He made clear that blessings pass away from the non-believer and had the believer been like that, then there would be no difference between them.

**Fifth:** The like of His saying (T) regarding the blessing of the Garden: **“A gift uninterrupted (*ghayr majdhūdh*)”** (11:108) while regarding the punishment of the people of the Fire: **“Indeed your Lord does what He wills.”** (11:107) And more than one also say (*ghayr majdhūdh* means): *“Not cut off”* also.<sup>82</sup>

**Sixth:** That He has conveyed that the People of the Garden and the Fire will not die. As in the Sahih hadith: *“Death will be brought in the form of a ram then slaughtered between the Garden and the Fire and it will be said: ‘Oh people of the Garden, eternity and no death in it and Oh people of the Fire, eternity and no death in it.’”*

Each group abides eternally in that which they are in. So if they never die then there must be an abode in which they can be in. It is impossible that they<sup>83</sup> are punished after entering the Garden, for only the abode of Bliss remains. And the living are never free from either pleasure or pain, but if pain is banished then eternal pleasure is designated.<sup>84</sup>

And the end of it is praise be to God Lord of the Worlds and peace and blessings upon Muhammad, his family and his companions. God is Sufficient for us and the best Disposer of affairs.

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<sup>82</sup> i.e. As in (56:33) mentioned previously.

<sup>83</sup> i.e. The People of the Fire after the Fire has passed away.

<sup>84</sup> i.e. Once the abode of suffering passes away the only abode the People of the Fire can reside in is the abode of eternal bliss.