

Appendix 12

Muslim Paradise

As explained on p.25-26, Paradise, or Heaven (*janna*) is spoken of as having seven levels. However, we are also told that there are 8 doors to Heaven, which is recorded in one of the *hadith*.ⁱ These eight 'doors' are considered to be various levels, or even stages within Paradise. Paradise for a Muslim is a place where every physical delight imaginable is available, comforts that were for many just dreams in this life. It is clearly a man-centred Paradise, though women are promised that it will be a delightful place for them, and they will receive 'precious stones and pearls', homes, protection, modesty – and every woman, whatever their marital status on earth, will be married in paradise and their relationships protected by Allah.

Janna (Paradise, Heaven) is called by eight names in the Qur'an (see following chart).

The following are some Qur'anic statements on the quality of life in Paradise. *Sura* 56 deals in depth with the Day of Judgement and the rewards that await those men who have led a good life.

'When that which is coming comes – and no soul shall then deny its coming – some shall be abased and others exalted. ... you shall be divided into three multitudes: those on the right (blessed shall be those on the right!); those on the left (damned shall be those!); and those to the fore (foremost shall be those!). They shall recline on jewelled couches face to face, and there shall wait on them immortal youths with bowls and ewers and a cup of purest wine (that will neither pain their heads nor take away their reason); with fruits of their own choice and flesh of fowls that they relish.' (Surah 56:1-21)

'And theirs shall be dark-eyed *houris*, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon [reward] for their deeds. There they shall hear no idle talk, no sinful speech, but only the greeting, "Peace, peace."' (Surah 56:22-26)

'Those on the right hand – happy shall be those on the right hand! They shall recline on couches raised on high in the shade of thornless *sidrahs* and clusters of *talh*; amidst gushing waters and abundant fruits, unforbidden, never-ending.' (Surah 56:27-35)

The reference to the 'right hand' signifies the place of blessing, the reward of righteousness obtained by obedience. The blessings consist of being able to rest in the shade of palms and vines laden with fruit and beautiful flowers, with fresh gushing water, and nothing ever being out of reach – the very opposite of life in the desert!

'We created the *houris* and made them virgins, loving companions for those on the right hand; a multitude from the men of old, and a multitude from the later generations.' (Surah 56:36-38)

Another 'more free' translation of the Qur'an indicates that wives of Muslims have a rightful place in heaven, and that they will be recreated as virgins, with much better temperaments, and therefore of greater attraction seemingly to their husbands, perhaps a demonstration of the tensions over this issue in Islam.

Contrary to the perception of many Muslims, the Qur'an itself does not promise large numbers of wives for the faithful men who achieve heaven; it is silent on this issue. It is in the *hadith* we find definitive statements about numbers, some suggesting two wives, others up to 72!ⁱⁱ However, the *hadith* that claim higher numbers are not treated as authoritative by the majority of Muslims, who wish to play down the idea of 72 virgins for every believer in paradise. More sober Muslim commentators consider this to be a sensational and spicy fantasy of some ancient writer. Limiting the number of wives to two, these will have supreme qualities that surpass the best women on earth, free of imperfections and of great beauty.

Another *hadith* of interest purports to describe how these *houris* live in paradise:

'In Paradise there is a pavilion made of a single hollow pearl sixty miles wide, in each corner of which there are wives who will not see those in the other corners; and the believers will visit and enjoy them. And there are two gardens, the utensils and contents of which are made of silver; and two other

gardens, the utensils and contents of which are made of so-and-so (i.e. gold) and nothing will prevent the people staying in the Garden of Eden from seeing their Lord except the curtain of Majesty over His Face.’ⁱⁱⁱ

Here we see an allusion to the great value that Muslims place on pearls, as an indicator of great wealth and comfort. And can this also be a reference to the problem of two wives living in one Muslim household, where jealousy disrupts the harmony of home? Note also how the gardens of Paradise are equated with the Garden of Eden.

Allah is not seen in Paradise and so there is no sense of sharing heaven with him (*tauhid* is maintained). He is represented as having a curtain of majesty over his face. Enjoyment in heaven is never focused on the holy, always on the sensual.

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The Names of Paradise in English translations of the Qur’an

Qur’anic References:

Translator:	25:15	6:127	40:42	9:72-73	32:19	5:70	83:18	18:107
Pickthall	The Garden of Immortality	The abode of Peace	The Garden	The Gardens of Eden	The Gardens of Retreat	Paradise	'Illiyin	The Gardens of Paradise
Yusuf Ali	Eternal Garden	The Home of Peace	The Garden (of Bliss)	The Gardens of Everlasting Bliss	The Gardens of Hospitable homes	The Garden	'Illiyin	The Gardens of Paradise
Shakir	Abiding Garden	The Abode of Peace	The Garden	The Gardens of Perpetual Abode	The Gardens of abiding place	The Garden	'Illiyin	The Gardens of Paradise
Sher Ali	Garden of Eternity	The Garden	The Garden	The Gardens of Eternity	The Gardens of Eternal Abode	Heaven	'Illiyin	The Gardens of Paradise
Rashad	Eternal Paradise	Paradise	The Garden	Eternal Paradise	Eternal Paradise	Paradise	'Elleyeen	The Blissful Paradise

ⁱ Mishkat book 2, ch.1, cited at [Answering Islam](#): Article: Paradise, ¶2.

ⁱⁱ Al-Bukhari, . Hadith.Book 54, Number 468-469; compare with ibn Waraq, at Guardian Unlimited: Article: Virgins? What Virgins?, Saturday January 12, 2002, ¶6.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Al-Bukhari](#). Hadith Book 60, Number 402.