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Home > The Emendation of A Shi'ite Creed > 24. Chapter on Al-A'raf

## 24. Chapter on Al-A'raf

Abu Ja'far says: "Our belief concerning al-A'raf is that it is a dividing wall . . . "ash-Shaykh al-Mufid comments that: "It has been said that al-A'raf is a mountain midway between Paradise and the Fire. Also, that it is a dividing wall between Paradise and Hell. It is generally considered a (particular) place belonging neither to Paradise nor to Hell. "These interpretations are confirmed by traditions, which furthermore, state that on the Day of Resurrection there will be found upon it the Messenger of Allah, the Commander of the Believers and the Imams from his progeny – may the blessing of Allah be upon him and his family.

Those are they whom Allah, the Exalted, and means by His saying:

And on the ramparts do men know each by their mark, who shall call to the inhabitants of Paradise: "Peace be upon you! They have not entered it, for all their eagerness" [7:46],

that is, because Allah, the Almighty, will enable them to discriminate between the inhabitants of Paradise and those of Hell by signs resembling marks.

This He illustrates further in His saying:

"They know each by their mark". And also: The sinners shall be known by their marks [55:41].

He the Almighty, also says:

Surely in that are signs for such as mark; surely they are on a way still un- effaced [15:75-76].

Thus, He tells that amongst His creatures there is a group which scrutinizes men and knows them by the marks they bear. It has been related from the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, that he has said in some of his narrations, "I am the holder of the baton and the clear-sighted", which means that he knows the state of him whom he scrutinizes carefully.

It has been related from Abu Ja'far Muhammad al- Baqir, peace be upon him, that he was questioned on the meaning of the speech of Allah: "Surely in that are signs for such as mark1, he said, "That it

refers to us, the People of the House (i.e., the Imams, peace be upon them)." It is also mentioned in the traditions that Allah, the Almighty will place therein, that is, al-A'raf, a group of men who have failed to merit Paradise by their good acts and have not deserved punishment, yet they do not merit an eternal abode in Hell; among these are they who wait for the decision of Allah and entertain hope of intercession; they will abide there till they are permitted to enter Paradise through the intercession of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, and the Commander of the Believers and the Imams, peace be upon them.

It has been mentioned also that it is an abode of those who were not subject to any relig- ious obligation in their lifetime, thus they do not deserve either Paradise or Hell; therefore Allah will place them therein and recompense them with a certain grace which is far below that of those who merited it by the virtue of their acts. Hence, all that is mentioned above (concerning al-A'raf) is tenable by reason and confirmed by traditions, and yet Allah best knows the truth. What is generally accepted regarding al-A'raf is that it is a place midway between Paradise and Hell; there will stand those whom we call the Proofs of Allah to His creatures (Hujaj Allah, that is, the Prophet and the Imams); there, also, will be those whose final judgment has been deferred. Beyond this Allah knows best what will be.

1. See al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol.I, p.218, Tradition nos.I & 2. Also, al-Mufid,al-Ikhtisas, p.303.

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