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26. Chapter concerning Al-'Aqabat

ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, says: "Our belief concerning this is that verily these mountain- passes (al-'aqabat) have each a specific name; some are called fard (compulsory duty) others, amr (command); yet others, nahy (prohibition)."

ash-Shaykh al-Mufid says: "al-'Aqabat desinates the obliga- tory acts, the inquiry into their performance and the confronta- tion with them on the Day of Judgment. It does not mean mountains which exist on earth and which have to be ascended. They are acts which are likened to al-'aqabat for the reason that, just as a man finds it hard and exhausting to climb a mountainpass ('aqabah), so also does he find the efforts which he makes to avoid shortcomings in his obedience to Allah, the Sublime.

Allah, the Almighty, says:

Yet he has not assaulted the steep, and what shall teach what is the steep, the freeing of a slave [90:11-13].

Thus He, the Exalted, names the acts which He has made compulsory for His servants ''aqabat ', likening them to steep roads and mountains because of the hardship a man suffers in order to perform them as if he were ascending a mountain road, difficult of access.

The Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, says: "In front of you lie difficult passes and dreadful stages through which one must pass and halt there; then you would either, by the grace of Allah, be saved, or you would suffer irrevocable destruction". He meant by 'aqabah, to get rid of responsibilities and obligations imposed upon men (by Allah).

Hence, this is far from what the Hashwiyyah maintain, that on the last day there will be mountains and steep roads which men must cross, either walking or riding; and this is nonsense if compared with the Divine purpose of retribution. Also, it is needless to create difficult passes to designate by each or poor-tax, or fasting, or pilgrimage or other obligatory acts which are to be ascended by men, so that if he falls short in his obedience to Allah, this would prevent him from ascending them.

The purpose of the Day of Judgment is to inquire into men's acts, and retribution for them either by

reward or punishment, a fact which does not require the naming of passes or creating mountains to be crossed with ease or difficulty. Moreover, no tradition has been handed down which supports such an allegation, or from which we can derive such an interpretation. Then as we have no support in traditions in this respect, the sound interpretation is the one put forward above.

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