

Seeing Allah (Ru'yat Allah)

The Shi'a school of thought absolutely denies what others say that Allah can be seen since He has no image or body. However, other schools of thought accept several hadiths that not only claim that Allah has physical parts; but also that He will be seen on the Day of Judgment like any other objects are seen. They also claim that Allah occupies space and travels from one place to another. The basis for these arguments are hadiths and not the Noble Qur'an. We mention some of these narrations:

Our Lord, before creating His creation, did not have anything with Him, underneath Him was air, above Him was air, then he created His throne on water. [1](#)

(On the Day of Judgment) It will be said to Hell, 'Are you filled up?' It will say, 'Are there any more?' So the Lord, Blessed and Exalted is He will put His leg into it, whereupon it will say, 'Now I am full!' [2](#)

We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah when he looked at the full moon and observed, 'You shall see your Lord as you are seeing this moon, and you will not be harmed by seeing Him.' [3](#)

The last narration, in particular, asserts that people will see Allah with their physical eyes, regardless of whether they are among the good or among the hypocrites. Seeing Allah means that Allah must have a physical body and occupy physical space. Imam Malik ibn Anas and Imam al-Shafi'i accept this opinion, and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal considers this belief among the fundamentals of the religion.

The opinion of the followers of the Ahlul Bayt is that seeing Allah is impossible. This view is supported by the Noble Qur'an and logic. The Noble Qur'an says clearly, "**No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision.**" [4](#) Furthermore, there are multiple examples of people asking to see Allah and the response of Allah, the Exalted was:

And remember when you said, 'O people of Musa, We shall never believe in you until we see Allah plainly.' But you were seized with a thunderbolt while you were looking. Then We raised you up after death so that you might be grateful. [5](#)

The People of the Scripture ask you (O Muhammad) to cause a book to descend upon them from Heaven. Indeed, they asked Musa for even greater than that when they said, 'Show us Allah in

public,' but they were struck with thunder and lightening for their wickedness. [6](#)

And those who expect not a meeting with Us say, 'Why are not the angels sent down to us?' or 'Why do we not see our Lord?' Indeed, they think too highly of themselves and are scornful with great pride. [7](#)

When Musa came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, he said, 'O Lord! Show Yourself to me so that I may look upon You.' Allah said, 'By no means can you see Me, but look at the mountain—if it abides in its place then you shall see Me.' When his Lord manifested His glory to the mountain, He made it like dust, and Musa fell in a swoon. When he recovered his senses, he said, 'Glory be to You. To You do I turn in repentance and I am the first to believe. [8](#)

If seeing Allah was impossible for the prophets and the messengers of Allah then it is clearly impossible for all other people as well; whether during this life or in the Hereafter.

Logically speaking, in order to see an object, the object must have several qualities. First, it must have a specific direction, such as in front of or to the left or right of the observer. Second, a distance must exist between the one seeing and the thing being seen. Seeing would be impossible if the distance became longer or shorter. Allah the Almighty is not a physical object that we can pin-point and ultimately see, nor does He occupy space.

Although the Noble Qur'an says, "**He is the Supreme, watching over His worshippers,**"[9](#) and "**They revere their Lord high above them**"[10](#)—"above them"—refers to the Almighty being above His servants in His might, power, and loftiness – not in place, space, area, elevation, or physical location. Such qualities do not apply to Him.

During his ascension to Heaven, the Prophet called upon his Lord by the words, "**You are as You have praised Your Own Self. While Prophet Yunus called upon his Lord from the bottom of the sea saying, 'There is no God but You! Glory be to You!'**"[11](#)

Regarding Prophet Yunus, the Prophet Muhammad said, "Do not exalt me over him in nearness to Allah just because I reached the high throne, whereas he was in the bottom of the sea, because the adored One is above being confined to a space or direction."

Imam 'Ali was asked by one of his companions, Thaqālab al-Yamani whether he had seen his Lord. Imam 'Ali replied, "How can I worship something that I do not see?" When asked how he saw Him, Imam 'Ali replied, "Eyes do not reach Him with physical sight, but the hearts reach Him with the realities of belief."[12](#) There are many things which people cannot reach and have no physical access to but which people still believe in. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, was once asked, "will Allah be seen on the Day of Resurrection?" His answer was, "May He be exalted and glorified from that! The eyes can only reach an object which has color and shape, but Allah, the Exalted, is the Creator of colors and shapes."

Similar aspects of Allah, such as His “hand” or His “face” are referred to as allegorically. The “Hand of Allah” refers to His power and might, and “His Face” refers to different things. The first step in the Oneness and Monotheism of Allah is the understanding that Allah is not a body and will never be seen and that He is unique, as the Noble Qur’an states, ***“There is nothing like Him.”***¹³

- ^{1.} Sunan ibn Majah, “Introduction”; Sunan al-Tirmidhi, “Explanations of Surah Hud”; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Vol. 4, 11–12
- ^{2.} Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 3, 128, Vol. 4, 191, Vol. 4, 129 of Anas. Some narrations say: “foot” instead of “leg.”
- ^{3.} Sahih al-Bukhari, “Book on the Times of Prayers” Hadith 521 and 539, Vol. 10. 18 and 20, “Interpretation of the Noble Qur’an,” Hadith 4473, “Monotheism” Hadith 6882–6884; Sahih Muslim, “Book on masjids and Places of Performing Prayers” Hadith 1002; Tirmidhi, “Book on the Description of Paradise” Hadith 2474; Abu Dawud, Book on the Sunnah, Hadith 4104; Ibn Majah, “Book on the Introduction” Hadith 173; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 4. 360, 362, and 365
- ^{4.} Noble Qur’an, 6: 102
- ^{5.} Noble Qur’an, 2:55
- ^{6.} Noble Qur’an, 4:53
- ^{7.} Noble Qur’an, 25:21
- ^{8.} Noble Qur’an, 7: 143
- ^{9.} Noble Qur’an, 6:61
- ^{10.} Noble Qur’an, 16:50
- ^{11.} Noble Qur’an, 21:87
- ^{12.} Nahj al-Balagha
- ^{13.} Noble Qur’an, 42:11

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