



Seeing the Prophet ﷺ Whilst Awake ¹

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In the name of Allāh, most Gracious, most Merciful.

Praise be to Allāh and salutations upon His Slaves whom He has Chosen.

This question has become increasingly [common nowadays] about the vision of the Prophet ﷺ among the People of the State (*arbāb al-aḥwāl*) whilst awake; a group in our times - those who have no foothold in religious knowledge have vehemently denied it and are astonished at this statement; they also claim that it is an impossibility.

So I have written these few pages and named it ‘Lighting Up the Dark: [An Exposition of] the Possibility of Seeing the Prophets and Angels’ (*tanwīr al-ḥalāk fī imkānī ruy’at al-nabiyyi wal malak*).

We begin with the *ṣaḥīḥ* (rigorously authenticated) Ḥadīth reported in the matter: Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd report from Abū Hurayrah ؓ that RasuḷAllāh ﷺ said:

“Whosoever saw me in his dream shall see me with his waking eyes (yaqadha) and the devil cannot impersonate me.”

¹ Selected excerpts from the ‘Lighting Up the Dark: [An Exposition of] the Possibility of Seeing the Prophets and Angels [With Waking Eyes]’

(<http://www.ghrib.net/vb/printthread.php?t=4700>)

Ṭabarānī has reported a similar narration from Mālik ibn `Abdullāh from the Ḥadīth of Abū Bakra; Dāramī has a similar narration from the Ḥadīth of Abū Qatādah.

The scholars have said: there is difference of opinion concerning the meaning of ‘*he shall see me whilst awake*’. Some said its meaning is: ‘he shall see me on Judgment day’ and this opinion is criticized as being futile because this is a special mention (*takhsīs*); otherwise, everyone shall see him on Judgment day, those who have already seen him and those who haven't.

It is also said that it means: ‘those who bore faith in him in his lifetime and did not see him because they were not present are given glad tidings that they shall see him before they die.’

A group has said that the meaning is literal and whosoever saw RasūlAllāh ﷺ in his dream, he shall surely see him awake; that is, with his waking eyes though some said that the insight of his heart [is meant] - both of these reported by Qādī Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī.

Imām Abū Muhammad Ibn Abū Jamra says in his annotations on al-Bukhārī:

“This Ḥadīth proves that whosoever saw him ﷺ in his dream shall see him whilst awake. [The debate is] whether this statement is generic for both during his lifetime and after his passing away, or whether it is only during his lifetime; also whether it is for everyone who saw him or whether it is specific for those people of merit and those who follow his Sunnah assiduously. The word appears to be generic and anyone who claims it to be specific without it being specified by him has transgressed (*mut'assaf*).”

He also said that,

“Some people fell to disbelieving the generic case and said what their intelligence permits them and said: ‘how can one living see the dead, in this world of beholding?’”

He replied:

“This objection gives rise to two dangerous possibilities; first is to disbelieve the [authenticated] saying of the truthful Prophet ﷺ who does not speak from his own desire; and secondly to ignorance of the Power of the All-Powerful.”

It has been reported that a scholar visited a *walī* (saint) and narrated a Ḥadīth; the saint said that the Ḥadīth was untrue. The scholar asked, “how can you say that?” the saint replied, “here is the Prophet ﷺ, standing by your head and he says that he has never said so.” And then the scholar saw him too.

In the book, *minah al-Ilāhiyya fī manāqib al-sādat al-wafāyiyya* of Ibn Fāris he says:

“I heard Sayyidī `Alī ؑ say: ‘I was five years old and I was learning Qur’ān from a shaykh named Ya’qūb. One day, I went to him and I saw RasūlAllāh ﷺ, I was awake, not dreaming, and he was wearing a white cotton shirt and then I saw that shirt upon me; he asked me to recite the Qur’ān and I recited the Sūrahs al-Duhā and al-Inshirāh. He then disappeared and I did not see him until I was 21 years old. I was starting the morning prayer in Qurafa when I saw the Prophet ﷺ again in front of me and he hugged me and said to me: “And speak about the favors of your Lord”. I have been granted his speech ever since.”

Notes:

The First:

Most of the visions of the Prophet ﷺ while awake are seen by the heart and progress is made until one sees with his waking eyes. We have quoted Qādī Abū Bakr ibn al-`Arabī earlier, but still ‘seeing with waking eyes’ does not mean the same as seeing

one another and is understood in common speech. Here, seeing is a transcendental experience, a supernatural state and an ethereal meeting; none except who is granted the great fortune knows its true meaning. We have narrated earlier, the story of Shaykh `Abdullāh al-Dallāsi where he said: ‘I started the prayer and I was taken by a vision of RasūlAllāh ﷺ.’ Here, he indicates that he was ‘taken’ by that state.

The Second:

Does the vision (*ru'ya*) of Mustafā ﷺ refer to seeing him in his body and soul or a likeness. Among the people of state (*arbāb al-aḥwāl*) whom I have seen, say that it is of the latter [a likeness, *mithāl*] and this is insisted upon by Imām al-Ghazālī:

“It does not mean that he sees his body; rather, it is a likeness, a form which incorporates his likeness....

...such a form (*ālah*) is sometimes real and sometimes imaginary; and the essence (al-nafs) is not an imaginary likeness. So that which one sees is not the soul of Mustafā , nor his person; rather, it is his likeness in reality.

...it is similar to the vision of Allāh Ta`ālā in a dream; because Allāh Ta`ālā is exalted and free from having a form and shape. Yet, a slave realises [that he has seen his Lord] by recognition of examples that he can discern from His Light etc., such an example, a likeness is true in his case which helps his recognition such that a man says: ‘i have seen Allāh Ta`ālā in my dream’; he doesn’t mean he has seen the *dhāt* or the Person of Allāh Ta`ālā. Which is quite unlike seeing others [among the creation].”

Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī said:

“The vision of the Prophet ﷺ in the manner matching his description which is well-known is grasping the reality; and in a manner that does not match his known description is a grasping his likeness.”

This is an extremely beautiful explanation. Yet, this does not negate that one can see his honored person , in his body and soul because he is alive, just like all other prophets, and their souls were returned to their bodies after they experienced a moment of [promised] death. they are permitted to go out of their graves and to

dispense matters both high and low; Imām Bayhaqī has written a separate monograph on the lives of prophets after their deaths.

The Fourth:

One can object that, ‘in this case, seeing him necessitates one to be a Sahābī?’

We answer: It does necessitate companionship. Because, if we suppose the vision to be an ethereal one (*al-mithāl*), it is obvious that *suhba* (companionship) is possible only if one sees him with his blessed body and soul.

And if we suppose that one sees his blessed person (*dhāt*) with his body and soul, the condition for being a companion or Sahābī is that RasūlAllāh ﷺ should be seen whilst he was in this world, and now he has passed on to another world. Therefore, such a vision does not necessitate companionship because there is evidence from Ḥadīth that the entire Ummah of RasūlAllāh ﷺ was presented to him; he saw them and they saw him, yet it does not make all the Ummah as Sahābī because those followers were in a different world at that time.

