

Critique and Review of the Ḥadith of "Seeing God" on the Day of Judgment

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Introduction

The issue of seeing God in the Hereafter is one of the challenging issues among theologians and exegetes, and various opinions have been expressed regarding it. The Ash'arites, following the Hanbalis, consider seeing God in this world impossible, but they believe that in the afterlife, only believers will see God. However, they do not comment on the sensory nature of this seeing and adhere to the theory of "bila kayf" (without knowing how). Although this belief contradicts reason and Quranic texts, their main evidence and basis for it are the traditions found in the two Ṣaḥīḥs (Bukhārī and Muslim). Therefore, the critique and review of these traditions using new research methods and approaches can provide a correct and systematic reading of the traditions and introduce correct and rational beliefs to the Islamic community.

Materials and Methods

The issue of seeing God on the Day of Judgment is one of the controversial issues that has occupied the minds of theologians and exegetes for centuries, and various opinions have been expressed regarding it, all of which Ash'ari has mentioned in the book *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (Ash'ari, 2010: 322). Among those who believe in seeing God, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, the founder of the Ash'arite school, following the Ahl al-Ḥadith and the Hanbalis, does not consider seeing God permissible in this world and says: only believers will see God in the afterlife, and by seeing they mean sensory seeing, because if God were visible in this world, Prophet Moses (as) would have seen Him and would not have been deprived of that encounter by the divine statement: "*You shall not see Me*" (lan tarānī) (ibid). A group (like the Karrāmiyya) also says: it is possible for us to see God in this very world with our eyes and to shake hands and embrace Him (ibid.; Shahrestani, n.d., vol. 1:

105). Some Mu'tazilite figures, such as "Ḍirār ibn 'Amir al-Kufi", propose seeing God on the Day of Judgment with a sixth sense and believe that God is not visible in this world or in the Hereafter with these physical eyes, but on the Day of Judgment, a sixth sense will arise in us through which He will be perceived (ibid.). These are a series of opinions that those who believe in seeing God have put forth. However, the question of how this idea found its way among Muslims, to the extent that it became a criterion for faith and disbelief—whereby one who denies it is considered a disbeliever and one who affirms it a believer and monotheist—is a key question this research aims to address. In fact, the present research, using a descriptive-analytical method, seeks to answer these questions: 1. Given the Quranic condemnation, what is the origin of this belief and how did it enter the Islamic community? 2. Does the tradition of this issue in the two Ṣaḥīḥs have a valid chain of transmission, and can it be given precedence over the Quran? 3. Is the implication of the aforementioned ḥadīths regarding the issue of seeing God rational and acceptable or not? 4. What are the consequences of accepting the aforementioned ḥadīths regarding the issue of seeing God?

Results and Findings

1. The belief in seeing God has never had its roots in the Quran and is also inconsistent with reason and intellect; rather, the origin of this idea lies in traditions from Jewish scholars. Some researchers and theologians consider its origin to be from the distorted "Old and New Testaments" that found their way among Muslims (Subhani, 1994, vol. 2: 158). If those who believe in seeing God cite verses and traditions, it is all to justify a belief they have already accepted. In fact, they resorted to the Quran and traditions to silence opponents.

2. The traditions indicating the permissibility of seeing God are questionable from two aspects: firstly, in terms of the chain of transmission (isnād), both traditions found in the two Ṣaḥīḥs (Bukhārī and Muslim) go back to Abu Huraira, who was a student of Ka'b, a Jewish one and attributed most of his teacher's traditions to the Prophet (PBUH) due to his companionship with him. Furthermore, in the chain of transmission of these traditions is "Qays ibn Abi Hāzim", who continuously harbored animosity towards Imam Ali (as). Additionally, he suffered from forgetfulness in his later years and still narrated ḥadīths

in that state. Secondly, in terms of implication (*dalālah*), the content of the ḥadith is not rationally and logically acceptable; moreover, it contradicts the apparent meaning of the Quranic verses. Aside from all this, these traditions are *Khabar al-Wāḥid* (a tradition of ḥadiths which is not regarded *al-mutawatir* ḥadith), and *Khabar al-Wāḥid* cannot be the basis for belief because the realm of knowledge is open in matters of faith, and one should not rely on conjectures.

3. One of the consequences of accepting the content of the traditions in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* is anthropomorphism of God, because this meaning of seeing in the content of the ḥadith is not possible without confrontation. Seeing is not possible unless confrontation is created between the eye and the seen object, and such confrontation necessitates that the object has physical form or occupies space. This consequence is not even accepted by the Ash'arites themselves, and therefore, in response to the question of how sensory seeing occurs in the afterlife, they inevitably resort to the theory of "*bila kayf*", or some, like Fakhr al-Razi, propose the theory of *Ḍirar ibn 'Amir*, namely the "sixth sense". All these justifications indicate the avoidance of reason in this theory and its contradiction with Quranic verses and texts.

Conclusion

The network of chains of transmission in this category of traditions related to seeing God has a structure stemming from Jewish scholars, which indicates the weakness of these traditions. While these traditions have not been included in Shi'i sources, they form the main root and origin of the belief in seeing God among the Ash'arites. However, these traditions are questionable both in terms of their chains of transmission and their text and implications, and they are not acceptable because they require the anthropomorphism of God, which is rejected both rationally and textually.

Keywords: Ḥadith, Seeing God, Seeing, *Isra'iliyyat*, *Khabar al-Wāḥid*, Ḥadith Collections.