

Can We See Allah?

Description: This lesson addresses the question of whether Allah can be seen from an Islamic perspective as compared to the Judeo-Christian teachings.

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Category: Lessons > [Islamic Beliefs](#) > [Oneness of God \(Tawheed\)](#)

Objectives

- To learn Allah cannot be seen or imagined.
- To compare the Islamic teaching on seeing God with the Judeo-Christian teachings.
- To understand the request of Moses to see Allah.
- To learn whether Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, saw Allah or not.
- To consider 'visions of God' in spiritual experiences.
- To learn about seeing Allah in the Afterlife.

Arabic Terms

- *Salah* - the Arabic word to denote a direct connection between the believer and Allah. More specifically, in Islam it refers to the formal five daily prayers and is the most important form of worship.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Hadith* - (plural - *ahadith*) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

The human mind is a true marvel, but in certain areas it is limited. Allah is different from anything the human mind can think of or imagine. Therefore, if the mind tries to picture Allah, certain aspects will be ambiguous and open to indefinite interpretation. Nevertheless, it is possible to understand the attributes of Allah which do not require making any mental pictures. For example, one of Allah's names is *al-Ghaffar*, which means 'Oft-Forgiver'. Everyone can understand this easily because that is how the human mind can clearly think of Allah. Jewish and Christian teachings on God are confused partly because of their incorrect understanding of this issue. The Jewish Torah teaches God is like man:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...so God made man in His own image.’ (Genesis 1:26-27)

Moreover, certain Christians put statues or images of an old white bearded man depicting God in their churches. Some of these were produced by the likes of Michelangelo, who depicted the Face and Hand ‘of God’ – a tough looking old man - in paintings.

Rendering images of God in Islam is an impossibility, and amounts to disbelief, as Allah tells us in the Quran that nothing resembles Him:

**“There is nothing like Him, but He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.”
(Quran 42:11)**

“There is nothing comparable to Him.” (Quran 112:4)

The Request of Moses to See Allah

Eyes can not grasp Allah, He tells us in the Quran:

**“Vision cannot grasp Him, but He his grasp is over all vision.”
(Quran 6:103)**

Moses, to whom God spoke and gave great miracles, was chosen by Allah to be His Prophet. It is said, that Moses thought that, since Allah used to speak to him, he might be able to actually see Allah if he asked. The story is in the Quran, where Allah tells us what happened:

“And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, ‘My Lord, show me (Yourself) that I may look at You.’ (Allah) said, ‘You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.’ But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, ‘Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers.’” (Quran 7:143)

Allah made it clear that no one, including the great prophet Moses, can bear the sight of the divine, for Allah is too great to be grasped by human eyes in this life. According to the Quran, Moses realized his request was in error; therefore, he sought forgiveness from Allah for having even thought to ask.

The Prophet Muhammad Did Not See Allah in This Life

Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, traveled in a miraculous journey through the heavens to meet Allah. People thought that since Prophet Muhammad spoke to Allah in that journey, he probably saw Allah too. One of the companions, Abu Dharr, asked him about it. The Prophet replied:

“There was only light, how could I see Him?”[\[1\]](#)

What was the light he saw? The Prophet explained:

“Surely, Allah does not sleep nor is it befitting for Him to sleep. He is the one who lowers the scales and raises them. The deeds of the night go up to Him before the deeds of the day and those of the day before those of the night, and His veil is the light.”[\[2\]](#)

Vision of God in Spiritual Experiences

Some people, including some who claim to be Muslims, report spiritual experiences where they have claimed to have seen God. Common reported experiences also include seeing lights, or a magnificent being seated on a throne. Such an experience is usually accompanied by dropping basic Islamic practices like *salah* and fasting, under the mistaken opinion that such practices are only for common people who had not had their type of experience.

One of the fundamental foundations of Islam is that the law revealed to Prophet Muhammad cannot be changed or canceled. God neither makes lawful for some what He has made unlawful for others, nor does He communicate His Law through such experiences to people. Rather, divine Law is revealed through the proper channel of revelation to the prophets, a channel that was closed after the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, the last of God’s prophets. It is Satan who pretends to be Allah to deceive ignorant people who believe in such experiences and go astray.

Seeing Allah in Afterlife

In this life Allah can not be seen, but the believers will see Allah in the next life, this is stated clearly in the Quran and the *Sunnah*. The Prophet said, **“The Day of Resurrection is the first day any eye will look at Allah, the Mighty and Exalted.”**[\[3\]](#) Describing the events of Resurrection Day, Allah states in the Quran:

**“On that day some faces will be bright, looking at their Lord.”
(Quran 75:22-23)**

The Prophet was asked if we will see Allah on the Day of Resurrection. He replied, **“Are you harmed by looking at the moon when it is full?”**[\[4\]](#) ‘No,’ they replied. Then he said, **“Surely, you will see Him likewise.”** In another *hadith* the Prophet said, **“Surely, each of you will see Allah on the day when you shall meet Him, and there will be no veil or translator between Him and you.”**[\[5\]](#) Seeing Allah will be a favor that is additional to Paradise on the Muslims who will dwell therein. As a matter of fact, the joy of seeing Allah for a believer will be greater than the joys of Paradise combined together. The unbelievers, on the other hand, will be deprived of seeing Allah and this will be greater punishment for them than all the pain and suffering of Hell combined together.

Endnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

[3] *Darqutni, Darimi*

[4] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[5] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

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