

Knowledge of Unseen (Ilm ul Gaib)

We, The Ahle As Sunnah, believe that Allah has given the knowledge of the Ghayb (unseen), to the Prophet [May Allah bless him and grant him peace], and that it is also permissible to say that our Prophet [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] knows the knowledge of the Ghayb. However, it is not possible, nor permissible to say that the Prophet's [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] knowledge of the Ghayb is equal to that of Allah - or even like the knowledge of Allah, since Allah's knowledge is His own and the Prophet's [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] knowledge has been given to him by Allah.

There are some people, who say to hold such beliefs will render that person a Kafir or an unbeliever. We will prove, with the help of Allah, that such a notion is not one of kufr.

Belief of the Ahle Sunnah about 'ilm of the Ghayb

Mufti Ahmad Yar Khan (Allah have mercy on him) states:-

“Allah has informed His Prophets about certain things from the Unseen. The knowledge of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) is more than anyone else's. Nobody can be equal to the knowledge of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) knowledge in the world. The five special things of the Unseen, Allah has informed some of these parts to the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace)”.

(See book Ja-alhaq, chapter Masa'la Gaib by Mufti Ahmad Yar Khan.)

Proof from the Qur'an that the Prophet Muhammad [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] has been given the knowledge of Ghayb

Allah says in the Qur'an,

“These are the tidings of Unseen that We reveal to you in secret”.

Surah-Ale-Imran, verse 44.

“Nor will He disclose to you the secrets of the Unseen. But He chooses of His Apostles (For the purpose)”

Surah-Ale-Imran, verse 179.

“The Knower of Unseen reveals not His secret to anyone. Except to His chosen Messengers”.

Surah-Al-Jinn, verse 26.

“...Allah has sent down to you the Book and Wisdom and has taught to you what you did not know, and great is the grace of Allah upon you.”

Surah Al-Nisa, Verse 113.

Imam Tabari writes under this verse:

Allah TA'ALA has told the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), you must thank Allah TA'ALA Who has informed you of what has already happened and what will happen in the future and this is a great grace of Allah upon you.

(Tafsir Tabari under verse 113 of Surah Al-Nisa).

The above Qur'anic verses prove that Allah TA'ALA has given Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) the knowledge of the Ghayb.

Proofs from the Ahadith that Prophet Muhammad [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] had the knowledge of the Ghayb

We find in a narration from the collection of Imam Bukhari :

Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) stood up in one meeting and he started to tell us about events from the beginning of this world to the end and he told us about heaven and hell and about the people who were going to hell and who were going to heaven and what will be their places in heaven and hell. Of course, some people remember what he told us and some people have forgotten.

(Bukhari, Chapter Bada-UI-Khalq.)

Imam Muslim writes that:

The Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) led the Fajr prayer and then sat on the pulpit, and until Zuhr he told the people of the things about the Unseen. After Zuhr, he sat on the pulpit and continued until Asar, then sat on the pulpit and continued until Maghrib prayer. He even informed of the dwellers of Paradise and Hell.

(Muslim chapter on Fadial).

Hafidhh ibn Hajar Asqalani in his famous commentary to Sahih Bukhari writes that:

What Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) told in that one meeting is a miracle of the Prophet and this should not be doubted.

(Fathul Bari chap on Bada-UI-Khalq).

Imam Bukhari writes:

The Munafiqs (hypocrites- those who were outwardly Muslims but inwardly unbelievers) made an objection to the knowledge of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). The Prophet

(May Allah bless him and grant him peace) stood on the pulpit and said, "Ask me what you will". One person stood up and asked, "What will be my place in the Hereafter?" The Prophet replied, "Hell". Another person whose name was Abdullah bin Huzaifa, (people doubted whether he was a legitimate child), stood up and asked, "Who is my Father?" The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, "Your Father is Huzaifa". (The accusation on Abdullah bin Huzaifa was cleared.) The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) repeated, "Ask me, ask me".

[Bukhari Kitab-ul-I'tisaam Muslim chap on Fadial].

It is evident from this Hadith that the only people who objected to the knowledge (Ilm-e-ghaib) of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) were the Munafiqs (hypocrites), and the belief that Allah informed His Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) of more knowledge than any one else is the belief of the blessed companions of the Prophet.

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal quotes the following narration which provides more evidence on the Prophets knowledge :

The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) stated, "I have seen my Lord, He put His hands upon my chest, after which everything appeared before me and I recognized everything.

[Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, vol 5, page 243]

Hafidhh Ibn Kathir writes:

A shepherd was with his goats. Upon which a wolf came and grabbed one goat and ran. The shepherd then chased after the wolf to get the goat back. The wolf then spoke to him and said, "Why do you take what food (rizq) which Allah has provided for me?" The shepherd was astonished that the wolf spoke. The wolf again said, "If you are so surprised that I can talk then go to Madina. You will find the last of the Prophets, and he can inform you of the Past and the Future". The shepherd left his goats and went straight to the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) and mentioned his experience. The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, "The wolf spoke the truth" Isnad (chain of narrators) for this hadith is (Jayid) Authentic.

[Taareekh: Chapter of Miracles of Prophet [May Allah bless Him and grant Him peace].

We also find the following clear cut hadith without any ambiguous meanings from Sahih Muslim:

The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) stated, “Allah put the earth before me and I saw it from the East to the West”

[Muslim (Chapter of Excellence of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace)]

This Hadith is a proof that the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) was bestowed with the knowledge of the whole world.

Hafidhh Ibn Kathir and Ibn Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab al Najdi write:

Suad bin Qarib recited a poem in front of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), “I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. Allah has made you the trustee over all the ghaib.

[Sirat-un-Nabi and Mukhtasar Sirat ul Rasool, Storey on Swad bin Qariq by Hafidhh ibn Kathir and Ibn Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab al Najdi]

Shaykh-ul-Islam, al-Hafidhh Ibn Hajar Asqalani writes that:

One of the qualities bestowed upon a Prophet is the quality that he knows what has already happened in the past and what will happen in the future.

(Fathul Bari chap on Anbiya).

From all the above Ahadith it is proven that the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) was bestowed with more knowledge, than any other in the creation by Allah Almighty. It is also clear that he, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), has been bestowed with the knowledge of the

past and future and it is therefore permissible to say that Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) is the trustee of the knowledge of Ghayb.

It is proven from the above narrations that Allah Almighty bestowed (that is gave) our Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) the knowledge of the Ghayb, so it is permissible to say that he, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) knows the Ghayb. Hence if someone says that they hold the Prophet to know the Ghayb(unseen), he is not committing Kufr or Shirk by holding such a belief.

Sayyedina Khidr (Alay hissalaam) also knew the Ghayb?

Imam Tabari, Imam Qurtabi and Qadi Shawkani quote the following narration:

Ibn Abbas reported that Khidr was a man who did all his work with the knowledge of the Ghayb because he knew the Ghayb.

[Tafsir Tabari, Tafsir Qurtabi, Tafsir Fathul Qadir, by Imam Tabari, Qurtabi and Qadi Shawkani].

The above statement proves from a narration from a Sahabi, which is accepted by leading and reputable classical authorities, that it is permissible to say about Khidhr that he knew the Ghayb, so how can it possibly be wrong to say that Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) also knows the Ghayb.

Hafidhh ibn Kathir and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab al Najdi wrote;

Malik Bin Aouf Nazri has written a Poem about our Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) and has written

I have not seen any one like you in this world that I can compare with.

Who always fulfill all that he promises.

There is no one more generous than him,

When you ask him some thing he will inform you of what is going to happen tomorrow.

[Sirat an Nabi Ibn Kathir and Muktasar Sirat al Rasool chapter Gazwa Hawazan by Hafidh ibn Kathir and Ibn Shaykh Najdy]

We will now examine some doubts that are raised by the opponents of the above Qur'anic and Ahadith based beliefs, and then by the grace of Allah, will answer their doubts so that the truth may become clear, Insha'allah.

Q) How can you say that Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) has been given the knowledge of the Ghayb when Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an that there are five things of which no one has any knowledge about?

The relevant verse of the Qur'an is as follows:-

“Undoubtedly, Allah has the knowledge of the Hour, and He sends rain and knows what is in the wombs of the mothers and no soul knows in what land it will die. Undoubtedly, Allah is the Knower, All Aware”. (Surah Luqman Verse 34)

There are two answers to this:

The word used in this verse in Arabic is Adri, which refers to that knowledge which someone can attain by guessing. Of course the knowledge of the Unseen of the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) was not by guessing. Allah informed this to him.

Hafidhh Ibn Kathir (who met and briefly studied with Ibn Taymiyya) has written in his famous commentary to the Qur'an, 'Tafsir Ibn Kathir', the meaning of this ayaat, namely, that no-one can find the knowledge of these things on there own endeavor. Only Allah can give this knowledge, for example Allah gives knowledge to the Angels whose duties are to control rain, and therefore on the command of Allah it rains.

Also Allah commands an Angel who goes into the mother's womb and hangs a record around the child's neck what he/she will do in their lifetime. This knowledge is not attained by the Angel but rather it is given by Allah Himself.

If the literal and direct meaning is taken from the above quoted ayaat, then it will mean that only Allah knows what is in the mothers womb but today, we can discover quite easily if the child is a male or female by modern scanning techniques.

If the Angels have some knowledge on the five Unseen things - given to them by Allah, why is it strange if the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) also has some of this knowledge - again bestowed by Allah.

During the battle of Badr, the Prophet mentioned the names of the kafirs that were to die the next and also described the manner in which the companions would achieve martyrdom.

These are clear and authentic examples of the Prophet, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), informing his ummah about future events, hidden from all else (ie ghayb), [Taken from Sahih Bukhari chapter on the Battle of Badr and also Tafsir Ibn Kathir on Surah Luqman Ayaat 34.]

(Q) Did Prophet Muhammad (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) not stop people from saying that he [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] had the knowledge of tomorrow?

On one occasion our Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) went to a wedding. There, the girls were singing about the battle of Badr. When they saw the Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) coming they stopped singing about Battle of Badr and started to sing that: "There is a Prophet amongst us that knows about tomorrow". The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) said carry on singing what you were singing before. [Miskat chapter Nikah]

If he [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] knew about tomorrow, then why did he stop them from singing it?

The Answer to this is:

These poems were written by a Companion [Sahabi], and had it been incorrect, he [May Allah bless him and grant him peace] would have instructed them to stop immediately and not to repeat.

This means the poem was right. The reason he told them to stop singing was because a wedding celebration was taking place and he wanted them to sing the poem that they were singing before, and secondly he did not want them to praise him in the presence of himself. That was one of the beauties of our Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), that he didn't like to be praised.

Everyone knows that our Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) did know about the future events up to the Day of Judgment and even after, how else could he have told us about the Mahdi, the Dajjal, the second coming of Jesus, the questions to be asked in the grave, the bridge over Hell which everyone will have to cross to get to Heaven, the Meezan (scales) where everyone's actions will be weighed etc etc.

There are countless more proofs which show without a shadow of a doubt that the Beloved Messenger of Allah, (May Allah bless him and grant him peace), had been given the knowledge of the Ghayb (Unseen) and ALLAH is the knower of all things!