14096 - Seeing Allah in a Dream

the question

What is the ruling on one who claims to have seen the Lord of Glory in a dream? Is it true, as some say, that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal saw the Lord of Glory in a dream more than one hundred times?

Summary of answer

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and others said that it is possible for a person to see Allah in a dream. A person may see in his dream that Allah is speaking to him, but whatever images he sees is not Allah because there is nothing like unto Allah, so there is nothing that resembles Him.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and others (may Allah have mercy on them) said that it is possible for a person to see his Lord in a dream , but what they see is not how He really is, because there is nothing like unto Allah. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer” [Ash-Shura 42:11]

So nothing in His creation resembles Him , but a person may see in his dream that his Lord is speaking to him, but whatever images he sees is not Allah because there is nothing like unto Allah, so there is nothing that resembles Him.

Shaykh Taqiy Ad-Din (may Allah have mercy on him) said concerning this that it may vary according to the situation of the person who sees it. The more righteous and good the person is, the closer his dream will be to what is true and correct, but Allah is different from whatever he sees, because the basic principle is that there is nothing like unto Allah.

He may hear a voice that says such and such or do such and such, without seeing any image that resembles any created being, because there is nothing like unto Allah. It was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw his Lord in a dream. It was narrated from Mu`adh (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw his Lord, and it was narrated via a number of chains of narrations that he saw his Lord, and that Allah put His hand between the Prophet's shoulders so that he felt its coolness on his chest. Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote an essay on that which he entitled Ikhtiyar Al-Awla fi Sharh Hadith Ikhtisam Al-Mala' Al-A`la. This indicates that the Prophets saw the Lord in his dreams. But as for seeing the Lord in this world with their eyes , that did not happen.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that no one will see his Lord until he dies . This was narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh. When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked whether he had seen his Lord, he said: "I saw Light." This was narrated by Muslim from Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him).

`Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was asked about that and she said that no one will see Him in this world, because seeing Allah in Paradise is the greatest blessing for the Muslims , so that will happen only to the people of Paradise and the believers in the Hereafter, and to the believers in the place of standing on the Day of Resurrection. This world is the abode of trial and testing, the place shared by both good and evil people, so it is not the place for seeing Allah, for seeing Him is the greatest blessing , so Allah has saved it for His believing slaves in the abode of honour on the Day of Resurrection.

With regard to seeing Allah in a dream as many people claim to have done, that varies according to the situation of the one who saw that – as Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said – how righteous and pious the person is.

Some people may imagine that they have seen Allah when that is not the case, for the Shaytan may appear to them and make them think that he is their Lord, as it was narrated that he appeared to `Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani on a throne above the water, and said, "I am your lord and I have relieved you of obligations." Shaykh `Abd Al-Qadir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Shut up, O enemy of Allah, you are not my Lord, because the commands of my Lord can never be lifted from those who are accountable.” Or words to that effect.

The point is that seeing Allah when awake cannot happen to anyone in this world , not even the Prophets (peace be upon them), as stated above in the Hadith of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him). This is also indicated by the words of Allah to Musa (peace be upon him) when he asked his Lord to let him see Him. He said to him (interpretation of the meaning):

“You cannot see Me.” [Al-A`raf 7:143]

But the Prophets and some of the righteous may see Him in a dream in a manner that does not resemble any of His creation, as stated above in the Hadith of Mu`adh (may Allah be pleased with him). However, if there is a command to do something that goes against Shari`ah, this is a sign that he has not seen his Lord, rather he has seen a devil. If he sees that he is telling him, Do not pray for you have been relieved of obligations, or you do not have to pay Zakah, or you do not have to fast Ramadan, or you do not have to honour parents, or he says it does not matter if you consume Riba (usury, interest) – all such things are signs that he has seen a devil and has not seen his Lord. With regard to the reports of Imam Ahmad seeing his Lord, I do not know if they are sound or not. It was said that he saw his Lord but I do not know if that is true.

And Allah knows best.