261590 - He is asking about the hadith “His veil is light” – is the veil created and bigger than the Throne?

the question

As you know, the greatest of created things is the Throne, and in the hadith it says of Allah that “His veil is light and if it were to be lifted, the splendour of His Countenance would burn His creation as far as His sight reaches.” If this veil is created and it prevents people from seeing Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, can we say that this veil is bigger than the Throne? Please note that I am speaking of created things, and I am not saying that the veil encompasses Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

One of the names of Allah, may He be Exalted, is an-Nur (the Light), one of His attributes is light, and His veil is light, as is indicated by the religious texts. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The religious texts state that one of the names of the Lord is Light (an-Nur), and that He has light, in the sense that it is attributed to Him, and that He is the light of the heavens and the earth, and that His veil is light. These are four kinds of light:

1.It is said that He, may He be Glorified, is light, without qualification, for He is the Light (an-Nur), the Guide (al-Hadi).

2.Light is attributed to Him as His life, His hearing, His seeing, His might, His power and His knowledge are attributed to Him. Sometimes light is attributed to His Countenance and sometimes it is attributed to His Essence.

The former is attributed to His Countenance, as in the words “I seek refuge in the Light of Your Countenance” and “The light of the heavens and the earth is comes from the light of His Countenance.”

The latter is attributed to His Essence, as in the verse {And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord} [Az-Zumar 39:69]. Ibn `Abbas said: That is His Light which, if He were to manifest Himself with it…. And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, in the hadith of `Abdullah ibn `Amr: “Allah created His creation in darkness, then He cast His light upon them…”

3.His light is mentioned in conjunction with the heavens and the earth, as in the verse: {Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth} [An-Nur 24:35].

4.As in the words: “His veil is light.”

The light that is attributed to Allah may be one of these four kinds.

The light with which He is veiled is called both *nur* (light) and *nar* (fire), as there was some uncertainty about the exact wording in the authentic hadith, the hadith of Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, in which it says: “His veil is light – or fire.” This fire is light, and it is that from which Allah spoke to His Kalim [the one to whom He spoke directly] Musa. It is pure fire; it glows without burning.

Thus there are three categories:

That which glows without burning, such as the light of the moon.

That which burns without glowing, which is the fire of Hell; it is black and burns, but it does not glow.

That which glows and burns, and is a glowing fire, such as the light of the sun, which both glows and burns.

This has to do with the kinds of light with which people are familiar and which are part of Allah’s creation.

The veil of the Lord, may He be blessed and Exalted, is light, and it is fire.

All these types of light are real, in their own ways.

Thus the light of His Countenance is real, and is not a metaphor.

If the light of what He has created – such as the sun, moon and fire – is real, then how can His light, compared to which the lights of His creation are more dim that a weak lamp in comparison to the sun, not be real?

End quote from *Mukhtasar as-Sawa`iq*, p. 423.

And he said in his *Nuniyyah*, p. 212:

An-Nur (the Light) is also one of His names and one of His attributes; glory be to the Owner of light.

His veil is light, and if the veil were to be lifted, the splendour of His Countenance would burn all that exists.

When He comes to pass judgement, His light will shine on earth, on the Day when bodies are resurrected. End quote.

II.

The veil of Allah is mentioned in many texts, including:

The verses in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by Revelation, or from behind a veil, or (that) He sends a Messenger to reveal what He wills by His Leave. Verily, He is Most High, Most Wise}[As-Shura 42:51]

{Nay! Surely they (evil-doers) will be veiled from seeing their Lord that Day} [Al-Mutaffifin 83:15].

In the hadith of Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, it says: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stood up and told us five things. He said: “Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, does not sleep and it is not befitting that He should sleep. He lowers the Balance and raises it; the deeds of the night are taken up to Him before the deeds of the day, and the deeds of the day before the deeds of the night; His veil is Light – according to the report of Abu Bakr: Fire – and if He were to remove it, the splendour of His Countenance would burn all of His creation, as far as His sight reaches.” Narrated by Muslim, 179.

In the hadith of Suhayb it was narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “When the people of Paradise have entered Paradise, Allah, may He be Blessed and Exalted, will say: ‘Do you want anything more?’ They will say: ‘Have You not brightened our faces, have you not admitted us to Paradise and saved us from the Fire?’ Then He will remove the veil, and they will not be given anything that is more dear to them than gazing upon their Lord (may He be Glorified and Exalted).” Narrated by Muslim, 181.

And according to the hadith of Abu Musa, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Two gardens of silver, their vessels and everything in them, and two gardens of gold, their vessels and everything in them, and there is nothing preventing the people from seeing their Lord but the veil of grandeur covering His Countenance in the Garden of perpetual abode.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 4878; and Muslim, 180.

Allah, may He be Exalted, is veiled from His creation by light and grandeur, and by whatever other veils He wills.

The texts which speak of the veils of Allah, may He be Exalted, are many; the followers of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) believe in them, and they know, from what they have inherited of the light of prophethood, that Allah, may He be Exalted, is veiled with light and with fire, and with whatever He wills of veils; and that if He were to lift the veil from His noble Countenance, nothing in creation could withstand His light; rather they would burn. But in the hereafter, Allah, may He be Exalted, will perfect the creation of the believers and give them the strength to look at Him, may He be Exalted, and they will find joy in that; in fact, it will be the

most sublime of the blessings they enjoy on the Day of Resurrection.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) refuted the specious arguments of those who deny the veils of Allah, may He be Exalted, in his book *Naqd Ta'sis al-Jahamiyyah wa Ibtal Bida`ihim al-Kalamiyyah* in many ways, making more than forty points, each of which on its own is sufficient to refute their argument.

For example:

** They say that the veil is to be understood as meaning that Allah does not create in [human] eyes the ability to see Him, may He be Glorified.

This is definitely false, because they interpreted the veil as meaning the inability of their eyes to see Allah, but what does not exist is not created and is not a thing, so it is nothing.

** It is soundly narrated in the hadith that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "He will lift the veil, and they will gaze upon Him."

Here lifting a thing that means removing it, we cannot speak of removing or lifting something that does not exist; rather what can be removed and lifted is something that exists.

** In the hadith, it says: "His veil is Light and if He were to remove it, the splendour of His Countenance would burn all of His creation, as far as His sight reaches."

It is as if they claim that the word veil refers to not creating the ability to see Him, but lifting that would not burn anything. The believers will see their Lord in the arenas of the Day of Resurrection, and in paradise, and their seeing Him will not burn anything …

See: *Sharh Kitab at-Tawhid min Sahih al-Bukhari*, 2/155.

See also: *Bayan Talbis al-Jahamiyyah*, 8/117 ff.

III.

The veil that is mentioned in the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “His veil is Light,” is something created. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw it, yet he stated that he did not see Allah when he said: “His veil is light; how could I see Him?”

If this veil was the light that is one of the attributes of Allah, may He be Exalted, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would have seen his Lord.

Muslim (178) narrated that Abu Dharr said: I asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): Did you see your Lord? He said: “[His veil is] Light, how could I see Him?”

And he (178) narrated that `Abdullah ibn Shaqiq said: I said to Abu Dharr: If I had seen the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) I would have asked him.

He said: What would you have asked him about?

He said: I would have asked him, did you see your Lord?

Abu Dharr said: I asked him that, and he said: “I saw Light.”

This light is the light of the veil.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

In *Sahih Muslim*, it is narrated that Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

I asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): Did you see your Lord? He said: “[His veil is] Light; how could I see Him [*nurun annaa arahu*]?”

I heard Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah say: What it means is that there was light or what prevented him from seeing Him was light, so how could he have seen Him?

He said: And this is supported by the fact that in some versions of *as-Sahih*, it says: Did you see your Lord? He said: “I saw light.”

This hadith confused many people, to the extent that some of them altered it and said: "*Nuraniyyun arahu* (Luminous; I saw Him [instead of *nurun annaa arahu* (Light; how could I see Him)]" as if it is all one word (*nuraniyyun* instead of *nurun annaa*), and a description of Him.

But this is wrong, both in wording and meaning. What caused this confusion and led to this mistake was their belief that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) saw his Lord, but he used to say: "How could I see Him?" – denying that he saw Him. But they were confused about the hadith, and some of them thought that its wording was incorrect.

All of these were excuses not to understand the hadith as it should be understood.

'Uthman ibn Sa`id as-Darimi narrated in his book *Ar-Radd* that the Sahabah were inanimously agreed that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not see his Lord on the night of the Mi`raj (ascent to heaven).

Some of them said that they were all agreed except Ibn `Abbas.

Our shaykh said: That is not contrary to the truth, because Ibn `Abbas did not say that he saw Him with his own two eyes. In one of the two views narrated from him, Ahmad relied on that hadith when he said that he saw Him, may He be Glorified and Exalted; and he did not say that he saw Him with his own two eyes. The wording of Ahmad is like the wording of Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both).

What proves that our shaykh's understanding of the hadith of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) is sound is the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in the other hadith: "His veil is light."

This light – and Allah knows best – is the light that is mentioned in the hadith of Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him): "I saw light."

End quote from *Ijtima` al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah*, 2/47.

See also: *At-Tibyan fi Aqsam al-Qur'an* by Ibn al-Qayyim, 382.

We should not indulge in discussions of this veil and whether it is bigger or smaller than the Throne, because there is nothing in the religious texts to explain this matter.

What we must do is affirm and accept, and not indulge in discussing what was not narrated in the religious texts.

We should also put an end to any hope of understanding the nature of Allah's essence and attributes, and stop any thoughts or speculation of that nature, for Allah, may He be Exalted, cannot be likened to any of His creation, and no one can imagine His Essence or His attributes.

May Allah have mercy on at-Tahawi, who said in his famous book *Al-`Aqidah*: No one can imagine Him or comprehend Him or understand His nature, and He cannot be likened to any of His Creation, may He be Glorified, Exalted and Sanctified.

And Allah knows best.