70364 - Humans Seeing Angels and Prophet in Awakened State

the question

We held a march in the capital to support the Palestinian and Iraqi people against the Israeli and American occupations. After the march ended, I heard some of the brothers and sisters saying that they had seen Jibreel coming down from the sky, and they had seen the Prophet Muhammad (S) and many of the angels accompanying them and supporting this march. Could these visions be real, and are we obliged to believe them? Otherwise we may think badly of our Muslim brothers. As for me, I cannot believe it knowing that the people of Badr and the companions and the ten who were promised Paradise did not see the angels with their own eyes, and they did not see Jibreel. Can we say that this was just their imagination, i.e., they imagined that they saw something and it became something that they believed they had really seen with their eyes?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We have explained the ruling on demonstrations in the answer to question no. 11469; please refer to it.

Secondly:

The blessings and salams (salutations) upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) should not be reduced to a single letter or abbreviation. Whoever can write such a lengthy question is not incapable of writing (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in full. We have explained the ruling on writing these abbreviations in the answer to question no. 47976; please refer to it.

Thirdly:

The angels have been created from light, as was narrated by Muslim, and no one can claim to have seen them in their true form unless he is a Prophet whose words are to be believed. As for those who see them in human form, this is possible for both the common folk and the elite. There are many such reports in the saheeh sunnah (authentic prophetic teachings), whether this happened among this ummah (nation) or among the nations who came before.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who was blessed with deep wisdom and understanding of religion, could not bear to see Jibreel (peace be upon him) in his true form with which Allah created him, so how can these people bear it – even if we assume that they saw him at all?

Shaykh ‘Umar al-Ashqar said:

Because the angels have subtle bodies of light, people cannot see them, especially since Allah has not given our eyes the ability to see them. No one in this ummah has seen the angels in their true form except the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He saw Jibreel (peace be upon him) twice in the form with which Allah created him. The texts indicate that humans can see angels if the angels appear in human form.

‘Alam al-Malaikah al-Abrar

Translator’s note: this book by ‘Umar al-Ashqar is available in English under the title The World of the Noble Angels, published by International Islamic Publishing House (IIPH), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

He also said, in the context of affirming the humanity of the Messengers and refuting those who said that they were angels:

It is difficult to see the angels. When the kuffar (non-Muslims) demanded to see the angels, and expected that the Messengers who were sent to them should be angels, they did not understand the nature of the angels and they did not know the difficulty and hardship that they might encounter as a result of seeing them.

Contacting the angels and seeing them is not something easy. Although the Messenger (peace and

blessings of Allah be upon him) was the best of mankind and was physically and spiritually strong to a great degree, when he saw Jibreel (peace be upon him) in his true form, he was stricken with immense fear and fled back to his house with his heart trembling. He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) suffered great hardship when the revelation came to him, hence Allah said, refuting them (interpretation of the meaning):

“On the Day they will see the angels no glad tidings will there be for the Mujrimoon (criminals, disbelievers, polytheists, sinners) that day.” [25:22]

That is because the kuffar only see the angels at the time of death or when the divine punishment descends, so when they are able to see angels, that is the day of their doom.

It was essential that human messengers be sent, so that they would be able to address mankind, and so that mankind would be able to learn from them and understand. If Allah had sent messengers from among the angels to them, that would not have been possible.

“And nothing prevented men from believing when the guidance came to them, except that they said: ‘Has Allah sent a man as (His) messenger?’

Say: ‘If there were on the earth, angels walking about in peace and security, We should certainly have sent down for them from the heaven an angel as a messenger.’” [17:94, 95]

But those who live on the earth are human, and the mercy and wisdom of Allah dictated that their messengers should be of their own kind.

“Indeed, Allah conferred a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger (Muhammad) from among themselves.” [3:164]

Since humans cannot easily see the angels and learn from them, this means that if Allah had wanted to send an angel as a messenger to mankind, He would have had to make him a man:

“And had We appointed him an angel, We indeed would have made him a man, and We would have certainly confused them in which they are already confused (i.e. the message of Prophet

Muhammad).” [6:9]

They would have been confused because of his appearing in human form, and they would not have been able to verify that he was an angel. As that is the case, there would have been no point in sending angels as messengers in this manner. Rather, sending angels as messengers in this manner would not have achieved the intended aim, because an angel-messenger would not be able to feel what humans feel, and share their emotions and reactions, even if he appeared in their form.

Al-Rusul wa’l-Risalat.

Translator’s note: This book by ‘Umar al-Ashqar is available in English under the title The Messengers and the Messages, published by International Islamic Publishing House (IIPH), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Fourthly:

With regard to seeing the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when one is awake, this is akin to Sufi myths, and there is no basis for this in sharee’ah (Islamic law) or in real life. Tremendous events befell the sahabah/companions (may Allah be pleased with them) after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and they were in the greatest need of seeing him among them, so why did he not appear to them, and why did they not see him when he was the dearest of people to them and they were the dearest of people to him?

With regard to some of them quoting the hadeeth (narration) that is narrated in al-Saheehayn from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) – that he said, “Whoever sees me in a dream will see me when he is awake” – as evidence that it is possible to see the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when one is awake, there is nothing in this hadeeth to support what they say. Rather it is glad tidings to the one who sees him in a dream, that he will see him in Paradise. It does not mean that he will see him when he is awake in this world.

Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Some of the righteous erred and claimed that it is possible to see him with one's own eyes.

Fath al-Baari.

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, concerning the meaning of the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), "he will see me when he is awake", there are a number of opinions concerning this.

1 – That what is meant is the people of his own time, i.e., that whoever saw him in a dream and had not migrated, Allah would enable him to migrate and to see him with his own eyes when he was awake.

2 – That he would see the confirmation of that dream whilst awake in the Hereafter, because all of his ummah (nation) will see him in the Hereafter.

3 – That he will see him in a specific sense in the Hereafter, by being close to him and attaining his intercession, and so on.

Sharh Muslim

What al-Nawawi mentioned in the first opinion is not contradicted by the opinion of al-Hafiz ibn Hajar that it is not possible to see him, because al-Nawawi stated that what was meant was the people of his own time, and what al-Hafiz was objecting to was those who claim to have seen him in a real sense after he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) died.

Abu'l-'Abbas al-Qurtubi said, refuting those who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) could be seen when one is awake:

This idea, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) may be seen when one is awake, may easily be refuted by common sense, because it implies that no one can see him except in the form in which he died, and that two people may see him at the same time in two different places, and that he may come to life sometimes and emerge from his grave and walk about in the marketplaces and converse with the people. This implies that his body is not in his

grave and there is nothing left in his grave, so the grave is visited and salam (salutation) is said to one who is not there, because he may be seen by night and by day in his real form outside his grave. [Quoted by al-Haafiz ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari]

Moreover, if it were true that someone could see the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he is awake, then he would be one of his companions and there would be sahabah (companions of the Prophet) until the Day of Resurrection.

Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar al-'Asqallani stated that Ibn Abi Jamrah narrated from some of the Sufis that they saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in a dream, then they saw him after that when they were awake, and they asked him about some things which they were worried about, and he told them how to deal with them, and they followed his advice and achieved the desired results. Then al-Hafiz commented on this by saying: This is very odd. If we interpret it as it appears to be, then these people would be sahabah, and there could be sahabah until the Day of Resurrection. But this may be refuted by the fact that many people see him when they are asleep but no one says that that they saw him when they were awake, so there is an inconsistency.

Fath al-Bari

The scholars of the Standing Committee said, refuting the beliefs of al-Tijani:

There is no proven report from the Rightly-Guided Caliphs or from the rest of the sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them), who are the best of mankind after the prophets, that any of them claimed to have seen the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he was awake. It is well known, and no Muslim has any excuse for not knowing, that the religion was completed during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and that Allah perfected this ummah's religion for it and completed His favour upon it before the death of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." [5:3]

So there can be no doubt that what Ahmad al-Tijani claims, that he saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he was awake, and learned the Tijani tareeqah (a Sufi order) from him orally when he was awake, and that he told him what wird (certain recitations) to recite to remember Allah (dhikr) and send blessings upon His Messenger, is false and is evident misguidance.

Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah

They also said:

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) died after having conveyed the message in full and after Allah had perfected His religion through him and established proof against His creation through him. His companions (may Allah be pleased with them) offered the funeral prayer for him and buried him where he died, in the room of ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her). After him came the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, during whose time events occurred which they dealt with on the basis of their own reasoning (ijtihad), and they did not refer concerning any of them to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Whoever claims after that to have seen the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he was awake, living and speaking to him, or to have heard anything from him before the Day of Resurrection, his claim is false, because it goes against the texts, the narrated reports and the laws of Allah that govern His creation. There is nothing in this hadeeth to suggest that he will be seen when one is awake in this world, because it could be interpreted as meaning, “he will see me in the Hereafter,” or it may mean, “he will see the interpretation of his dream”, because this dream is true according to what is stated in other reports, namely that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “… he has indeed seen me.” The believer may truly see the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in his dream in the form in which he appeared when he was alive.

Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah.

To sum up:

It is not permissible for anyone – after the prophets – to claim to have seen the angels, for they have bodies of light which Allah has not enabled humans to see, unless the angels appear in human form.

It is not permissible for anyone to claim to have seen the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he is awake. Perhaps these illusions come from those who do not have any Islamic knowledge or maturity, so they imagine things that are not there.

And Allah knows best.