

The Prophet and Imam's Knowledge of the Unseen in the Qur'an

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(Received: November 03, 2023, Accepted: December 18, 2023)

Abstract

This research explains the problem of the prophet and imam's knowledge of the unseen from the perspective of the Qur'an and hadiths. The approach of this study is interpretative and narrative, and by adopting the descriptive analytical method based on library studies, the view of the Qur'an regarding the knowledge of the unseen of the Prophet and Imam (as) has been examined. In this research, after explaining the intended meaning of the prophet and imam's knowledge of the unseen, its instances in the verses and hadiths have been examined and analyzed. The findings of this research illustrate that in Holy Qur'an, two types of occult sciences are mentioned, the inherent knowledge that is specific to the Lord of the Universe and no one can know about it; non-inherent knowledge, which is a blessing from the Lord and is available to prophets and divine saints. The prophet and imam's knowledge of the unseen is of the second category and by the grace of God, it is given to the prophets and imams pertaining to the important responsibility of guiding and bringing people to the abode of eternal happiness and final perfection. Therefore, believing in the Prophet and Imams' knowledge of the unseen is completely based on the teachings of the Qur'an, and opposing the attribution of such knowledge to the prophets and imams is an explicit opposition to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge of the Unseen, the Prophet (pbuh), Imam, Qur'an and Hadiths.

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Problem Statement

Why is opposing the Prophet and Imam (as)'s knowledge of the unseen contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah? The attribution of occult knowledge to the Prophet and Imam is based on which Qur'anic verses and authentic traditions? If such a belief is in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an, why do some people try to introduce the belief of the Shias in the knowledge of the unseen against the teachings of the Qur'an? This research seeks to evaluate and investigate the belief in the unseen knowledge of the Prophet and Imam by referring to the verses of the Qur'an and authentic Islamic sources, and to show that opposing such a belief is in fact opposing the explicit verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the infallible (pbuh).

Although according to the verses of the Qur'an and authentic narrations, attributing the knowledge of the unseen to the prophets and the infallible imams (pbuh) is an obvious and undeniable matter, some strongly oppose this belief and those who believe in the knowledge of the unseen to the prophets and imams have been introduced as a rebellion and tyrant. (Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, Collection of Treaties ..., vol. 1, p. 377) While such a thing is neither philosophically or logically impossible (Ibn Sina, 1375, pp. 151-150) nor is it impossible from a psychological point of view. (Alexis Carle, p. 135) On the other hand, the occurrence of such a thing, that is, informing the prophets and divine saints of unseen news throughout history, is a clear proof of its realization. But due to the fact that the deniers of this belief consider such a belief to be invalid (Qafāri, Nasser ibn Abdullah, vol. 2, p. 629) and claim that such a belief is against the teachings of the Qur'an and traditions (Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, Interpretation, vol. 1, p. 124) in this research we try to briefly examine the knowledge of the unseen of the Prophet and the Imam from the perspective of the verses of Holy Qur'an.

Unseen from the lexical and technical point of view

Examining dictionaries and thesauruses shows that the term *ghaib* (unseen) is originally an infinitive and literally means something that is covered and hidden from the external senses, in contrast to intuition, which means something that can be felt and understood by the senses.

(Tareehi, *Majma' Al-Bahrain*, 1375, vol. 2, pp. 134-135; Rāgheb, 1412, p. 616) Therefore, the fact that human beings and that truth have been separated and veiled by barriers of understanding, that truth can be said to be hidden, which is beyond the understanding of an ignorant person.

Technically, it is something whose knowledge cannot be realized with the help of normal means. (Sobhani, 1420, vol.3, pp. 402-407) Therefore, the knowledge of the unseen means knowing the unseen and speaking of the unseen and being aware of hidden things and things that cannot be understood by the senses. (Javadi Amoli, 2008, vol.3, p.414) The meaning of unseen is terminologically opposite to the meaning of being observed, and the world of the unseen is opposite to the world of observation, such as the world of angels, the world of purgatory, the world of resurrection, where the understanding and knowledge of the details of these worlds are beyond the power of human senses.

Types of knowledge of the unseen

According to a division, occult affairs are of two types: first, what is revealed by education, thought and religious or spiritual exercise, and austerity. Second, what can be achieved is possible only with God's permission, and He grants it to anyone he wishes. The second part is of two types: What is necessary for prophets and divine messengers to reveal such as miracles, religions and other unseen news. What is special to God and He does not inform anyone about it (Sadeghi Tehrani, 1365, vol. 27, pp. 17-18.) This category of unseen things cannot be seen by anyone other than God with external senses or intellectual and heart. (Javadi Amoli, 2008, vol. 3, p. 415)

The meaning of the knowledge of the unseen in this research is the knowledge that God provides to His special servants, and this knowledge is not inherent to them, but the inherent knowledge is specific to the Lord of the Universe, and no one is aware of it. The prophets and imams (AS) gain knowledge from the other world, and such knowledge is not their inherent knowledge, but a blessing that God has given them. Like the knowledge mentioned in verse 65 of Surah Kahf, where God says: We enlightened him with knowledge of Our Own. This type of knowledge is specific to prophets, imams and divine saints, which was given by God, and this is the occult sciences. As



Imam Bāqir (as) says: There are two kinds of knowledge, one is the knowledge that is exclusive to God and He has not informed any of His creatures about it, and the knowledge that He has given to His angels and messengers. (Kāfī, vol. 1, Bada chapter, p. 203) Therefore, the knowledge of the unseen is a divine gift that is given to the infallible by God without any training or practice.

Qur'an and knowledge of the unseen

The verses in which the knowledge of the unseen of the Prophet and the infallible imams (as) are proven can be divided into three general categories. In one group of these verses, the prophets are briefly introduced as those who know the unseen, and in the second group, the knowledge of the unseen is attributed to them under the general heading, such as the verses of witnessing deeds, knowledge of the kingdom of things, verses teaching the language of birds, the verses of teaching names and the third category is the verses that prove the Prophet's knowledge of the occult in specific cases.

The first category: general verses of knowledge of the unseen

These verses indicate that God has granted the knowledge of the unseen to the prophet and he himself is their protector and guardian, and the prophets enjoy what they have been taught with the same clarity. “He is the¹ Knower of the unseen, disclosing none of it to anyone, except messengers of His choice.” The implication of this verse on the teaching of the knowledge of the unseen by God to the Prophet is completely clear and there is no room for doubt. “Allah will not ‘directly’ reveal to you the unseen but Allah chooses from His Messengers whom He will.”

By referring to the narrations of the infallible imams (as) it is found that God has given them the knowledge of the unseen, which is briefly referred to two examples of these hadiths. “But the knowledge about the things that God has decreed and signed is the knowledge that reached the Messenger of God and from him to us.” (Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 256) It can be concluded from this hadith that the knowledge of everything that God has decreed is at the disposal of the Prophet and the Imam (a.s.). In another long narration, quoted by Salman Farsi, the



Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him), referring to the mentioned verse, stated that I am "Mortaza", which means that I am favored among those to whom God has revealed His knowledge of the unseen. (Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarir, Nawādir al-Mujizāt, p. 83)

Imam Riḍā (as) says: "So the Prophet has been praised by God and we are the heirs of that Messenger who God made him aware of what he wants from the unseen, so he made us aware of the past and the future until the Day of Resurrection." (Tafsir Nūr al-Thaḳalain, vol. 5, p. 444) Apart from these two narrations, we have many hadiths where *Maṣūm* says, "The Messenger of God is Morteza [favored] by God, and we are the heirs of the same Messenger whom God has informed and made aware of whatever He wills on His unseen. So, we are aware of what happened in the past and what will happen in the future until the Day of Judgment." (Ravandi, Qutbuddin, Vol. 1, p. 343)

"And your fellow man is not insane. And he did see that 'angel' on the clear horizon, and he does not withhold 'what is revealed to him of' the unseen." This verse, while removing the unreasonable proportion of insanity from Holy Prophet and knowing the Prophet to be far from being stingy with the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen, clearly states that the Prophet saw an angel, which proves the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen.

The verses of teaching names

This group of verses proves the widest knowledge of the unseen, an example of it is mentioned: "Remember when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a successive 'human' authority on earth." They asked 'Allah', "Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" Allah responded, "I know what you do not know." He taught Adam the names of all things, then He presented them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these, if what you say is true?" According to the emphasis that is put on the word all, it seems that all the facts of the world are meant, both the unseen and the seen, of course, this includes divinely ordained beings, not what is in the treasury of God in indefinite forms, which they are from The scope of this occult science is outside. Of course, the names in this verse do not

mean the names of beings, which includes the science of vocabulary, because God, in the face of the angels' protest, makes them understand that man has talent and strength that the angels do not have, and it seems far-fetched that Angels do not have the patience to learn vocabulary. Another point is that the names of words and phrases are for understanding between humans and angels do not need to learn them.

The verses of witnessing actions

In this section, we examine the verses that demonstrate the awareness of the prophets and imams on the deeds of the servants, and the meaning of testifying is also witnessing. Of course, such knowledge is not accessible to the prophets through normal means, therefore, knowledge is generally considered to be unseen; The number of this type of verses in the Qur'an is very large, and in this research, a few examples of them are briefly mentioned.

“So how will it be when We bring a witness from every faith-community and bring you 'O Prophet' as a witness against yours?” “Indeed, We have sent to you a messenger as a witness over you, just as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.” “And so We have made you 'believers' an upright community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you.”

These verses clearly illustrate the awareness of the Prophet on people's actions, which is a kind of knowledge of the unseen. These verses clearly state that the Prophet will be raised as a witness in the court of divine justice on the Day of Resurrection. A group of witnesses will be brought from among them, and the Prophet will be a witness to those witnesses. The requirement of witnessing and testifying is that the witness observes the act himself, not that something is taught to him later. The context of the verses makes it clear that what is meant by being a bearer of good news, witnessing and warning is that the possessor of the attribute must be in this state at the moment of the revelation of the verse, and according to the research of the lexicographers, witnessing is the same as declaring presence and awareness of the action. and it says that witnesses are those who are present and aware of the act. On the other hand, we come across verses in the Qur'an in which it is stated that the Prophet and Imams saw the



deeds, and this example of the verses itself is clear evidence of seeing the deeds in person, not that they were taught later.

The verses of inner and esoteric leadership and infallibility

One of the truths that the Noble Qur'an and the hadiths of Ahl al-Bayt have spoken about is inner guidance or imamate and formative leadership. According to the Qur'an, the formative imamate is a high position that many of the first prophets have reached and certainly the Prophet of Islam and the infallible imams have this position. The requirement of all-round infallibility in the imam, which consists of immunity in speech, action and thought, is the knowledge of the occult, because a person cannot perceive all the realities with ordinary tools as they are, rather, he commits mistakes. And only God's knowledge and divine vision can protect him from error.

Here, we will first discuss some of the verses that introduce religious leaders as having the position of inner guidance, and then we will discuss the verses that state their infallibility.

“We ‘also’ made them leaders, guiding by Our command, and inspired them to do good deeds, establish prayer, and pay alms-tax. And they were devoted to Our worship.” “We raised from among them leaders guiding by Our command, when they patiently endured and firmly believed in Our signs.”

A brief explanation about the word *Amr*

There are two types of command: The Shari'i command and the formative command. Man is free against the first type, that is, he has the ability to disobey it, such as the command to pray, give zakat, etc., but the second type is a formative command that nothing can do against it. No one has the authority and ability to be stubborn. Like this verse in which God says: “All it takes, when He wills something ‘to be’, is simply to say to it: “Be!” And it is!”

The meaning of the word command in verse 24 of Surah Sajdah is the second type of command, i.e. the formative command that is given after trials and reaching the stage of certainty, and the meaning of words in verse 124 of Surah Baqarah is the facts with which Abraham was tested, not words. Because for the position of leadership, there must be

tests that prove his mental and spiritual perfection, and testing with words and expressions is not appropriate for this position. These verses are well used that the prophet imam has immunity in terms of speech and behavior and only behaves according to the command of the Lord.

Esoteric guidance

In the Qur'an and the hadiths of the infallible, it is also mentioned about the inner guidance and Imamate that many of the Ulu l-'Azm Prophets and the Prophet (pbuh) and the Imams have reached the high position of formative Imamate. Holy Qur'an has mentioned guidance in every case that it has tried to describe the imamate, and then it has tied the guidance to the command of God, as a result, it is clear that the imamate is not just any guidance, but the guidance is the command of the Lord. In fact, the inner imam is a kind of guardianship over the people in their actions, and guiding them is to bring them to their destination according to the divine command, not that the purpose of the imam is merely guidance, which the prophet can also do. Rather, every believer plays the role of guidance to God with good advice and preaching.

Verses of Infallibility

“Satan said, “By Your Glory! I will certainly mislead them all, except Your chosen servants among them.” This verse displays that the devil's lack of greed in misleading the sincere servants is due to their immunity from being misled and contaminated (therefore, the sincere is equal to the infallible). According to this, sincere servants of God will never commit an ugly or sinful act under the influence of Satan's temptation. In another verse of Holy Qur'an, it is said that “And whoever Allah guides, none can lead astray.” It is clear from these verses that God's prophets are never subject to error, and since committing sin is one of the sure examples of error, these verses show that the prophets are infallible from sin.

“Allah only intends to keep ‘the causes of’ evil away from you and purify you completely, O members of the ‘Prophet’s’ family!” God only wants to remove any impurity from you (Prophet's) family and purify you fully. From the fact that the will of God is dedicated to Ahl al-Bayt,



it is clear that the will is formative, because the legislative will include all servants, on the other hand, no obstacle can prevent the fulfillment of God's formative will. Since the meaning of *Rijs* (abomination) includes material and spiritual filth, this verse protects the family of Ahl al-Bayt from all filth. Many hadiths have been narrated from Holy Prophet (pbuh) who says that these verses are about Ali (as), Fatima (as), Hasan (as) and Husayn (as), and he said, "O Allah, praise be to the people, and when the verse was revealed, there was no one in the house except them."

The verses of seeing the kingdom of heaven and earth

Seeing the kingdom of the universe and the inner course of things is beyond the limits of human consciousness, which God bestows on some of His servants. One of these servants is Ḥaḍrat Ibrahim, whom God says about him:

"Thus, did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty" According to what was mentioned, Abraham's vision of the kingdom is not an intellectual vision, because the way of thinking about divine creations and the way of proof and rational reasoning is a conventional science and available to everyone, but in the case of Abraham, it means observation and intuition above these. For this reason, seeing the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is considered the knowledge of the unseen.

There are many narrations about seeing the kingdom of the heavens and the earth by the infallible imams (pbuh), here, for brevity, one of them is mentioned. Referring to the above verse, Imam Ṣādiq (as) says: For Abraham, the veil of the seven heavens was removed, so that Abraham saw up to the top of the throne, and the seven lands appeared to him, and it also happened to Muhammad (pbuh), and I see that your imam and the next imams also did this to them. (Tafsīr Burhān, vol. 1, p. 531) It is also found from other narrations about the throne that God has shown the kingdom to all his chosen ones.

Ascension of the Prophet and observation of great divine signs

One of the occult sciences that was obtained for the Prophet through unconventional intuition and passed on to his guardians is the



observations of Holy Prophet (pbuh) during the Ascension journey, which is mentioned in the first verse of Surah Isrā'. "Glory be to the One Who took His servant 'Muḥammad' by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed, so that We may show him some of Our signs.¹ Indeed, He² alone is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing." In Tafsir Qomi, in a narration by Mam Ṣādiq (as), more details of this trip are mentioned. This hadith is very long and detailed, and in short, in this narration, it refers to things such as the Prophet's companions, his means of flight, praying, his different positions, continuing the journey of Holy Prophet (pbuh) in the heavens, seeing past prophets, God's angels, seeing things from heaven, talking with angels and past prophets. These observations are definitely beyond the power of ordinary human senses and powers, and therefore, they are considered as one of the sure examples of occult knowledge, which was transmitted by His Holiness to his guardians (the infallible Imams, peace be upon him).

Conclusion

What has been examined in this research under the title of unseen knowledge is the information that the prophets and imams (pbuh) obtain through revelation and spiritual communication or inspiration from the world beyond, and their knowledge is not inherent, but rather a blessing that God has bestowed on them. According to this definition, the knowledge of the occult, which in some verses of the Qur'an is denied to anyone other than God and attributed to God, is the inherent and special knowledge of God. The verses that attribute the knowledge of the unseen to the Prophets and Imams are the knowledge of the unseen that God has bestowed upon them. The difference of narrations regarding the knowledge of the unseen is also the same, and the existence of the knowledge of the unseen in the prophets and imams is not in doubt. If in some cases the knowledge of the unseen is denied, it has its own reasons, which include *taqīyyah* (dissimulation), negation of inherent knowledge, etc.



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