

# Seeing Allah While Dreaming: A Comparison between Shi'a and Sunni Beliefs

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**ABSTRACT:** The two main branches of Islam have taken opposing stances on the possibility of seeing Allah in the dreaming state. While the dominant Sunni position has been open to the possibility, the dominant Twelver Shi'a position has not. The difference between these two approaches has not always been recognised. In this study, therefore, both traditions are examined, particularly with reference to the Qur'an and Hadith. Mulla Sadra's views are also discussed as the views of a key detractor from Shi'a orthodoxy.

**KEYWORDS:** dream; vision; experience; Qur'an; Hadith; Shi'a; Sunni.

## Introduction

Different positions can be found in the Islamic tradition regarding the possibility of seeing Allah.<sup>1</sup> Some have believed that Allah cannot be directly apprehended by man in any form, others have believed that the only comprehension is auditory. Some have believed that seeing the Deity is possible in the hereafter and some have believed it is possible while dreaming. In this article we undergo a theological examination of the latter possibility, that is, the possibility of seeing Allah while dreaming.

The topic of dreaming has received attention in both the Qur'an and the Hadith as well as in the works of Muslim scholars, whether Sunni or Shi'a. These scholars have viewed dreams and dreaming as a spiritual phenomenon and have therefore considered the issue with some seriousness, sometimes devoting entire works to the topic.<sup>2</sup> With regard to seeing Allah in dreams we will see that figures of different persuasions from the Sunni tradition have not only believed that this is possible but that it has also occurred numerous times. In contrast, we see that the Shi'a tradition has been opposed to such a possibility. This clear difference is noteworthy given that the Shi'a position has been overlooked in recent studies. Lori, for instance, holds that in the Islamic tradition seeing Allah is a rather ambiguous topic.<sup>3</sup> Vajda, on the other hand, has investigated the possibility of seeing Allah in the Shi'a literature but has not distinguished it clearly from the Sunni position.<sup>4</sup>

## What is 'Dreaming'?

Many reports exist in the Hadith literature which define dreaming.<sup>5</sup> The most complete of these is probably what has been narrated from al-Nawfali from Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him:

I said to [Imam] Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon him, 'How is it that a man sees a dream and it occurs for him [in reality] just as he saw it, and a man sees a dream and nothing happens?'

He replied, 'When a believer sleeps, his soul begins to make an elongating motion (*kharajat min ruhihi harkatun mamdudah*). At times it ascends to the sky and whatever the soul sees at the place of destiny and arrangement (*mawdi'i al-taqdir wa al-tadbir*) is the truth and whatever it sees while on earth are confused dreams (*adghasu ahlam*).'

I said, 'May I be sacrificed for you! Does his Soul (really) ascend to the sky?'

He replied, 'Yes'.

I said, 'To such an extent that nothing of it remains in the body of the believer?'

He replied, 'No. If it exits completely and nothing of it remains in the body of the believer, he would die.'

I said, 'Then how does it come out?!'

He replied, 'Do you see the sun how it is in its place in the sky but its beam is on the earth. The soul is similar to that, it is in the body but it has an extended motion (*harkatuha mamdudah*).'<sup>6</sup>

Based on this discussion dreaming can be said to be what is seen by the soul when it separates from the body during sleeping. What is seen in dreams depends on where the soul is. Dreams can be true, false, or confusing. Moreover, Satan can also influence one's dreams when the soul separates from the body as has been clearly stated in a tradition from the Prophet, Allah's blessings be on him and his family, 'Dreams are of three kinds: good news (*bushra*) from Allah, sadness (*tahzin*) from the Satan, and the things man thinks about which he (also) sees while he sleeps.'<sup>7</sup> It is possible, therefore, that seeing Allah in a dream is simply the effect of Satan's influence and not a veridical experience of the Deity.

### *Sleeping and Dreaming in the Qur'an and Hadith*

In the Qur'an sleep is regarded as one of God's signs: 'And from his signs is your sleeping during the night and day' (30:23). It is also viewed as a phenomenon which causes calm: 'And we made your sleep a repose (*subata*)' (78:9). It is one of Allah's great blessings which He has bestowed upon His creations. Without it, life would be very difficult. It has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, that 'There exists nothing alive except that it sleeps, except for Allah, Mighty and Glorified be He.'<sup>8</sup>

The Qur'an affirms the possibility of 'true' dreams, that is, dreams which involve, for example, foresight or veridical experience. In Surah Yusuf, alone, three such dreams have been mentioned: the first is the dream in which Joseph saw eleven stars, the sun, and the moon prostrating to him; then there are the dreams of the two prisoners and, thirdly, the dream of the king of Egypt. There are also other instances where true dreams have been mentioned in the Qur'an. For example, Abraham's dream about slaughtering Ishmael (37:102, 105) and the dreams of the Prophet, Allah's blessings be upon him and his family (8:43, 17:60, 48:27). Shi'a and Sunni scholars have written much about dreams and their meanings when studying the aforementioned verses.<sup>9</sup> The importance of dreams is further realised when considering the fact that dreaming was one form of revelation for the prophets and messengers of Allah.

It is appropriate to mention here that, the dreams of the Divine Proofs (*hujaj Allah*) – like the Messenger of Allah – form a completely legal basis for their actions. This can be inferred from a narration from Imam 'Ali, peace be upon him: 'The dreams of the prophets are revelations (*wahy*).'<sup>10</sup> The dreams of normal people, however, cannot be acted upon without further proof of their veracity. In the case where an ordinary person does have the veracity of their dream proven his or her dream can only be used as a basis for his or her own actions only. Unfortunately, this point has gone unnoticed among some Sunni jihadists who use their dreams as a pretext to cause harm to others.<sup>11</sup>

In the next section we will commence discussion of the main concern of this article: the topic of seeing Allah while dreaming.

### *Seeing Allah while Dreaming in the Sunni Tradition*

As will become clear in the next section, Twelver Shi'ism has traditionally deemed it impossible to see Allah, whether it be in a state of consciousness or unconsciousness or whether it be in this world or the hereafter. This has been the position regarding both prophets and ordinary people. However, this has not been the line of notable representatives of Sunni thought.<sup>12</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani cites Ibn Batal as saying, 'The Sunnis and most of the *ummah* believe that seeing Allah is possible in the hereafter.'<sup>13</sup>

Burusy has said ‘Some scholars deem it possible to see Allah in any shape, whatsoever it may be, because what is seen is not the essence (*dhat*) of Allah if it does not have a face (*surah*).’<sup>14</sup>

One of the arguments put forward by Sunnis to justify this view is Moses’ request to his Lord to show Himself to him.<sup>15</sup> According to this argument, since Allah did not show Himself in this world He must, therefore, show Himself in the hereafter otherwise such a request would have been absurd.<sup>16</sup> (We will see below that the eighth Imam of the Shi‘a, Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, reasoned differently about this event.) Abu Hamid Ghazali, on the other hand, argues that just as the thoughts that humans have while awake originate from Allah, dreams also originate from Allah and thus Allah can show himself in dreams in whatever form that he wishes.<sup>17</sup>

Lori has categorized the different reports of seeing Allah recorded by Sunnis.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, there are reports of seeing Allah in the form of light (*nur*) without a specific figure or appearance. Secondly, there are reports of Allah appearing in the shape of a known or unknown person. Thirdly, there are reports of seeing Allah appearing as a king, parent, or a brother.

Al-Tirmidhi has narrated quite a few narrations in his *Sunan* concerning this matter. According to these narrations, the Prophet of Allah has seen and spoken with Allah in his dreams and Allah has appeared to him with the most magnificent and beautiful visage. Here is a short version of one of these narrations which he has narrated from Ma‘adh ibn Jabal:

One day the Prophet arrived so late to perform the morning prayers that the sun had nearly appeared. He hastily entered the Mosque and led the prayer then said, ‘Do not break (the prayer) lines.’ He then explained his delay: ‘I woke up last night and performed some prayers and went to sleep again. In a dream I saw Allah with the most beautiful of features. He said to me, “O Muhammad!” I answered, “*Labbayk*, my lord.” He said, “What are the archangels quarrelling about?” I replied, “I do not know.” He repeated this for three times and after hearing a negative answer every time, He put his hand on my back – and I felt the coldness of His fingers – then He said to me...’<sup>19</sup>

After al-Tirmidhi narrates this *hadith* he says: ‘This *hadith* is good (*hasan*) and authentic (*sahih*). I asked Muhammad ibn Isma‘il al-Bukhari about it and he also approved of it and said it is good and authentic.’

Many Sunni scholars have narrated from ‘Umarat ibn ‘Amir from Umm al-Tufayl (the wife of ‘Ubay ibn Ka‘b) that she heard the messenger of Allah, Allah’s blessings be on him, saying ‘he saw his Lord, Mighty and Majestic be He, in a dream in the figure of a handsome young man wearing green and (standing) on a golden carpet and wearing golden shoes.’<sup>20</sup> Al-Darimi believed that seeing Allah in any figure is possible,<sup>21</sup> whilst Ibn Taymiyyah, believed that seeing Allah is only possible for the faithful, in different figures and in accordance with the amount of their faith and certitude (*yaqin*).<sup>22</sup> Gimaret notes that some Sufis with Sunni thinking have believed that the Prophet has seen his Lord in the figure of a young man with long hair.<sup>23</sup>

Some Sunni scholars have wanted to limit the possibility of seeing Allah in a dream to the Prophet, Allah’s blessings be on him and his family. Ibn Hajar al-Makki, the tenth century AH scholar and the foremost authority in the Shafi‘i school of jurisprudence, asks:

Is it permissible for someone to say that he has seen his Lord in this world? And that he has seen Him with his eyes whilst awake, just like a group have said that it is possible to see God (*al-mukhtar*) with the eyes whilst awake.

He then answers his question like this:

The answer is: there are two aspects that must be considered here. The first is that is this rationally (*‘aqlan*) possible? The Sunnis believe that in this world it is. The second is, according to the Sunnis, has this ever occurred...? Seeing [Allah], even though it is rationally and religiously possible, has never occurred in this world except to our Prophet...most Sunnis believe that this occurred for him in the Night of Ascension (*laylat al-mi‘raj*).<sup>24</sup>

Other Sunni figures have not restricted sight of the Deity to the Prophet, rather they have maintained that it is possible for ordinary people to see Allah too. The contemporary exegete, Mulla Huwaysh Āl Ghazi regarded this to be so normal that he stated, ‘Many people have seen Allah while dreaming.’<sup>25</sup> Āl Ghazi also believed that to see Allah in a dream one does not necessarily need to be learned or pious.<sup>26</sup> Al-Darimi narrates a tradition about the Prophet seeing Allah in his dream then goes on to interpret this dream. He then cites Ibn Sirin, the famous *mu‘abbir* (a person who interprets dreams), as saying, ‘who ever sees Allah in his dream will surely enter Paradise.’<sup>27</sup> In a sentence attributed to Abu Nu‘aym, which has been recorded in the preface of *Hilyat al-Awliya*, he says: ‘He who sees his Lord in a dream, will surely enter Paradise.’<sup>28</sup>

Qadi ibn ‘Arabi al-Maliki (d. 543 AH) writes in his commentary on *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*,

Master (*al-ustadh*) Abu Ishaq al-Isfara‘ini, the shaykh of the learned ones and the pious, saw the Creator (*al-bari*) in a dream and said to him, ‘My Lord, I have been asking you to forgive me for thirty or forty years but you have not answered me!’

He [Allah] answered, ‘You have asked for a great thing! Verily, you have asked for Our love.’<sup>29</sup>

Ahmad ibn Hanbal has claimed as follows:

I saw the Mighty Lord in a dream and said, ‘O Lord, what is the best thing that those who seek closeness to you [can use] to become close to you?’

He answered, ‘My words O Ahmad.’

I said, ‘With understanding or without understanding (*bi-fahm aw bi-ghayri fahm*)?’

He replied, ‘With understanding and without understanding.’<sup>30</sup>

Abu Hanifah also claimed to see Allah in a dream: ‘I saw the Almighty Lord ninety-nine times while dreaming.’<sup>31</sup> Alusi (d. 1270 AH) says, ‘All praise be to Allah for I have seen my Lord three times while dreaming. The third time was in the year 1246 AH. I saw him, Glorified be His Stature, while he was covered in light and was facing towards the east. He said to me words that I forgot when I woke up.’<sup>32</sup> He has also made other claims about seeing Allah while dreaming in his *Tafsir*.<sup>33</sup>

Al-Suyuti in his *tafsir* and Ibn Jawzi in *al-Mawdu‘at* have narrated the following *hadith* from Ibn ‘Abbas on the authority of Abu Talib al-Makki and Ghazali:

He who prays two units (*rak‘atayn*) of prayers between the midday (*zuhr*) and evening (*‘asr*) prayers of Friday and recites after al-Fatihah in the first unit the Verse of the Throne (*ayat al-kursi*) once and Surat al-Falaq twenty-five times, and in the second unit the chapter of *tawhid* [i.e. al-Ikhlās] once and the chapter of al-Nas twenty-five times, and after finishing his prayer says ‘*la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*’, then he will not die until he sees Allah.<sup>34</sup>

Although al-Suyuti and Ibn Jawzi regard this tradition to be a forgery (*ma‘jul*) it was not because of the content. The reason for them regarding the *hadith* a forgery was because of the people unknown (*majhul*) to them in the chain (*isnad*).

The above quotations have been gathered from important figures in the development of normative Sunni thought. Plenty more evidence could have been mustered if the mystical thought of Sunnis were to be ventured. Sufis such as ‘Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadhani, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Abu Hamid Ghazali, Ibn ‘Arabi, and Baha’ al-Din – the founder of the Sufi Naqshbandi order – have all spoken of seeing Allah while dreaming.<sup>35</sup> Ibn ‘Arabi has been quoted as saying:

In the night of 14 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 627 AH, I saw Allah with my eyes, truly and in reality. I had never seen Him like this before and when I saw Him like this I gained a knowledge, pleasure, and joy that no one can comprehend except by tasting (what I tasted).<sup>36</sup>

## *The Shi'a Position about Seeing Allah while Dreaming*

As we have seen, Sunnis of different persuasions have not been averse to speaking of 'seeing' Allah in dreams. The Shi'a, however, have been opposed to this approach despite the presence of anthropomorphic references in Shi'a sources also. These references include terms like 'the hand of Allah' (*yad Allah*), 'the face of Allah' (*wajh Allah*), and 'the tongue of Allah' (*lisan Allah*). Amir-Moezzi explores references to these terms in Shi'a Hadith literature, and argues that these refer to the Imams and Divine Proofs and not to Allah Himself.<sup>37</sup>

The majority of Shi'a have taken a different path to the majority of Sunnis regarding anthropomorphic references in scripture and regarding seeing Allah while dreaming principally due to at least three verses of the Qur'an:

The sights (*absar*) cannot comprehend him but He comprehends the sights. (6:103)

Nothing is similar to Him. (42:11)

Their knowledge will not encompass Him. (20:110)

Many Shi'a traditions exist which reject claims about seeing Allah with reference to these verses.<sup>38</sup> Other traditions explicitly state that *absar* in verse 6:103 refers to the thought and imagination, something which is much more powerful than the eyes and sight. In other words, verse 6:103 says, 'The thoughts and imaginations cannot comprehend him, but he comprehends the thoughts and imaginations.'

The received Shi'a view is that even though Allah is manifest to the utmost extent, literally seeing Allah in any form or state is fundamentally impossible because Allah is inaccessible to man's physical senses. Humans do not even have the ability to view all of creation let alone the creator Himself. Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, says:

O son of Adam! If a bird eats your heart, it will not satisfy [it's hunger] and if a hole the size of a needle is poked in your eye, then your eye will become covered [i.e. with blindness]. With these two [weak organs] you intend to see the kingdom of the skies and earth?! If you think what you intend is correct, then here is the sun, a creature from Allah's creations. If you can fill up your eye from it, then, what you say is correct.<sup>39</sup>

He also says:

The sun is one part from the seventy parts of the light of the Seat (*al-kursi*), and the Seat is one part from the seventy parts of the light of the Throne (*al-'arsh*) and the Throne is one part from the seventy parts of the light of the Veil (*al-hijab*) and the Veil is one part from the seventy parts of the light of the Screen (*al-sitr*). If they think they are saying the truth, they should (be able to) fill their eyes from the sun when it is not covered by clouds.<sup>40</sup>

Where Shi'a Hadith literature has spoken of 'seeing' Allah it has always been explained that it is not the eyes which 'see' Allah but rather, it is the heart:<sup>41</sup>

A man came to Imam Ali, peace be on him, and said, 'Have you seen your Lord?'

He replied, 'Woe unto you! I do not worship a Lord that I do not see.'

The man said, 'How have you seen Him?!'

He replied, 'The eyes do not reach him using sight, rather, the hearts see Him through the realities of faith (*bi-haqa'iq al-iman*).'<sup>42</sup>

It seems that there is no tradition in the Shi'a Hadith corpus which explains the quality of 'seeing with the heart'. Amir-Moezzi has attempted to explain this matter but he relies heavily on Sufi thought, using concepts such as 'subtle centres', 'the sun of the heart', and 'colours of the heart'.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, this paper has been seeking to draw attention to a more mainstream position.

In orthodox Shi'a thought, in accordance with verse 42:11 (mentioned above), any experience of Allah

being similar to anything is regarded as null and void. Creation is considered to have nothing in common with the Creator: ‘He has no mass and no face, cannot be sensed or felt. He can’t be sensed with the five senses and he cannot be perceived by imagination.’<sup>44</sup> It is for this reason, explains Imam al-Rida, peace be on him, that Moses’ request to see Allah was a request from the tribe of Moses – and not a request by Moses for himself. According to the Imam, Moses said his tribe would only become believers if they saw their Lord.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from what we already mentioned about the impossibility of seeing Allah in any state, there exists a narration in a Shi’a source which explicitly denies the possibility of any one seeing Allah while dreaming. Ibrahim al-Karkhi narrates that he asked Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, that ‘A man sees Allah in a dream. Is that possible?’ The Imam answered, ‘That person is a man who has no faith. Allah, the Exalted, cannot be seen (by someone) who is awake or asleep, in this world or the hereafter.’<sup>46</sup>

One notable figure in the Shi’a tradition who took a different stance to the received Shi’a view was Mulla Sadra, who said: ‘It has been narrated from a righteous person that “I saw my Lord in a dream in the figure of my mother.”’<sup>47</sup> Mulla Sadra did not mention the name of the righteous person but from a similar account in ‘Ayn al-Qudat’s *Tamhidat* we can infer that the person was Abu Bakr al-Qahtabi.<sup>48</sup> However, what has been narrated in *Tamhidat* differs slightly to what Mulla Sadra narrated. In *Tamhidat* it is stated that ‘I [i.e. al-Qahtabi] saw the Honourable Lord in the figure of my mother’ without mentioning whether this vision occurred in a dream or not even though Mulla Sadra explicitly states that it occurred in a dream. Mulla Sadra continues to mention the interpretation of this dream: ‘The interpreter (*al-mu‘abbir*) has interpreted “Lord” as the verses of the Qur’an and “mother” as the Prophet with whom is the mother of the book (*umm al-kitab*).’ By ‘interpreter’, Mulla Sadra is referring to ‘Ayn al-Qudat’s interpretation of the dream in *Tamhidat* although what we actually find in *Tamhidat* is again slightly different. Mulla Sadra further explains that such dreams or visions seen by the Prophet, Allah’s blessings be on him and his family, the other Prophets, and the Divine Proofs, are an indication of the thickness or the thinness of the veil (between them and Allah).

Mulla Sadra has expressed the view that Allah can be seen – either while asleep or awake – in more than one place. In the third volume of his *Tafsir* he is quite clear about his contention.<sup>49</sup> Firstly he asks ‘Is it possible for man to see [Allah] in any form whatsoever?’<sup>50</sup> While answering this question he says, ‘Seeing Allah, the Exalted, whether it be with this special tool [i.e. the physical eye] or the eye of the heart and whether His essence (*dhat*) is seen or any one of His manifestations (*mazahir*), then four rational possibilities must be examined.’ He then mentions these possibilities and their probabilities but only the second is of interest here:

The second, is seeing with this physical eye a manifestation (*mazhar*) from the manifestations of His essence (*dhat*) or His image (*mithal*) or the place of His appearance (*majlah*), Exalted be He. Whether it is known (that what is being seen) is His manifestation or it is not known. This (kind of seeing) is possible, rather, it occurs (*ja’iz bal waqi*).<sup>51</sup>

He then continues,

‘Allah is similar to nothing (*munazzah ‘an al-mithl*)...but can have an image (*la yunazzah ‘an al-mithal*)<sup>52</sup>...if someone says, ‘I have seen Allah in a dream’, he does not mean that he has seen Allah’s essence...rather it means that he has seen an image (*mithal*) of His essence – and an image (*mithal*) is different from a similarity (*mithl*).<sup>53</sup>

Again, Mulla Sadra puts forward another question: why did Allah tell Moses ‘You will never see me’? Mulla Sadra’s answer is that Moses had asked for a special kind of vision which is only possible when someone dies or in a death like state (*huwa ru’yatun la yumkinu tahaqquqaha illa bi al-sa’q wa al-indikak wa al-mawt*).

Mulla Sadra’s view regarding seeing Allah is not only different from the Sunni position but it is also different from the received Shi’a position, as more than one critic of recent times has argued. According to Ayatollah Mirza Mahdi Isfahani (d. 1365 AH) – the jurist, traditionist, and reviver of the epistemology of the *ahl al-bayt* in the seminary of Mashhad – Mulla Sadra’s mistake was reliance upon ‘worldly’

knowledge and not ‘divine’ knowledge.<sup>54</sup> These two types of knowledge, according to Mahdi Isfahani, are completely different. For starters, seeing (*ru’yat*) or meeting (*liqa’*) Allah is only possible through the enlightened rationality (*al-‘aql al-nuri*) of the heart and this cannot be developed by any worldly means but only through being faithful to revelation and the teachings of the *ahl al-bayt*.<sup>55</sup> The disciples of Isfahani have also been keen to follow the example of their teacher in responding to Mulla Sadra. As Muwarid argues, manifestation (*tajalli*) and subsequent recognition (*ma’rifah*) of Allah can occur at many levels but all of these levels occur in the heart and are thus incomprehensible to the intellect. It is only the effects of manifestation and recognition which are comprehensible in that they can create fear (*khawf*) or hope (*raja’*) in the person who is experiencing them.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

Numerous examples exist in Sunni scholarship of the belief that Allah can be seen while dreaming. While some Sunni personalities have restricted the possibility of seeing Allah in a dream to the Prophet, most have not. Their reports attribute a number of anthropomorphic qualities to Allah such as a figure, a handsome young face, a hand, cold fingers, having a sound like the sound of a human, long hair, wearing green clothes, wearing shoes, and standing like a man. These reports describe a God that is seen with the eyes and is encompassed by knowledge. The dominant Shi’a view has been that these claims contradict verses of the Qur’an, the most obvious one being, ‘Nothing is similar to Him’ (42:11). The Shi’a position can be summarised in the report from Imam al-Rida of a ‘sacred narration’ (*hadith qudsi*): ‘He has not recognized Me who likens Me (*shabbahani*) to my creations.’<sup>57</sup> Or, in the words of Imam al-Sadiq, peace be on him,

He who likens Allah to his creations is a polytheist (*mushrik*). Allah, Blessed and Glorified be He, is not similar to anything and nothing is similar to him and everything that is imagined about Him, He is other than that.<sup>58</sup>

Naturally, there have been departures over the centuries from the Sunni and Shi’a positions.<sup>59</sup> The views of one notable Shi’a detractor in this regard, Mulla Sadra, were presented in particular. Nevertheless, as far as orthodoxy is concerned, it has been shown there is a clear difference between the Sunni and Shi’a traditions on the issue of seeing Allah, especially while dreaming. This point is made in order to clarify the respective stances and differences which exist between the two main branches of Islam regarding the topic of seeing Allah while dreaming.<sup>60</sup>

## Table of Key Transliterated Terms

| Term Appearing in Text | Arabic/Persian | Term With Diacritics |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Absar                  | أَبْصَار       | AbÒÁr                |
| ‘Aqlan                 | عَقْلًا        | ÝAqlan               |
| ‘Arsh                  | عَرْش          | ÝArsh                |
| Bushra                 | بَشْرَى        | BushrÁ               |
| Dhat                   | ذَات           | DhÁt                 |
| Kursi                  | كُرْسَى        | KursÐ                |
| Majlah                 | مَجْلَة        | Majlah               |
| Maj‘ul                 | مَجْعُول       | MajYÛl               |
| Mazhar                 | مَظْهَر        | MaÛhar               |
| Mithal                 | مِثَال         | MithÁl               |
| Mu‘abbir               | مَعْبَر        | MuÝabbir             |
| Al-mukhtar             | الْمُخْتَار    | Al-mukhtÁr           |
| Nur                    | نُور           | NÛr                  |
| Ru’yah                 | رُؤْيَة        | RuÐyah               |
| Shabbahani             | شَبَّهَنِي     | Shabbahanĭ           |
| Surah                  | صُورَة         | NÛrah                |
| Tahzin                 | تَحْزِين       | Tahẓĭn               |

|       |      |       |
|-------|------|-------|
| Yaqin | يقين | Yaqin |
| Wahy  | وحى  | Wahy  |

<sup>1</sup> For a great overview of what western and Islamic scholars have said about seeing Allah and the different discussions surrounding them see W. Williams, *Tajalli wa Ru'ya: A Study of Anthropomorphic Theophany and Visio Dei in the Hebrew Bible, the Quran and Early Sunni Islam* (PhD thesis, The University of Michigan, Michigan, 2008). Also see Özgen Felek & Alexander D. Knysh (eds.), *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> For instance see Āl-i 'Uṣfur, *Balaghat al-Shi'at al-Kiram fi Ta'bir Ru'ya al-Manam* (self-published, n.d.) and Mirza Husayn al-Nuri, *Dar al-Salam fi ma Yata'allaqu bil-Ru'ya wa al-Manam* (Qumm: al-Mat'abat al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.). Muhammad Baqir Majlisi has also created two chapters in this regard, see 'Haqiqat al-Ru'ya wa Ta'biruha wa Fadl al-Ru'ya al-Sadiqatu wa 'Illatiha wa 'Illat al-Kadhibah' and 'Akhir fi Ru'yat al-Nabi wa Awsiya' ihi wa Sa'ir al-Anbiya' wa al-Awsiya', in *Bihar al-Anwar* LVIII (Beirut: al-Wafa', 1404 AH). Suhayli, the famous Sunni historian, has authored a separate book on this subject called *Mas'alatu Ru'yat Allah fi al-Manam wa al-Nabi* (n.p., n.d.). The authors of the Sunni *Sahih* and *Sunan* collections have all included relevant sections in their books on the topic. For example, Muhammad Isma'il al-Bukhari, 'Bab al-Ta'bir', in *Sahih al-Bukhari* VIII (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, 1407 AH); Muslim al-Nisaburi, 'Kitab al-Ru'yah', in *Sahih al-Muslim* VII (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1374 AH); Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn Ash'ath, 'Bab ma Ja'a fi al-Ru'yah', in *Sunan Abu Dawud* II (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), etc.

<sup>3</sup> P. Lory, *Le reve et ses interpretations en Islam* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003), 290.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Vajda, 'Le Problème de la Vision de Dieu (Ru'yah) d'après quelques auteurs ši'ites duodécimains', in *Le Shi'isme Imamite. Colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 31-54.

<sup>5</sup> For more on this refer to 'Abd al-'Ali ibn Jum'ah al-Huwayzi, *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn* II (Qumm: Isma'iliyyan, 1415 AH), 429.

<sup>6</sup> Taj al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Din al-Shu'ayri, *Jami' al-Akhbar* (Qumm: Intisharat Radi, 1363 AH (solar)), 172.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* LVIII, 191.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Babawayh al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah* II (Qum: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1395 AH), 666.

<sup>9</sup> See al-Huwayzi, *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn* III, 179 and Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an* XI (Tehran: Intisharat-i Nasir Khusraw, 1364 AH (solar)), 283.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* LVIII, 181.

<sup>11</sup> For more on this subject see L. Edgar, *The Dream in Islam: From Qur'anic Tradition to Jihadist Inspiration* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> For more on this matter see Williams, *Tajalli wa Ruya*, 155-204.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari fi Sharhi Sahih al-Bukhari* XIII (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), 359.

<sup>14</sup> Isma'il Haqqi Burusy, *Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan* VIII (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 34.

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Mahmud Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani* V (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 48-50.

<sup>16</sup> See E. Pouresmaeil, 'Moses' Request to See Allah: A Comparison between the Quran and Torah', in *Majalli-yi Pajuhishi Dini* XXI (Autumn & Spring 1389 AH (solar)).

<sup>17</sup> See T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Islamic Thought: Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt* (London: Institute for Ismaili Studies, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Lory, *Le reve et ses interpretations en Islam*.

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Isa al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sunan* V (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 368.

<sup>20</sup> Abu al-Qasim Sulayman ibn Ahmad al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir* XXV (Baghdad: Dar al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), 143; Ahmad ibn Husayn al-Bayhaqi, *al-Asma' wa al-Sifat* II (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawadi lil-Tawzi', 1413 AH), 367-369; Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* XIII (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 311.

<sup>21</sup> Burusy, *Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan* VIII, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. III, 390.

<sup>23</sup> D. Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme* (Paris: 1997), 143-164; H. Ritter, *Das meer der seele* (Leiden: 1995), 445.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmad Shahab al-Din ibn Hajar Haytami al-Makki, *al-Fatawa al-Hadithiyyah* I (Mustafa al-Halabi Publications, n.d.), 107 & 153.

<sup>25</sup> Mulla Huwaysh 'Abd al-Qadir Āl Ghazi, *Bayan al-Ma'ani* II (Damascus: Matba'at al-Taraqqi, 1382 AH), 410.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Darimi, *al-Sunan* II (Istanbul, 1401 AH), 126.

<sup>28</sup> Lory, *Le reve et ses interpretations en Islam*, 293.

<sup>29</sup> Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi, *Aridat al-Ahwadhi fi Sharh al-Tirmadhi* XXII (Egypt: n.p., n.d.), 117.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Sha'rani, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* I (Egypt: 1316 AH), 44; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al-Manaqib* (Beirut: n.p., n.d.), 434; Sayyid Mu'min al-Shablanji, *Nur al-Absar* (Beirut: n.p., n.d.), 225.

<sup>31</sup> 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Munawi, *Faid al-Qadir Sharh al-Jami' al-Saghir* II (Egypt: al-Maktabat al-Tijariyyat al-Kubra, 1356 AH), 52.

<sup>32</sup> Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani* V, 50.

- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Jala al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur fi Tafsir al-Ma‘thur* I (Egypt: n.p., n.d.), 52. Abu al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Ali ibn Jawzi, *al-Mawzu‘at* II (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1421 AH), 119.
- <sup>35</sup> See H. A. Qubadi, T. Poornamdarian, A. Chikati, M. Ma‘arifi, ‘Sleeping and Dreaming from the Viewpoint of Mawlawi’, in *Pajuhishnamih-yi Zaban wa Adabi Farsi*, year 3, no. 4, (Winter 1388 AH (solar)). Burusy, *Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan* III, 80; V, 123; IX, 223.
- <sup>36</sup> Mahmud Mahmud al-Ghurab, *al-‘Alam al-Barzakh wa al-Mithal* (Damascus: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabi, 1359 AH), 61.
- <sup>37</sup> Mohammad ‘Ali Amir-Moezzi, ‘Seul l’Homme de Dieu est Humain. Théologie et Anthropologie Mystique à Travers l’Exégèse Imamite Ancienne (Aspects de l’Imamologie duodécimaine)’, in *Arabica* XLV (2008), 193-214. Also published in English as Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, ‘Only the Man of God is Human: Theology and Mystical Anthropology According to Early Imami Exegesis (Aspects of Twelver Imamology IV)’, trans. David Bachrach, in *Shi‘ism*, ed. Etan Kohlberg (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 17-39.
- <sup>38</sup> For a tradition which uses all these verses see Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* I (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, n.d.), 96.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid, 94.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid, 98.
- <sup>41</sup> See Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn Babawayh al-Saduq, *al-Tawhid* (Qumm: Intisharat Jami‘-i-yi Mudarrisini Hawzihi-yi ‘Ilmiyyi, 1398 AH), ch. 8.
- <sup>42</sup> Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* I, 97.
- <sup>43</sup> Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi‘ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 44-55.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, 80.
- <sup>45</sup> See Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn Babawayh al-Saduq, *‘Uyun Akhbar al-Rida* I (Tehran: Nashr-i Jahan, 1378 AH (solar)), 200.
- <sup>46</sup> Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* IV, 32.
- <sup>47</sup> Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-Karim* IV (Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1366 AH (solar)), 416.
- <sup>48</sup> ‘Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamdani, *Tamhidat* (n.p., n.d.), principle 10, 61.
- <sup>49</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-Karim* III, 408-415.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid, 409.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid, 410-11.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, 412.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid, 414.
- <sup>54</sup> See Mirza Mahdi Isfahani, *Abwab al-Huda*, ed. Husayn Mufid (Tehran: Markaz Farhangi wa Intisharat-i Munir, 1387 AH (solar)), 135.
- <sup>55</sup> Mirza Mahdi Isfahani, *Asas Ma‘arif al-Qur‘an* (Mashhad: Astan Quds Radawi Library, manuscript), 317.
- <sup>56</sup> Hasan ‘Ali Murwarid, *Tanbihat Hawl al-Mabda‘ wa al-Ma‘ad* (Mashhad: Astan Quds Radawi, 1418 AH), 103.
- <sup>57</sup> Al-Saduq, *al-Tawhid*, 68. In fact, see throughout pages 31-82 for similar statements.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid, 80.
- <sup>59</sup> For more examples see Omid Ghaemaghani: ‘Numinous Vision, Messianic Encounters: Typological Representations in a Version of the Prophet’s *hadith al-ru‘ya* and in Visions and Dreams of the Hidden Imam’, in Özgen Felek & Alexander D. Knysh (eds.), *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).
- <sup>60</sup> This article is based on doctoral research completed under the supervision of Dr. Mohammad Baqer Hojjati of the Divinity and Philosophy Department, Science & Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. I have also benefitted from the advice of Dr. Mohammad Kazem Rahman Setayesh of the Faculty of Islamic Theology, University of Qum, Qum, Iran.