



# Knowledge of the Unseen and the Five <sup>1</sup>

*Mawlana 'Abdul Hakim Sharf Qadri*

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All praise to Allah, who knows the manifest and hidden. The knowledge of the unseen of the heavens and Earth are only for Him and by revelation, He grants news of the unseen to His Prophets as He wishes. Peace and salutations upon His revered Messenger sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam to whom we turn and his family who are epitomes of righteousness and his companions.

Allah gifted His Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam with innumerable qualities and distinctions; one of which is that He granted him more knowledge than all knowledge of the first and the last. He informed him of many hidden things and it is His habit that he unveils hidden things upon His Prophets and friends.

## **Definition of Ghayb**

Before presenting the evidences, it is important to define *Ghayb*. Imam Baydawi writes:

Ghayb is that which can be understood neither by the senses nor with the effort of the intellect. It has two forms:

1. That for which there is no proof. This is what is meant by the verse: And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures – none knows them but He [6:59].
2. That for which there is proof such as Allah and His attributes; the day of judgement and its occurrences and this is what is meant by the verse: Those who believe in the unseen [2:3].<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the verse: *Those who believe in the unseen*, Imam Baydawi writes:

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<sup>1</sup> The original book is available at <http://www.razaanw.org/modules/sunnibooks/item.php?itemid=105>

<sup>2</sup> Translation began on 1<sup>st</sup> Ramadan, 1430 AH

<sup>3</sup> Tafsir Baydawi, p.128

Linguistically, Iman means testifying. Sometimes, it also refers to certainty. Both meanings are appropriate in this verse.<sup>4</sup>

It is evident from these two excerpts that an ordinary believer knows that unseen for which there is proof because when Iman means testifying and testifying is a type of knowledge; then the verse *Those who believe in the unseen* means that Muslims know the unseen and can know that unseen for which there is proof and Allah informing them is the biggest proof for this.

Imam Zarqani writes:

Allah has made us responsible to believe in the unseen only because He sometimes opens the doors of the unseen upon us. This is what Imam Ghazzali has pointed towards in the marginalia of *Ihya al-'Ulum*.<sup>5</sup>

It must be pondered that if ordinary Muslims know the unseen, then what will be the level of the knowledge of the unseen of Allah's Prophets and friends and in particular the dear Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam?

### **Evidence from the Qur'an**

There are many verses of the Qur'an which prove that Allah bestowed His Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam with knowledge of many hidden things. We shall mention some of them:

1. Nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but Allah chooses of His Messengers whom He pleases.<sup>6</sup>
2. The Knower of the unseen, He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger.<sup>7</sup>
3. Oh Prophet, these are announcements relating to the unseen which We reveal to you.<sup>8</sup>
4. And this Prophet is not avid of the unseen.<sup>9</sup>
5. And taught you that knowledge of the unseen which you could not have known by yourself and Allah's grace on you is very great.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tafsir Baydawi, p.123-124

<sup>5</sup> Sharh Mawahib al-Ladunniya, v.7, p.229

<sup>6</sup> 3:179

<sup>7</sup> 72:26-27

<sup>8</sup> 11:49

<sup>9</sup> 81:24

<sup>10</sup> 4:113

6. The most affectionate taught the Qur'an to His beloved. He created the perfect man and taught him whatever had already happened and whatever will happen.<sup>11</sup>

### **Evidence from the hadith**

The hadith on this subject are numerous but for conciseness, we shall present only a few.

1. Mu'adh ibn Jabal radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that once, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was late for the Fajr prayer. He then arrived and after leading the prayer, he said: Indeed, I shall inform you what caused my delay today. I stood in prayer at night and did so for as long as Allah wished. During prayer, I felt tired and when I awoke, I was present before my Lord in the best manner. Allah said: Oh Muhammad, do you know what the closest angels are arguing about? I said: Oh my Lord, I do not know. I then saw that Allah placed His hand<sup>12</sup> of mercy between my shoulders until I felt its coolness in my chest. Then, everything became enlightened for me and I recognised it.<sup>13</sup>
2. Abu Bakr Siddiq radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam performed the morning prayer and stayed in his position through the time of Duha [between sunrise and meridian] and did so till he offered Dhuhr, 'Asr, Maghrib and 'Isha. During this time, he conversed with no one and he then stood and walked away. Abu Bakr radiyAllahu 'anhu asked about this and the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam replied: Yes, all occurrences in this world and the hereafter were presented before me.<sup>14</sup>
3. Tariq ibn Shihab narrates that he heard 'Umar radiyAllahu 'anhu say: The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam stood amongst us and informed us about events from the beginning of creation till the entrance of people into paradise and hell. Whoever remembered it, remembered it and whoever forgot it, forgot it.<sup>15</sup>
4. Hudhaifa radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam stood amongst us spoke and he did not leave out any occurrence till the day of judgment. Whoever remembered it, remembered it and whoever forgot it, forgot it. My companions learned of this. When I see something about which the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam had mentioned that I had forgotten, I recall it upon seeing it. Like that person who remembers a face when it is absent; when he sees it again, he remembers it.<sup>16</sup>
5. Abu Zayd radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam led us in the morning prayer. He then climbed the pulpit and sermonised until the

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<sup>11</sup> 55:1-4

<sup>12</sup> The hadith has the words *Yad* and *Anamil* for Allah. These are from the ambiguous whose reality our intellect cannot reach. Allah is free from a body and hands – Sharf Qadri

<sup>13</sup> Musnad Ahmad, v.5, p.243, Beirut

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Sahih Bukhari, v.1, p.453

<sup>16</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.2, p.390

time of Dhuhr for which he descended the pulpit and led us. He then ascended the pulpit and spoke till 'Asr for which he stepped down and led us. He then ascended the pulpit again and orated till sunset. Thus, he informed of past and future events. The most knowledgeable of us is whose memory in the strongest.<sup>17</sup>

6. Thawban radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Indeed Allah folded the Earth for me and I have seen its East and West.<sup>18</sup>
7. Anas ibn Malik radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that some people continuously questioned the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. So, one day he came and ascended the pulpit and said: Ask me. I will answer any question that you pose. Anas says that a man who was attributed to other than his father asked: Oh Prophet of Allah! Who is my father? The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Hudhafa.<sup>19</sup>

We say that if Allah had not gifted his Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam with copious knowledge, then the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam would not have issued an unconditional challenge that ask me whatever you wish.

8. The famous exegete, Sudai, says that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said that my nation was presented to me in form of idols made of sand as it was presented before Adam 'alaih salam. I was told which of them will believe in me and who will deny. These words reached the hypocrites so they said mockingly: Muhammad claims to know about people who are not yet born and whether they will affirm or deny him even though we are with him and he does not know about us. When this reached the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, he ascended the pulpit, praised Allah and said: What is the state of those people who object to my knowledge? Ask me about whatever you wish till the day of judgement, I will inform you. 'AbdAllah ibn Hudhafa stood and asked: Oh Prophet of Allah, who is my father? He replied: Your father is Hudhafa. Then 'Umar radiyAllahu 'anhu stood and said: Oh Prophet of Allah, we are satisfied that Allah is the Lord, Islam is the religion, the Qur'an is the leader and you are a Prophet. Forgive us. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Will you refrain? Will you refrain?<sup>20</sup>
9. Abu Musa Ash'ari radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was asked about things which displeased him. When people continued to question him about such things abundantly, he became angry and said: You can ask me whatever you wish. One man asked who his father is. He replied: Hudhafa. Another man stood and asked the same. He replied: Your father is Salim, the freed slave of Shayba.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.2, p.390

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Tafsir Khazin, v.1, p.382, Egypt

<sup>21</sup> Sahih Bukhari, v.1, p.19-20

10. Abu Hurayra radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that a wolf once came to a shepherd and took one of his goats. Upon this, the shepherd challenged the wolf and took back his goat which caused the wolf to climb a rock and stand on its tail. He said: Allah has given me sustenance but you took it from me. The shepherd replied: By Allah, I have not heard a wolf speak to this day. The wolf said: More amazing than this is that a man is present in Madina who gives you news of the past and future. Abu Hurayra says that this shepherd was a Jew who then came to the presence of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and relayed this event. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam affirmed it and he became a Muslim.<sup>22</sup>
11. Imam Qastalani writes that Imam Tabrani relates from 'AbdAllah ibn 'Umar radiyAllahu 'anhuma that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Indeed Allah raised the world for me, hence, I can see the world and whatever will occur in it till the day of judgement like I see the palm of my hand.<sup>23</sup>

Imam Zarqani writes in its commentary: Thus I have encompassed everything that is in this world.

He also writes: Since he is truthful and it is necessary to believe in his sayings, it is known that after his demise, whatever events transpire before people are from those that he saw when the world was presented to him.<sup>24</sup>

12. The companion, Sawad bin Qarib radiyAllahu 'anhu, recited poetry in the presence of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam amongst which is this line:

فاشهد ان الله لا رب غيره  
وانك مامون على كل غائب<sup>25</sup>

*I bear witness that there is not deity except Allah  
And indeed he was entrusted with all of the unseen*

It is evident that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam can only be entrusted with all of the unseen when he has knowledge of it too and if it is Shirk as the Wahabis claim, then the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam would have rebuked it strongly. He did not stop Sawad, hence, we learn that it is not Shirk.

13. ibn Hisham relates that in the year of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was circumambulating the Ka'bah when Fudala bin 'Umar Laythi intended to martyr him. When he neared, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam asked: Are you Fudala? He affirmed. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam asked: What were you planning in your heart? Nothing, I was remembering Allah, he responded. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam smiled

<sup>22</sup> Mishkat, p.541, Karachi

<sup>23</sup> Mawahib al-Ladunniya ma'a Sharh Zarqani, v.7, p.234, Egypt

<sup>24</sup> Sharh Mawahib, v.7, p.234

<sup>25</sup> Mukhtasar Sirat al-Rasul, p.69, 'AbdAllah bin Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahhab Najdi, Maktaba Salfiya Lahore

and said: Seek forgiveness from Allah. He then placed his blessed hand on Fudala's chest which gave it tranquillity. Fudala used to say that the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam had not lifted his hand from my chest that my state became such that nothing in creation was more beloved to me than the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Unseen Five and the Soul**

Allah says:

**Surely Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the hour, and He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs; and no one knows what he shall earn on the morrow; and no one knows in what land he shall die; surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.<sup>27</sup>**

Does this verse mean that only Allah has knowledge of these five things and that no one can know them? The reality is that these five things, rather, all knowledge of the unseen is specific to Allah. He bestows knowledge upon whomsoever He pleases and no one can prevent Him from imparting knowledge. He says:

**And they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases.<sup>28</sup>**

### **Knowledge of the Hour [Judgement Day]**

Allah says:

**The Knower of the unseen, He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger.<sup>29</sup>**

Imam Zamakhshari Mu'tazali writes:

Here, *Messenger* refers to those chosen by Allah, meaning he only informs of the specific unseen to those whom He elects as Prophets. Not all favoured and elect people are meant.

He continues:

This verse disproves miracles of non-Prophets because Allah only informs His Messengers of the unseen.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Fiqh al-Sira, p.363, Beirut, Dr. Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti; al-Sirat al-Nabawiyya, v.2, p.276, Imam 'Abdul Malik bin Hisham

<sup>27</sup> 31:34

<sup>28</sup> 2:255

<sup>29</sup> 72:26-27

<sup>30</sup> Tafsir al-Kash'shaf, v.4, p.172, Tehran

Since Zamakhshari is a Mu'tazali, his denial of miracles from non-Prophets is due to his I'tizal which has been refuted by many commentators.

Imam Razi writes:

Allah says: He does not reveal His secrets to any. Here, *Ghayb* is not the ordinary unseen, rather, we say that it refers to the time of Qiyamah. This is supported by the fact the verse comes after the verse: I do not know whether that with which you are threatened is near<sup>31</sup> which means that I do not know of the time of Qiyamah by myself. There is no proof in the verse which shows that Allah does not reveal the unseen upon anyone, rather, it means that Allah does not reveal this specific unseen [knowledge of the hour] to anyone except His chosen Messengers.

He continues:

If it is asked that if you have designated the meaning of this verse towards knowledge of the hour, then why does Allah say: Except to whom He chooses as a Messenger, even though He does not reveal this unseen upon any of His Messengers? We reply that near the hour, Allah will reveal it upon them and how can it not be when Allah says: The Day the heaven shall be rent asunder with clouds, and angels shall be sent down, descending in ranks [25:25]. Doubtless, the angels will get to know this knowledge with the commencement of Qiyamah.<sup>32</sup>

Where there is negation of *Dirayah* in some places, such as the verse: And no one knows what he shall earn on the morrow; and no one knows in what land he shall die; this means that no one can know with their own effort and exertion what he will do tomorrow or where he will die. This certainly does not mean that Allah cannot grant this knowledge to whom He wills.

Imam Badr al-Din 'Ayni explains the word *Dirayah*:

*Dirayah* refers to obtaining knowledge through ones own efforts.<sup>33</sup>

The earlier scholars differed as to whether the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was granted the knowledge of the time of Qiyamah. There are two schools:

1. Some scholars opine that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was not told of the exact time of Qiyamah but it is imperative to bear in mind that these scholars believed this according to their research and certainly not because [Allah forbid] they intended to denigrate the rank of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.

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<sup>31</sup> 72:25

<sup>32</sup> Tafsir al-Kabir, v.30, p.168, Egypt

<sup>33</sup> 'Umdat al-Qari, v.1, p.293, Beirut

2. The second school believes that Allah even bestowed the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam with the knowledge of when Qiyamah will happen. Neither school is the target of any sneer.

The Mu'tazila repudiate two things using the verse *The Knower of the unseen, He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger*. Firstly, the miracles of the saints and secondly that Allah does not bestow the knowledge of the unseen upon them. The conclusion of this is that *Ghayb* in this verse refers to the time of Qiyamah and it is permissible for Allah to inform His chosen Messengers of this.

Imam Taftazani refuted the Mu'tazila thusly:

Here, *Ghayb* is not for generality, rather it is to denote a specific unseen knowledge which, according to the context, is the time of Qiyamah. It is not far fetched that Allah informs some of His Messengers of this; whether they be angelic Messengers or human.<sup>34</sup>

Imam Sayyid Mahmud Alusi writes about the time of Qiyamah:

It is permissible to believe that Allah gave the exact knowledge of the time of Qiyamah to His beloved sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam but not such that his knowledge is equal to the knowledge of Allah. Due to some wisdom, He made it necessary for the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam to conceal this and this knowledge is specific to the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam though I have not seen any absolute evidence for this.<sup>35</sup>

Imam Qurtubi writes:

Whoever claims to know these five things without the intermediation of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam is a liar.<sup>36</sup>

The meaning of this is clear that whoever claims to know these five things with the intermediation of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam is truthful, otherwise, placing the restriction of attaining them without the intermediation of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam holds no significance.

Imam Suyuti writes:

Some scholars hold that the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam has been given the knowledge of even the five and he knows the time of Qiyamah and of the Soul but has been ordered to conceal this.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Sharh Maqasid, v.2, p.205, Lahore

<sup>35</sup> Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, v.21, p.101, Tehran

<sup>36</sup> Fath al-Bari, v.1, p.132, Egypt; 'Umdat al-Qari, v.1, p.290, Beirut; Mirqat, v.1, p.65, Multan; Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, v.21, p.100

<sup>37</sup> Khasa'is al-Kubra, v.2, p.95, Faisalabad



Imam ‘Abdul Baqi Zarqani states:

Apart from the keys the unseen five, Allah has bestowed the knowledge of other knowledge upon the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and it has been said that He bestowed the five too and forbidden him to inform others, as stated in *Khasa'is al-Kubra*.<sup>38</sup>

Imam ‘Abdul Ra’uf Manawi writes:

*No one knows these five things*, meaning no one can encompass them so as to know every minute detail regarding them. This is not contradictory of Allah informing His chosen people of several unseen things and even these five because they are a few parts. The denial of the Mu'tazila is without proof and stubbornness.<sup>39</sup>

The Ghawth of his era, ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Dabbagh, writes:

How can the knowledge of these five be hidden from the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam when it is not concealed upon leading saints. The saints cannot dispose of affairs in the universe until they know the knowledge of the five.<sup>40</sup>

Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi writes:

Does the verse 31:34 prove that only Allah knows the unseen five and they are specific to Him?

He answers:

These verses do not prove any specificity never mind particular specificity. Have you not seen that from these five things, some do not even point towards specificity. This is why Allah says: He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs. We do not accept that just because these things have been used to praise Allah, knowledge of them is specific to Him. Allah has praised Himself with the attributes of hearing and seeing and has done so for His creation too. He says: He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections<sup>41</sup>.

Secondly, if specificity is accepted, then the question remains: What is special about these five things that there is no way for Allah to reveal them?<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sharh Mawahib al-Ladunniya, v.1, p.10. Egypt

<sup>39</sup> Fayd al-Qadir, v.3, p.485, Beirut

<sup>40</sup> al-Ibriz, p.283, Egypt

<sup>41</sup> 16:78; 32:9; 67:23

<sup>42</sup> al-Dawlah al-Makkiya, p.310, Karachi

## Knowledge of Rainfall

Imam Jalal al-Din Suyuti has entitled a chapter in his *Khasa'is al-Kubra: The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam gave news of rain in Yemen*. He then wrote:

Imam Bayhaqi narrates through his chain from 'AbdAllah ibn 'Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhuma that it once rained and the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam came to us and told us: The angel deputised for rainfall came to me. After greeting me he informed me that he is taking the rain to a valley in Yemen called Sarih. Thereafter, a traveller came to me and upon being asked, told me that on the same day, rain fell in their land.

Imam Bayhaqi said that this is supported by the narration of Bakr ibn 'AbdAllah Mazani who said that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam told us: The angel of rainfall came to from a certain city where it had rained on a particular day. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam asked him: When will it rain in our city? On a certain day, he replied. Some hypocrites were in the presence of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and they remembered this dialogue. When they researched it, they found that it had actually rained on that day and thus, they became believers. They mentioned this event to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam who prayed for steadfastness in their belief.<sup>43</sup>

Imam Alusi Baghdadi writes:

Imam Qastalani said that when Allah orders the angel of rainfall to go to a certain city, those angels get to know this and Allah informs from His creation whom He wills about the knowledge of rainfall.<sup>44</sup>

Allah mentions the story of Yusuf 'alaihi salam thusly:

**He said: You shall sow for seven years continuously, then what you reap leave it in its ear except a little of which you eat. Then there shall come after that seven years of hardship which shall eat away all that you have beforehand laid up in store for them, except a little of what you shall have preserved. Then there will come after that a year in which people shall have rain and in which they shall press (oil).<sup>45</sup>**

Notice how Yusuf 'alaihi salam gave news of abundance and surplus after famine. All of this happened by Allah informing him of it.

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<sup>43</sup> Khasa'is al-Kubra, v.2, p.103, Faisalabad

<sup>44</sup> Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, v.21, p.100, Tehran

<sup>45</sup> 12:47-49

## Knowledge of what is in the Womb

1. Umm Fadl bint Harith radiyAllahu 'anha narrates that she went to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and asked: Oh Prophet of Allah, I saw a strange dream last night. When she explained what she had seen, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: You have seen something very good. It means that Fatima [the daughter of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam] will give birth to a boy whom you will nurture. Umm Fadl said that this is what happened when Husayn radiyAllahu 'anhu was born. According to what the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam had foretold, he was nurtured by me [Imam Bayhaqi narrated this in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah*].<sup>46</sup>
2. Abu Nu'aym narrates through his own chain from ibn 'Abbas radiyAllahu 'anhuma that Umm Fadl passed by the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said to her: There is a boy in your womb. When he is born, bring him to me. She says that when the boy was born, I took him to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam who proclaimed the adhan in his right ear and takbir in his left and gifted him his blessed saliva as medicine and named him 'AbdAllah. He then said: Take the father of the Khulafa. Umm Fadl told 'Abbas of this who then came to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: What you have been informed of is true; he is the father of the Khulafa. From him will be Safah, Mahdi and the one who leads 'Isa ibn Maryam in prayer.<sup>47</sup>
3. Imam Muhammad narrates from 'Aisha radiyAllahu 'anhu that Abu Bakr radiyAllahu 'anhu said to her: This belongs to the heirs and they are your two brothers and two sisters. Divide it between you according to the Qur'an. 'Aisha asked: Father, by Allah, I would not take of it even if it is this much. Asma' is my only sister, who is the other? He replied: The daughter of Kharja [his wife] because I feel there is a girl in her womb. Hence, it so happened that a girl was born.<sup>48</sup>
4. Hudhaifa bin Asyad narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: The seed stays in the womb for 40-45 days and then an angel comes to it and says: Oh Lord, is this child privileged or not? It is written according to the order and the angel then asks: Is it a male or female? This too is written where after its actions, influence, age and sustenance are written. The scrolls are then tied after which no change can occur in them.<sup>49</sup>

All this knowledge is given by Allah to His Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, Abu Bakr radiyAllahu 'anhu and the angel responsible for the womb. Modern medicine has advanced so much in this age that experts can determine the gender of the child through

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<sup>46</sup> Mishkat al-Masabih, p.572, Karachi

<sup>47</sup> Mawahib al-Ladunniya ma'a Sharh, v.7, p.254

<sup>48</sup> Muwatta Imam Muhammad, p.349-350, Karachi

<sup>49</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.2, p.333

apparatus. Not just this, they can tell if the child is properly formed and see its features. If Allah grants this knowledge to His chosen people, then to deem it impossible in this day and age is erroneous.

### **Knowledge of what will happen tomorrow**

The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam gave much news of future events. Details of these can be seen in *al-Shifa'*, *Mawahib al-Ladunniya* and other books of Sira. We shall mention only a few things here that are connected with news of the future.

1. Anas ibn Malik radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam placed his hands on the ground and said: Such and such an infidel will die here and another here. Wherever the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam had indicated, no infidel died at any other place than it.<sup>50</sup>

Look how accurately the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam gave news of the future and it transpired exactly how he told it.

Imam Nawawi commentates on this hadith:

This hadith mentions two miracles one of which is wherever the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam had specified, no infidel leader fell at even a slightly different place.<sup>51</sup>

2. Salma ibn Akwa' narrates that 'Ali radiyAllahu 'anhu was left behind during Khaybar due to eye pain. He thought that he would be left further behind and thus he met with the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. The night before the conquest, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said that tomorrow, I will give the flag to that person or that person will hold the flag [the narrator is uncertain] who is beloved to Allah and His Prophet or who loves Allah and His Prophet. Allah will grant victory at his hands. Suddenly, we saw 'Ali radiyAllahu 'anhu even though we did not expect his arrival. The people said: Here is 'Ali and then the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam gifted the flag to him and Allah granted victory through him.<sup>52</sup>
3. Abu Tufayl 'Amir ibn Wathila narrates that Mu'adh radiyAllahu 'anhu said that we left for Tabuk with the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Insha' Allah, we will reach the spring of Tabuk tomorrow and you shall reach it at the time of Duha. Whoever reaches it must not touch its water before my arrival.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.2, p.102

<sup>51</sup> Sharh Muslim, v.2, p.102

<sup>52</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.2, p.279

<sup>53</sup> Musnad Ahmad, v.5, p.237

4. ‘AbdAllah ibn Rawaha radiyAllahu ‘anhu said in his poetry: The Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam showed us the path when we were wondering like blind people. Our hearts are certain that whatever the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam said will surely come true.<sup>54</sup>

Commentating on this poetry, Imam Qastalani writes:

Our hearts are certain that whatever news of the unseen the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam gave will surely come true.<sup>55</sup>

When ‘Abdul Rahman ibn Rawaha recited these verses in the presence of the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam, the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam said:

Your brother is neither speaking incorrectly nor obscenely.<sup>56</sup>

Hence, the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam verified the words of ‘AbdAllah ibn Rawaha that whatever news of the unseen he foretells, they will indeed occur. These are news of the future.

5. Hassan ibn Thabit radiyAllahu ‘anhu says:

نبي يرى ما لا يرى الناس حوله  
ويتلو كتاب الله في كل مشهد  
فان قال في يوم مقالة غائب  
فتصديقها في ضحوة اليوم او غد<sup>57</sup>

*The Prophet sees that around him [angels etc.] which others do not  
And he recites the book of Allah at every place  
If he says something about the unseen on any day  
It is verified on the same day before the time of Duha*

### **Knowledge of where one will die**

1. We have mentioned the narration from Sahih Muslim which mentions the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam foretelling the place of death of the idolaters. Wherever he placed his blessed hand, the mentioned infidel died in exactly the same place.<sup>58</sup>
2. The Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam said to the Ansar: My life and demise will be with you.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Sahih Bukhari, v.1, p.155

<sup>55</sup> Irshad al-Sari Sharh Bukhari, v.2, p.330, Beirut

<sup>56</sup> ‘Umdat al-Qari, v.7, p.214

<sup>57</sup> Mawahib al-Ladunniya Sharh Zarqani, v.7, p.230

<sup>58</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.2, p.102

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, v.2, p.103

This hadith unequivocally states that Allah had given the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam knowledge that his luminous shrine will be in Madina [may Allah increase its nobility].

Imam Nawawi commentates on this hadith thusly:

Meaning I will spend my life with you and my demise will also happen near you. This is from the miracles of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.<sup>60</sup>

3. Imam Qastalani writes: One incident from the knowledge of the unseen of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam is that he foretold that Imam Husayn radiyAllahu 'anhu will be martyred in Tuf. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam also took dust from his blessed hands and said that in this land will be Imam Husayn's final resting place.

This hadith has been narrated by Baghawi in *Kabir* and Hafidh Abu'l Qasim 'AbdAllah ibn Muhammad in his *Mu'jam* from Anas ibn Malik that the angel in charge of rainfall sought permission from Allah to visit the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and Allah granted it. That day, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam was at the residence of Umm Salama radiyAllahu 'anha and he said to her: Oh Umm Salama, keep an eye on the door lest someone disturb us. Hence, she stood at door when suddenly Imam Husayn radiyAllahu 'anhu arrived and without being stopped, entered and came to the Prophet. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam kissed Husayn with great affection so the angel asked: Is he beloved to you? The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam affirmed upon which the angel said: Indeed your nation will martyr him and if you wish, I shall show you the place of martyrdom. Hence, he did so and bought sand or red coloured dust which Umm Salama wrapped in a cloth. Thabit says we used to call this place Karbala.<sup>61</sup>

Imam Hafidh Abu Hatim Muhammad ibn Hibban narrated it in his *Sahih* and Imam Zarqani explains his words *Malik al-Qatar* thusly:

Malik al-Qatar is Israfil 'alaihis salam who is appointed upon rainfall and vegetation. The same is related from Imam Bayhaqi and others from 'Abdul Rahman ibn Sabit. Imam Ahmad and ibn As'ad relate it from 'Ali and Tabrani does so from 'Aisha radiyAllahu 'anha that it refers to Israfil 'alaihis salam.<sup>62</sup>

4. Mu'adh ibn Jabal radiyAllahu 'anhu narrates that when the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam sent him to Yemen, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam came out with him and when he had finished advising him, he said: Oh Mu'adh,

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<sup>60</sup> Sharh Muslim, v.2, p.103

<sup>61</sup> Mawahib al-Ladunniya Sharh Zarqani, v.7, p.250

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

perhaps we will not meet after this year and it could be that you will pass by my mosque and my grave.<sup>63</sup>

This hadith explicitly shows that the blessed grave of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam will be near his mosque in Madina and that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam knew about his demise.

5. Jabir ibn 'AbdAllah radiyAllahu 'anhuma narrates that during the battle of Uhud, my father called me in the night and said: I can only see that I will be first to be martyred from the companions of the Prophet and apart from the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, you are the dearest to me amongst those I leave behind. I have a debt which you must repay and take good care of your sisters. Jabir said: When morning came, he was the first to be martyred.<sup>64</sup>

Notice how a companion of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam foretold the news of his martyrdom and how it transpired as he had said.

### **Knowledge of the Soul**

Like there is disagreement about Qiyamah, so too is there on this issue. A large group has proven that by the bestowment of Allah, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam has knowledge of the Soul too.

1. Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi writes: Thirdly, even the common philosophers and theologians know about the Soul. Hence, for the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam to deny this knowledge for himself is against his status and will result in people denying him. Moreover, the issue of not knowing about the Soul is contemptible for even a common man. So, how can it be that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, who is more knowledgeable than any other, does not know about it?

Fourthly, Allah says about the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam: The most compassionate taught the Qur'an<sup>65</sup> and We taught you that which you knew not and the grace of Allah upon you is great<sup>66</sup>. He also said: Supplicate to Allah that Oh my Lord, increase me in knowledge<sup>67</sup>. About the attribute of the Qur'an, it says: The knowledge of all wet and dry is in the Qur'an<sup>68</sup>. The personality who holds these ranks, how can it be envisaged that he does not have knowledge of the Soul.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Musnad Ahmad, v.5, p.235

<sup>64</sup> Sahih Bukhari, v.1, p.180

<sup>65</sup> 55:1-2

<sup>66</sup> 4:113

<sup>67</sup> 20:114

<sup>68</sup> 6:59

<sup>69</sup> Tafsir al-Kabir, v.21, p.37, Egypt

2. Imam Ghazzali writes: As for the Soul which is the origin and due to whose depravity the whole body becomes corrupt; it is from the secrets of Allah. This is why the intellect cannot comprehend it, rather, knowledge of it is through a light which is higher and more eminent than the intellect. This light shines only in the realm of Prophethood and sainthood and its relationship with the intellect is like the intellects relationship with the imagination and thought.
3. Imam Badr al-Din ‘Ayni writes: I say that the rank of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam is higher than this that he does not have knowledge of the Soul. How can it be when he is the beloved of Allah and the leader of creation and Allah has announced His favour upon him by saying: We taught you all that which you knew not and the grace of Allah upon you is great [4:113].

Most scholars said there is neither any verse of the Qur’an which says it impossible to have knowledge of the Soul nor any verse that denies this knowledge for the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.<sup>70</sup>

### **Sayings of scholars regarding knowledge of the unseen**

Imam Qadi ‘Iyad writes:

It has been said that a Prophet and a Messenger are different in one way because they both share the quality of Prophethood which means knowing the unseen.<sup>71</sup>

He further writes:

And from the miracles of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam is that he is aware of *ma kan wa ma yakun* meaning the unseen of the past and future. There are numerous hadith on this matter which are an ocean whose depth cannot be imagined. It is from his miracles that we know definitely and has reached us through mass transmission because its reporters are many and these hadith all point towards the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam being aware of the unseen.<sup>72</sup>

Imam Ghazzali writes about the specialities of Prophethood:

The fourth attribute of Prophethood is that a Prophet gets to know the unseen of the future whilst asleep or awake because through this attribute, he reads the sacred tablet and whatever unseen is written on the tablet, he sees it.

He further writes:

When the interior is pure, the eyes of the heart begin to see events of the future such as the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam seeing the entry into Makkah in

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<sup>70</sup> ‘Umdat al-Qari, v.2, p.201, Beirut

<sup>71</sup> al-Shifa’, v.1, p.161, Multan

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, v.1, p.221, Multan



his dream up to the point that the verse: Truly did Allah fulfil the vision for His Messenger [48:27] was revealed.<sup>73</sup>

Imam Baghawi narrates from ibn Kisan the exegesis of the verse: خلق الانسان علمه البيان:

*Insan* in this verse refers to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and *Bayan* refers to *ma kan wa ma yakun*, meaning the exposition of all that has happened and all that will happen. That is, Allah gave the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam knowledge of all that has happened and all that will happen because the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam has explained news of the entire first and the last and of Qiyamah.<sup>74</sup>

Imam Qastalani writes:

The Prophet's knowledge of the unseen was so well known amongst the companions and even the hypocrites and infidels that they would fear saying anything to each other and would say: Be quiet, by Allah, even if there is no one to inform the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, the stones of the valleys of Makkah will tell him what we speak.<sup>75</sup>

Imam Zarqani writes:

According to Qadi 'Iyad, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam being aware of the unseen is mass transmitted and they all point to this fact.<sup>76</sup>

Imam ibn al-Haj Makki writes:

There is no difference in the life and demise of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam in that he continues to be a witness upon his nation and their intentions, thoughts and states. All of these matters are clear to him and none of them are hidden.<sup>77</sup>

Commentating on the verse: Guide us along the straight path<sup>78</sup>, Imam Baydawi writes:

Guidance from Allah comes in innumerable forms but they can be categorised. The fourth type of guidance is that Allah reveals secrets upon their hearts through revelation and inspiration and true dreams. He makes them witness things in their reality and this is specific to Prophets and saints. Only they can attain this and this is what is meant by the verse: These are they whom Allah guided [6:90].<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ihya al-'Ulum al-Din, v.4, p.194, Beirut

<sup>74</sup> Ma'alim al-Tanzil, v.7, p.2, Egypt; Khazin, v.7, p.2

<sup>75</sup> Mawahib al-Ladunniya ma'a Sharh Zarqani, v.7, p.229

<sup>76</sup> Sharh Zarqani 'ala al-Mawahib, v.7, p.228

<sup>77</sup> al-Madkhal, v.1, p.252, Beirut; al-Mawahib al-Ladunniya, v.8, p.349

<sup>78</sup> 1:6

<sup>79</sup> Tafsir Baydawi, p.9-10, Deoband

Imam ibn Hajar ‘Asqalani writes:

The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam has an attribute through which he encompasses the unseen future and reads the sacred tablet. Similar to the attribute by which a wise man is distinguished from a fool. These are the flawless attributes that are proven for the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.<sup>80</sup>

Imam ‘Ali Qari writes:

When a purified Soul becomes enlightened and its illumination increases due to its disinclination from the material world; and similarly, when the mirror of the heart is polished free from the rust of foulness; steadfastness upon good actions and knowledge and the continuous showering of the mercies of Allah strengthen the illumination [of the Soul]. This causes the heart to broaden and at this point, the writing of the sacred tablet begins to reflect on this heart. Man becomes aware of the unseen and begins disposing of affairs in the world. Moreover, if Allah Himself enlightens him which is the highest and most noble gift, then why will other things not become apparent to him?<sup>81</sup>

He writes concerning the hadith: I got to know everything in the heavens and the Earth:

Imam ibn Hajar said that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam knows the whole universe and everything that is in the heavens and above as proven from the occasion of Mi'raj. Similarly, he has knowledge of everything that is in the seven worlds as proven from the hadith that all the worlds rest upon a fish and an ox.<sup>82</sup>

He also writes regarding the verse of Imam Busiri's *Qasida Burdah*: And amongst your knowledge is that of the tablet and the pen:

The tablet and the pen are but one line from the lines of knowledge of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and one river from the oceans of his knowledge.<sup>83</sup>

Shaykh ‘Abdul Haq Dihlawi writes concerning the hadith: I got to know everything in the heavens and the Earth:

This means that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam has knowledge of all partial and complete knowledge and he has encompassed them.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Fath al-Bari, v.16, p.21, Egypt

<sup>81</sup> Mirqat al-Mafatih Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih, v.1, p.62, Multan

<sup>82</sup> Mirqat al-Mafatih Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih, v.2, p.210, Multan

<sup>83</sup> al-Zubdat al-‘Umdah, p.117, Sindh

<sup>84</sup> Ashi'at al-Lum'at, v.1, p.333, Sikkhar

Imam Alusi Baghdadi writes:

The knowledge of Qiyamah is the most hidden from the mentioned things and Allah has informed the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam of this time partially but his knowledge compared to others is perfect and complete. As for his saying: I was sent in the time when I and Qiyamah are like this [indicating towards two fingers]. The most this proves is that he has some knowledge of the time of Qiyamah and I do not believe that some angels have more knowledge of Qiyamah than the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. This is supported by Hamidi in his *Nawadir* who reports with his own chain from Imam Sha'bi that 'Isa ibn Maryam asked Jibril 'alaihi salam about the time of Qiyamah. Jibril waved his wings and said: The one being asked does not know more than the questioner; which means their knowledge is equal and the perfect knowledge of Qiyamah is with Allah alone and He has granted others brief knowledge of it such as its signs. It is possible that Allah gives perfect knowledge of this to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam at the onset of Qiyamah but not such that his knowledge becomes the same as Allah. Allah ordered the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam to conceal this knowledge due to some wisdom and it is from his specialities though I have seen no definitive evidence for this.<sup>85</sup>

### **Qadi Shawkani**

It must be remembered that Qadi Shawkani is a personality revered by all Ghayr Muqallids of the subcontinent. He writes regarding the verse: Nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen [3:179]:

If it is asked that when it is proven from the Qur'an that Allah bestows upon His Messengers as much knowledge of the unseen as He wishes, then is it permitted for the Messenger to convey this knowledge of the unseen which Allah has revealed to him to some members of his nation? I say, yes, there is nothing preventing this and it is proven from the sunnah of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. [Qadi Shawkani then presents numerous hadith that mention the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam giving news of the unseen and then writes:] When this is proven, then there is nothing prohibiting Allah from choosing pious people for this nation to reveal the unseen to that he revealed upon His Prophet. The Prophet has specified some persons of his nation too and they have informed others. This is from the miracles of the pious and are all through the intermediation of the Prophet and the blessings of Allah.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, v.21, p.100, Tehran

<sup>86</sup> Fath al-Qadir, v.5, p.312, Beirut

## Deobandi creed regarding Knowledge of the Unseen

Khalil Ahmad Anbethwi writes:

We believe with the heart and speak with the tongue that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam has been given more knowledge than the whole of creation regarding the intrinsic, attributes and rulings and also the utmost reality and hidden secrets that no creation could reach; neither an angel nor a Prophet. And indeed he was given the knowledge of the first and last and the grace of Allah is upon him but this does not necessitate that he has knowledge of all the particulars of every event in every age.

A few lines later, he writes:

Yes, it is not damaging whatsoever if he does not have knowledge of irrelevant details due to not paying attention to them when it is proven that he has more knowledge than any creation regarding those aspects that are connected with his task.<sup>87</sup>

The truth reveals itself and need not be forced.

Even Khalil Anbethwi is accepting in clear words that the knowledge of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam is more than the whole of creation and that he sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam knows the utmost realities and hidden secrets [of the unseen] and not knowing some minor events is due to lack of attention and this does not divert from him being the most knowledgeable.

Note that the book *al-Muhannad* has been endorsed by all leading Deobandi scholars that number over twenty, some of whom are: Mahmud Hasan, Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi and Mufti KifayatAllah.

### Clarification of a misconception

We know that Allah bestowed His Prophets and especially the final Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam with knowledge of the unseen as we have elucidated. There are many Qur'anic verses and hadith and sayings of the predecessors that establish this but on the other hand, Allah has denied knowledge of the unseen for anyone but Himself, as the following verses show:

**Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah.**<sup>88</sup>

**To Allah do belong the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth and to Him goes back every affair.**<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> al-Muhannad, p.24-25, Deoband

<sup>88</sup> 27:65

<sup>89</sup> 11:123

**And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures, none knows them but He.**<sup>90</sup>

There are many other verses to this effect.

### **Hadith**

It is in the hadith of Jibril 'alaihi salam:

The time of Qiyamah is from those five things which only Allah knows, then the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam recited the verse: Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah [31:34].<sup>91</sup>

‘Aisha radiyAllahu 'anha said:

Whoever says the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam used to give news of what will happen tomorrow, he has told a great lie against Allah because He says: Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah [27:65].<sup>92</sup>

No believer would dare deny any verse that affirms or negates knowledge of the unseen. We thank Allah that we – Ahlu’s Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah – have conviction in all verses and in reality, these verses [of affirmation and negation] are not contradictory because the word of Allah is free from this. Allah says:

**Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.**<sup>93</sup>

To diffuse the apparent contradiction between verses of affirmation and negating regarding knowledge of the unseen, Sayyid Yusuf Hashim Rifa’i, who is from the scholars of Kuwait, writes:

See, on one hand, our Lord has clearly negated knowledge of the unseen for His creation as He says: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah and in other verses, He has affirmed knowledge of the unseen for His Messengers wherein there is room for doubt such as: Except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger. All these verses are true and having faith in them is necessary and denying any of them is to deny the Qur’an. Hence, whoever totally denies and does not believe in knowledge of the unseen is a denier of the verses of affirmation and whoever completely affirms and does not deny at all is a denier of the verses of negation. A believer is someone who believes in all verses and does

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<sup>90</sup> 6:59

<sup>91</sup> Sahih Muslim, v.1, p.29

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, v.1, p.98

<sup>93</sup> 4:82

not attempt to take the path of differentiating so as to affirm some and deny others.<sup>94</sup>

Imam ibn Hajar Makki writes:

Whatever I have written in the exegesis of this verse has been expounded upon by Imam Nawawi in his fatawa. He says the meaning of the verse is that to encompass all knowledge and know it by oneself intrinsically is not proven for anyone but Allah and as for miracles, they are bestowed upon them by Allah telling them.<sup>95</sup>

He also writes:

This verse does not conflict with the verse: Of them there are some whose story We have related to you, and some whose story We have not related to you [40:78]. Firstly because Allah only related stories about those Prophets who were mentioned to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam and secondly because after the revelation of this verse, Allah mentioned all the Prophets to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam.<sup>96</sup>

Imam Shihab al-Din Khafaji writes:

This is not contradictory to those verses that prove that only Allah knows the unseen. The verse: Had I known the unseen I would have had much of good [7:188] is negating knowledge without a means. However, it is an accepted point that by Allah informing him, the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam knows the unseen which is proven by the verse: He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger. Allah does not grant perfect knowledge of His unseen to anyone except His chosen Messengers.

ibn 'AtaAllah Iskandari writes in *Lata'if al-Minan* that it is not extraordinary for a person to know the unseen of Allah through his visual perception. This is proven by the hadith: Fear the perception of a believer because he sees with the light of Allah. This is the meaning of the hadith of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam: I become his eyes with which he sees because if Allah becomes someone's eyes, it is not improbable for him to know the unseen.<sup>97</sup>

Imam Zarqani has written exactly the same.<sup>98</sup>

Imam Mahmud ibn Isma'il, better known as Qadi Samawana, writes:

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<sup>94</sup> Adilla Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, p.30-31, Kuwait

<sup>95</sup> Fatawa Hadithiya, p.268, Egypt

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p.153

<sup>97</sup> Nasim al-Riyad Sharh Shifa', v.3, p.150, Beirut

<sup>98</sup> Zarqani Sharh Mawahib, v.7, p.228-229

These verses are reconciled because the knowledge that is negated is that which is personal or that definitive knowledge is denied, not speculative. This is supported by the verse: Will You place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood [2:30] because this is unseen and the angels said it due to their opinion or by Allah telling them. Hence, if someone claims to know without being bestowed, he will be called an infidel and if someone claims to know it through inspiration whilst asleep or awake, he will not be deemed an infidel because there is no clash between the verse and his claim as has been stated in the reconciliation earlier.<sup>99</sup>

These excerpts prove that knowledge that is negated is personal knowledge that is attained without a means or without being told. However, knowledge of the unseen that is bestowed by Allah is not negated.

Imam Mahmud Alusi writes:

And it is permitted for Allah to inform His chosen people of any of these five unseen and to grant them some level of knowledge of them. The knowledge that is specific to Allah is that which encompasses everything in every detail. There is a hadith in *Manawi Kabir*, commentary of *Jami' Saghir* that says: There are five things that only Allah knows. This refers to that knowledge that is all encompassing and includes all partial and complete details, this is only proven for Allah and no one but Him. This is not contrary to Allah informing His chosen people of some of the unseen and even some of the unseen five. As for the denial of the Mu'tazila, it is stubbornness [Imam Manawi]. From this elucidation, the hadith that mention knowledge of the unseen is specific to Allah are reconciled. For hadith that prove the opposite – that the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam gave news of the unseen – study of *Shifa'* and *Mawahib al-Ladunniya* is useful.<sup>100</sup>

### **The Knowledge of Allah and creation are not equal**

What has been expounded earlier gives an idea of the breadth of the Prophet's knowledge. Allah granted the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam the knowledge of the first and last up to the point that in a single sitting, he gave news from the beginning of creation to the entry of people into heaven and hell. In spite of this, the knowledge of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam is not equal to the knowledge of Allah, rather, the knowledge of the whole of creation is not equal to it, rather, the reality is that there is not even a possibility of it being equal.

Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi discussed the issue of whether the knowledge of Allah and that of His creation is equal. He writes:

From this research, it is clear that no Muslim can even think that if the knowledge of the whole of creation is on one side, it can be equal to the knowledge of Allah.

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<sup>99</sup> Jami' al-Fusul, v.2, p.220, Egypt

<sup>100</sup> Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, v.21, p.100, Tehran

Can the blind not see that there are many differences between the knowledge of Allah and the knowledge of the Prophet [and the whole of creation]?

1. His knowledge is personal and innate, that of His creation is bestowed.
2. Knowledge is necessary for Allah and possible for His creation.
3. His knowledge is beginningless and endless, eternal, it has and will always exist and real whereas the knowledge of creation has a beginning because all creation has a beginning and the rule is that an attribute cannot exist before that to which it is attributed.
4. His knowledge is not created, the knowledge of creation is created.
5. His knowledge is not governed, the knowledge of creation is governed and constrained.
6. It is necessary for His knowledge to always exist, the knowledge of creation can be destroyed.
7. It is impossible for His knowledge to undergo change, the knowledge of creation is changing.<sup>101</sup>

The idea of equality will only inflict that person who is ignorant of the vastness of the knowledge of Allah. The reality is that the comparison of the knowledge of the whole of creation to the knowledge of Allah is not even like a drop in the seven oceans. Even if this comparison is made, it is only to allow comprehension, otherwise a drop and an ocean are both limited and comparison between them is a comparison of two limited entities whereas there can be no such comparison between the knowledge of Allah and His creation because the knowledge of creation is limited and the knowledge of Allah is unlimited. The relationship between them is like the relationship between limited and unlimited.

Hafidh Abu 'AbdAllah Hakim Nishapuri narrates from Ubai ibn Ka'b radiyAllahu 'anhu that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said:

When Musa 'alaihi salam met Khidr 'alaihi salam, a bird came and dipped its beak in water. Khidr 'alaihi salam said to Musa 'alaihi salam: Notice what this bird is saying. Musa 'alaihi salam asked: What is it saying? Khidr 'alaihi salam replied: This bird is saying: Oh Khidr, yours and Musa's knowledge compared to the knowledge of Allah is like my taking some of this water with my beak.

This hadith is Sahih according to the conditions of Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim but they did not narrate it.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> al-Dawlah al-Makkiya, p.212, Karachi

<sup>102</sup> Mustadrak Hakim, v.2, p.369



Imam Khafaji replicates what Imam Tayyibi [commentator of Mishkat] wrote thusly:

There is no limit to the knowledge of Allah. Whatever unseen is in the heavens and the Earth and whatever the angels reveal and conceal is all but a drop of His knowledge.<sup>103</sup>

Mawlana ‘Abdul Hakim Siyalkoti wrote the same.<sup>104</sup>

Mawlana Siyalkoti also writes:

It is narrated that Allah created one hundred thousands lanterns that were hanged from the ‘Arsh [throne]. Their vastness is such that the whole sky and Earth and whatever is in them and heaven and hell are in only one lantern and Allah knows what is in the rest of them. Ka’b al-Ahbar said: Allah knows how many worlds there are. Nobody knows the armies of your Lord apart from Himself.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusion

It is the creed of Ahlu’s Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah that Allah granted the knowledge of *ma kan wa ma yakun* [all that has happened and all that will happen] to His Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam gradually. The knowledge of the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam encompasses everything that has happened and will happen from the beginning of creation till people entering heaven and hell. This has been proven from the Qur’an, hadith and sayings of the predecessors earlier. As the revelation of the Qur’an continued, so too did his knowledge until it became complete. Whoever denies this must provide absolute evidence that after the revelation of the whole Qur’an, there is something that the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam does not know. This is the creed of the Imam of Ahlu’s Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi. Numerous jurists, hadith masters, Qur’anic exegetes and gnostics are united in this belief.

Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi writes:

After all these consensuses, our scholars disagreed whether the innumerable knowledge of the unseen granted by Allah to the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam include the knowledge from the first day to the last for the whole universe as is the meaning of various verses and hadith; or is there specificity in it. Many *Ahl al-Dhahir* [people who take apparent meanings] have leant towards specificity. Some of them said knowledge the ambiguous, some said of the five and many said of the Hour [Day of Judgement]. The *Ahl al-Batin* [who consider inner meanings, Sufis], and following them, many *Ahl al-Dhahir*, have opined that the verses and hadith are general. It is possible that it includes the knowledge of *ma kan wa ma yakun* [from beginning of creation till Qiyamah] as explained

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<sup>103</sup> ‘Inayat al-Qadi, v.2, p.129, Beirut

<sup>104</sup> Hashiya Tafsir Baydawi, p.301, Quetta

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p.59

above. Whether knowledge of the Hour is included or not, it is but a small portion of the knowledge of Allah.

He then writes:

This is the issue that our scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah have discussed and it is similar to the differences between Ash'aris and Maturidis where there is no scorn upon one another. Yes, our adopted position is that which is the creed of most gnostics and numerous scholars and details of verses, hadith and sayings of the scholars can be found in my monographs *Anba' al-Mustafa* and *al-Lu'lu' al-Maknun fi 'Ilm al-Bashir ma Kan wa ma Yakun*.<sup>106</sup>

### **Causes of the disagreement**

The actual reason for disagreement on this matter is due to writings such as this of Isma'il Dihlawi:

Whoever says that a Messenger or an Imam or an elder knew the unseen but did not claim it respect for the Shari'ah, such a person is a big liar. Rather, no one knows the unseen apart from Allah.<sup>107</sup>

He did not pay attention to all the verses and hadith some of which we have mentioned earlier.

Khalil Ahmad Anbethwi wrote:

The end result: One should ponder that by looking at the state of Shaytan and the angel of death, and proving [similar] knowledge that encompasses the Earth to the Pride of the world *sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam* without any documentary evidence and merely by wrong analogy – if this is not polytheism, then which part of belief is this?

Because such extensive [knowledge] for the angel of death and Shaytan is proved from absolute evidence [*nusus-e-qat'iyah*]. Where is any such absolute evidence to prove the extensiveness of the knowledge of the Pride of the world *sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam* which refutes all absolute documents in order to prove one polytheistic belief?<sup>108</sup>

The meaning of this passage is that the knowledge of Shaytan [Allah forbid] is greater than the knowledge of the Prophet *sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam* because he wrote that the knowledge of Shaytan encompasses the Earth and this is proven from the texts and the knowledge of the Prophet *sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam* is not like this. Rather, to attribute knowledge that encompasses the Earth to the Prophet *sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam* is Shirk

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<sup>106</sup> Khalis al-I'tiqad, p.26-27, Lahore

<sup>107</sup> Taqwiyat al-Iman, p.26, Delhi

<sup>108</sup> Barahin-e-Qati'ah, p.55, Deoband

and against the texts. How astonishing that if knowledge that encompasses the Earth is attributed to the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, it will be Shirk and if Anbethwi attributes the same knowledge to the accursed Shaytan, it is not only not Shirk but actually proven from the texts [we seek the refuge of Allah].

Further, Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi writes:

And then, if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen to be possessed by the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam, as Zayd says, then it remains to be asked, which one he refers to. Is it only a part of it or complete; if he refers to part, then what is extraordinary about the Prophet in possessing it? Such knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by all and sundry (Zayd, Amr); even infants, lunatics and all the animals and quadrupeds.<sup>109</sup>

These passages and others like them were the cause for disagreement in the Subcontinent. The scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah rose up to protect the rights of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam which was a necessary action upon them and strongly refuted such notions. Amongst them was Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi who wrote numerous books to protect the sanctity of divinity and the status of the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. He thoroughly refuted those who insulted the sanctity of divinity and the rank of Prophethood and this is the reason why the insulters have abhorrence towards him and they invent lies against him which his personality is free from.

### **The Awliya [saints] and Knowledge of the unseen**

Imam ibn Hajar Makki was asked about a person who says that a believer knows the unseen. Will he be deemed an infidel due to verse: Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah? The Imam replied that because his speech is ambiguous, he will not be deemed an infidel unconditionally. He writes:

When a person says that a believer knows the unseen, he will be asked for clarification and if he says my words mean that Allah grants knowledge of some unseen to His friends, then his words will be accepted because they are valid intellectually ['aqlan] and are proven to be true through transmission [naqlan]. This is from the miracles of the saints that are uncountable. Some saints know the unseen through revelation, some have the veil lifted for them and some have the sacred tablet revealed to them and they can see it.

Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi says:

لوح محفوظ است پیش اولی  
آنچه محفوظ است محفوظ از خطا

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<sup>109</sup> Hifz al-Iman, p.8, Deoband

The story of Khidr in the Qur'an is proof enough for this on the basis that the majority of scholars and gnostics consider him to be a saint, even though the more correct position is that he was a Prophet. It is narrated about Abu Bakr Siddiq radiyAllahu 'anhu that he gave news to his wife that she will give birth to a boy and it so happened.<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, 'Umar radiyAllahu 'anhu made an exposition about Sariya and his army even though he was in a different country. 'Umar was on the pulpit in Madina delivering the Friday sermon and with the words *Ya Sariyat al-Jabal* [Oh Sariya, save yourself towards the mountain], he informed Sariya of the imminent attack of the enemy. The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said about 'Umar radiyAllahu 'anhu: He is the *Muhaddath* of my nation who receives revelation [Ilham].

*Risala Qushayriyya* and '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*' of Imam Suharwardi have countless accounts of saints giving news of the unseen such as some of them saying that I will pass away at the time of Dhuhr tomorrow and it so happened and after they are buried, upon seeing them open both eyes, the buriers asked: Have you become alive after demising? The saint replied: I am alive and every beloved of Allah is alive.

Qadi Shawkani writes [as mentioned earlier]:

When this is proven, then there is nothing prohibiting Allah from choosing pious people for this nation to reveal the unseen to that he revealed upon His Prophet. The Prophet has specified some persons of his nation too and they have informed others. This is from the miracles of the pious and are all through the intermediation of the Prophet and the blessings of Allah.<sup>111</sup>

This is possible even today that Allah imparts His blessings upon His pious servants through the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam. There is no Islamic or intellectual ruling forbidding this.

Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi writes:

The Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said that I spend time with my Lord and He gives me to eat and drink. Using this meaning, it is our creed that whosoever has greater knowledge of the unseen realm, his heart becomes stronger and its weakness decreases. This is why 'Ali ibn Abi Talib radiyAllahu 'anhu said: By Allah, I did not tear the door of Khaybar with physical strength, rather it was through divine strength. This is because at that time, the attention of 'Ali radiyAllahu 'anhu was not towards the physical realm, the angels were pouring light into his heart from the sovereign realm and his soul received strength through its connection with the angelic souls. The light from the angelic realm began to shine in his soul, hence, he necessarily became powerful over things that other people were not.

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<sup>110</sup> We have the reference from *Muwatta* that he gave tidings of a girl and it was a girl that was born – Sharf Qadri

<sup>111</sup> Fath al-Qadir, v.5, p.312, Beirut

He further writes:

When a person becomes habitual upon obedience, he attains a rank about which Allah says: I become his ears and eyes. When the light of Allah becomes his ears, he hears from afar as he hears from near and when the light of Allah becomes his eyes, he sees both near and far and when this light becomes his hands, he becomes powerful over the disposition of worldly affairs, whether easy or difficult.<sup>112</sup>

Imam ‘Ali Qari writes:

It should be known that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam said: Fear the perception of the believer for he sees with the light of Allah and the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam recited the verse: Surely in this are signs for those who examine [15:75]. Tirmidhi narrated it from Abu Sa'id Khudri radiyAllahu 'anhu. It is also pertinent to note that *Firasat* has three types. *Firasat Imaniya* is gained through the light that places in a believer's heart whose nature is that it conquers the heart as fast as a lion does its prey and this is why it is called *Firasat*. It strengthens and weakens according to the strength of Iman; however strong ones Iman is, the stronger his *Firasat* will be. Abu Sulayman Darani says: *Firasat* is composed of inspiration of the soul and seeing the unseen and is a level from the levels of Iman.<sup>113</sup>

Shah WaliAllah Dihlawi writes:

When the being is overtaken by seraphic strength and its animalistic strength is destroyed, the heart is revolutionised and becomes the soul and it stops striving and gains friendship without any difficulty. The person's intellect becomes accomplished and moves away from normal workings and utilises perception [*firasat*], spiritual unveiling [*kashf*] and revelation [*ilham*] to achieve perfection and knowledge of the unseen.<sup>114</sup>

He also writes:

The Naqshbandis have astonishing power over disposition of affairs such as concentrating on a goal such that it becomes according to their will; to affect the heart of a seeker; to remove illness from the sick; to inspire a sinner towards repentance; to control peoples hearts so that they begin to love and respect; to influence peoples intellects so that they understand greater things; to know about the engagements of the pious whether they are alive or in their graves; to know the states of peoples hearts and their thoughts; to reveal events of the future and to

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<sup>112</sup> Tafsir al-Kabir, v.21, p.91, Egypt

<sup>113</sup> Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar, p.80, Egypt

<sup>114</sup> Ham'at, p.109, Hyderabad, Sindh

remove calamities that were to befall and other things, but, we have presented only a few as an example.<sup>115</sup>

And the most astounding of Shah WaliAllah's expositions is that he writes:

Today, I am speaking whilst I am silent. To summarise, one after the other, I travelled through the secrets [asrar] and illuminations [tajalliyat] and knowledge [ilm] and cognizance [ma'rifat] until I reached the name of Rahman which is the origin and centre of all illuminations. I reached the highest level through it and when it entered into me, I saw all the knowledge, places and excellence that were given to the first man. I do not mean just Adam, rather all the men from Adam till when the world is destroyed and the skies are torn asunder, all the knowledge, excellences and ranks that all men ever gained – whether in this world, in the grave, on Qiyamah or in paradise – I encompassed all those excellences such that no one thing was an obstacle to the other until I encompassed the excellences of all the heavens, substances, vegetation, animals, angels, jinns, the sacred tablet, Israfil and the whole universe.

He then added:

Whoever examined me did not find any excellence for me, rather I am excellence personified and excellence is within me. My hands, feet, face and chest are all excellence. I entered my grave according to my excellence and I await seeing all excellences enter into me. Perhaps my existence is Qiyamah which is established to display excellences. I know such secrets that I cannot talk of. I say:

وعندى علوم لا يكاد يحيطها  
سما ٍ لا بر و بحر و ساحل  
ولكن ابنا ٍ الزمان وجدتهم  
تساوى لديهم عاقل ثم غافل<sup>116</sup>

*And I have so much knowledge that the skies, land, oceans and shores cannot encompass it; but for people in my times, the knowledgeable and ignorant are the same*

Yes, where are those people who denigrate the knowledge of the Prophets and saints? We ask them, what ruling will you issue upon Shah WaliAllah? He has affirmed for himself knowledge that encompasses everything. If even after this, Shah WaliAllah is a monotheist then it remains to be asked if such knowledge is accepted for the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam by Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi and his followers, rather by all the scholars of Islam, that the Prophet sallAllahu 'alaihi wasallam has knowledge of *ma kan wa ma yakun* [and that too which is bestowed and not intrinsic] by Allah teaching it to him, then why are they deemed polytheists?

<sup>115</sup> Qawl al-Jamil, p.102-103, Karachi

<sup>116</sup> Tafhimat, v.2, p.90-98, Hyderabad, Sindh

Shah WaliAllah Dihlawi is a personality that is respected by the scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah, Deobandis and Ghayr Muqallids. Isma'il Dihlawi writes about him:

The Qiblah of the researchers and Ka'bah of the sagacious, I mean Hadrat Shah WaliAllah, may Allah sanctify his secret.<sup>117</sup>

He also writes:

The model of saints and quintessence of the people of purity, meaning Hadrat Shah WaliAllah.<sup>118</sup>

This is what Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz Dihlawi writes regarding knowledge of the unseen:

To know about the essence [nafs al-amr] of all existence – whether by reading the sacred tablet or otherwise – is in all cases acquired by the friends of Allah. Reading the contents of sacred tablet is mass transmitted from some saints.<sup>119</sup>

The Imam of Deobandis and Ghayr Muqallids in the subcontinent, Isma'il Dihlawi writes:

And similarly, when the hearts of the abstemious people turn away from everything but Allah and become clean from rust of carelessness, then they become like mirrors. For example, when something becomes ordained by Allah, many pious people see them whilst asleep or awake before they occur.<sup>120</sup>

Anwar Shah Kashmiri Deobandi writes:

Then it must be known that those things which the saints see before their transpiration in this world, they too have some sort of existence. Such as Bayazid Bustami passing by a school and smelling a whiff of air from it upon which he said: In this air, I smell the fragrance of an accomplished man of Allah. Hence, Shaykh Abu'l Hasan Kharkani was born there. Also, the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam saying: I smell the fragrance of Allah from Yemen, hence, Uwais Qarni radiyallahu 'anhu was born there.<sup>121</sup>

It is expected from an unbiased reader that after reading these texts from the Qur'an, hadith and from scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah, Deobandis and Ghayr Muqallids; he will decide that Imam Ahmad Rida Baraylawi did not hold any contravening or new belief regarding knowledge of the unseen. Rather, his proof is from the Qur'an and hadith and the expositions of outstanding gnostics, jurists, hadith masters and Qur'anic exegetes.

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<sup>117</sup> Sirat-e-Mustaqim, p.11, Lahore

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>119</sup> Tafsir Fath al-'Aziz, v. Tabarakalladhi, p.26, Delhi

<sup>120</sup> Sirat-e-Mustaqim, p.37, Lahore

<sup>121</sup> Faid al-Bari, v.1, p.182, Cairo

The claim that Ihsan Ilahi Zahir made in his book *al-Baraylawiya* that this is an innovation concocted by Imam Ahmad Rida and that he is alone in this stance – our readers will have themselves decided how much of a clear slander this is and also how far Zahir has gone away from the boundaries of justice.

‘AbdAllah ibn Mas’ud radiyAllahu ‘anhu narrates that the Prophet sallAllahu ‘alaihi wasallam said:

I am the city of knowledge and Abu Bakr is its foundation; ‘Umar is its four walls; ‘Uthman is its roof and ‘Ali is its door. Speak only goodness about these four.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Firdaus al-Akhbar, v.1, p.76, Beirut