

Seeing with inner sight

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 18 September 2020

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ
أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾

“Vision cannot comprehend Him, and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware. Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever sees, it is for the good of his own soul; and whoever is blind, it is to its harm. And I am not a keeper over you.” (6:103–104)

This passage begins by disclosing the fact that the human eye does not have the capacity or ability to see God like it can see a material object. Even human imagination cannot visualize Him because that imagination is based on what he sees in this world and is limited by his experiences of life in this world. God, however, knows all the types of vision that exist in the universe and within the human mind. The word for “vision” here is based on the word *baṣīr*, which means having the power of seeing. The same word is used in the second verse above. “Clear proofs” are *baṣāir* and the word for “sees” in “whoever sees” is *abṣara*.

So while God cannot be seen, or encompassed by the power of human vision, yet He has sent arguments for our guidance which **can** be seen and those who see them benefit themselves. It adds that those who remain “blind” only do harm to themselves. So, while God cannot be seen as a Being, He has sent His teachings which we can see and understand with our minds. Some choose to remain blind, and refrain from applying the faculties that enable them to see.

To be able to see guidance, the sight which is required is mentioned as follows:

فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعَى الْأَبْصَارَ وَلَكِنْ تَعَى الْقُلُوبَ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿٣٦﴾

meaning “For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts” (22:46). It is with that kind of sight, the sight of the heart, that a person can find true guidance. Many people have said in the past, and even in the present day, that if they saw God with their eyes they would believe in Him. The Quran replies that what you **can** see is God’s guidance but you need to develop the sight of the heart to see it. The Quran distinguishes between looking at something and seeing it:

وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ لَا يَسْمَعُوا ۖ وَتَرَاهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

“And if you invite them to guidance, they do not hear; and you (O Prophet) see them looking towards you, yet they do not see” (7:198). Here again, the word for “seeing” is based on *baṣar*. The word for “looking” is from *nazar*.

Similarly:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَعِينُكَ ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْكَ ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمْىَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

“And some of them listen to you (O Prophet). But can you make the deaf to hear, though they will not understand? And some of them look at you. But can you show the way to the blind, though they will not see?” (10:42–43)

Another well-known verse contains the words:

لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

“They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear” (7:179).

Of course, these people saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, whatever they wanted to. Literally, they did see the great and noble character of the Holy

Prophet. Literally, they did hear the words that he uttered. But they did not let these enter into their hearts, which is the real seeing and hearing.

This applies not only to the rejectors of the Divine message but also to those who accept it. When you hear or see something, you also have to go into the deeper meaning of those words and of what you saw. If you learn religion by watching and listening to someone, and you simply copy that person, you are not taking anything into your heart or mind. Your heart hasn't understood, and your mind's eyes haven't seen and your mind's ears haven't heard.

There is a verse in the Quran in which the Holy Prophet is told to say:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي^ط

“Say: This is my way; I call to Allah, with certain and sure knowledge (*baṣīrat*) — I and those who follow me” (12:108).

What is meant by *baṣīrat* here is that the Holy Prophet, and also his followers, call others to the path of God as if they can see the truth of that path with their eyes. They are absolutely convinced of the truth of what they are inviting others to follow, they have experienced walking along that path and can tell others about it. I could tell someone how to get to a place by following a route that I have read on a map, a route that I myself have never been along. Take the motorway M25, exit at junction 3, etc. But if I have travelled on that route myself, I could tell him much more about it, any special points to remember, any notable things to see along the way, any pitfalls to avoid, etc. In this verse the Holy Prophet is told to tell people: This is the way I walk along, and the one I invite others to follow, through my own experience of it, and my personal insight into it; and not I, but also my followers invite others to the same path through their own experience.

Regarding the life after death the Quran says:

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ

“On that day you will see the believers, men and women, their light gleaming before them and on their right hand.” (57:12)

The light of faith which they had in this life, by means of which they called others to the same path, that light will be seen running in front of them and to their right-hand side. We hear a great deal about what awaits Muslims in paradise, such as the so-called *hūrs* in paradise, apparently for men. But do we ever hear of this *light* that will be granted to those followed the light of truth in this life? And this light will be granted to both men and women.

We must also remember that here by “believing men and believing women” are not meant any Muslims whatsoever. Four verses before this verse it says to Muslims themselves:

“And what reason have you that you do not believe in Allah? And the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and He has indeed accepted your covenant, if you are believers” (57:8).

Allah has accepted your covenant means He has accepted your professing to be Muslims, and the promise you made to Him, but you still don't really believe in Allah because you are not helping the cause of the Messenger of Allah and you are reluctant to make the sacrifices that he is asking you to make on behalf of Allah.

Then four verses after this verse it says:

“Has not the time yet come for the believers that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and the Truth that is revealed, and (that) they should not be like those who were given the Book before, but time was prolonged for them, so their hearts hardened. And most of them are transgressors.” (57:16)

This clearly foretells that, just like the followers of previous faiths, Muslims too would degenerate and become hard of heart after a long passage of time after the beginning of Islam, so that the remembrance of Allah and the truth just wouldn't

penetrate into their hearts. In these verses the Quran also tells us what Muslims actually have to do before they can become those believing men and women who will see light streaming in front of them and on their right in paradise.

In one place, the Quran says:

“And whoever is blind in this (world) he will be blind in the Hereafter, and further away from the path” (17:72).

Obviously, “blind in this world” does not mean the physically blind people of this world. It means those who make no effort to see guidance and truth during their lives. Their spiritual eyes remain closed during this life, so when after death the body is gone and only the soul remains, it has no sight. This could be us as well. May Allah protect us from this, ameen!

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