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PERCEPTION

PERCEIVING ALLAH WITH THE HEART'S EYE

The Heart's Eye: Prophetic Perception and Our Path to Allah

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim

In the Name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy,
The Source of Mercy

Sura [chapter] *Al Najm* [The Star], in the Quran, presents Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as the example of what the human being can become in relationship with Allah. Allah created us with different faculties, the mind, the *nafs* [egoistic or animalistic nature], the senses, and the heart, and these must function together as intended. In the Prophet (pbuh), we see this integration. His perception was clear because his entire being was directed toward Allah.

Allah says, "The *fu'ad* [spiritual heart; perception center] did not reject what it saw" (*Al Najm* [The Star]: 11). Perception is more than what we see with our physical eyes. We have to use our mind, investigate and recognize truth, but the heart must confirm what is perceived. In the Prophet (pbuh), the heart confirmed the truth, while the *nafs* did not interfere. His focus remained completely on Allah: "His eye did not waver, nor did it lose its focus" (*Al Najm* [The Star]: 17).

This is what it means to perceive Allah with the Heart's Eye. The question is not simply, "What am I looking at?" but "What is my heart able to perceive?" If the *nafs* controls us, our perception becomes limited by our desires and assumptions. The Prophetic example teaches us another possibility: keep the *nafs* under control, use the mind properly, allow the heart to confirm truth, and do not lose focus on Allah. We keep returning our attention to Him.

Every day our eyes gather thousands of images, yet somehow we still miss what is most important. The physical eyes can only see what is in front of them. But the heart has another kind of sight. The Quran refers to this inner faculty as the *fu'ad* [spiritual heart; perception center]. This is the place within us that truly perceives.

- Shaykh Nishaat Ahmed Siddiqi



The Prophet (pbuh) shows us what this looks like as a way of being. Allah describes him as deeply concerned for humanity and “full of pity, kindness, and mercy towards the *mu’minin* [believers]” (*Al Tawba* [The Repentance]: 128). He represents the most mature level that the human being can reach. This is not an abstract idea of perfection, but being deeply connected to Allah and acting through that loving connection. His attention remained on Allah, and this connection was expressed through his mercy and kindness toward people.

In the account of the *Mi’raj* [Prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) spiritual, metaphysical Night Journey to Allah’s presence], when Allah asked the Prophet (pbuh) what he wished for, he asked that his *ummah* [community] have what he had. When asked what he wanted personally, he said, “O Allah, please never dismiss me from Your service.” Look at where his heart and attention were directed. He wanted for his people what he had, while for himself, he wanted to remain in Allah’s service.

That direction toward Allah continued throughout his daily life. Before sleeping, the Prophet (pbuh) turned toward Allah: “In Your name, my Lord, I lay down my body, and in You do I revive it.” Our Prophet (pbuh) talked to Allah before he went to sleep. His attention remained on Allah, not only in extraordinary moments, but in the ordinary moments of life. This is what we are being invited to learn: to experience our connection with Allah, with our hearts and with all our senses, in every moment.

One purpose of Prophethood was to awaken people from their slumber, enable them to see and perceive, and invite them to Allah’s everlasting beauty and His *Zat* [Essence]. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) shows us how the faculties Allah has given us can remain aligned toward their true purpose. Perceiving Allah with the Heart’s Eye requires this alignment: use the mind, keep the *nafs* under control, allow the *fu’ad* to confirm truth, and keep your attention on Allah. The Prophetic example shows us the direction. The heart learns to see when Allah remains its target.

- MURSHIDA SHAYKHA MUZEYYEN VARGONEN ANSARI
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The One Who Acts with Mercy; The Beneficent



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