

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, most Kind, most Merciful



Surat al-An'am 6:103

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ
وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ
وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

The sights do not perceive Him, yet He perceives the sights, and He is the All-Attentive, the All-Aware.

Learning Objectives

- To examine key attributes of Allah and how they differ with His creation
- To conclude through Qur'an and *ahadith* that Allah is not visible
- To explain the qualities that Allah cannot have

Key Words

الصِّفَةُ *Sifah*
a quality or characteristic that describes someone or something

الصِّفَاتُ السَّلْبِيَّةُ *As-sifat as-salbiyyah*
the negated attributes of Allah

Tawhid

Tawhid is the essence of Islam and the first root of religion. The *Usul* (roots) of religion are our core beliefs, which strengthen our faith. *Tawhid* is the belief that there is only one God, Allah.



Surat al-Ikhlâs 112:1

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

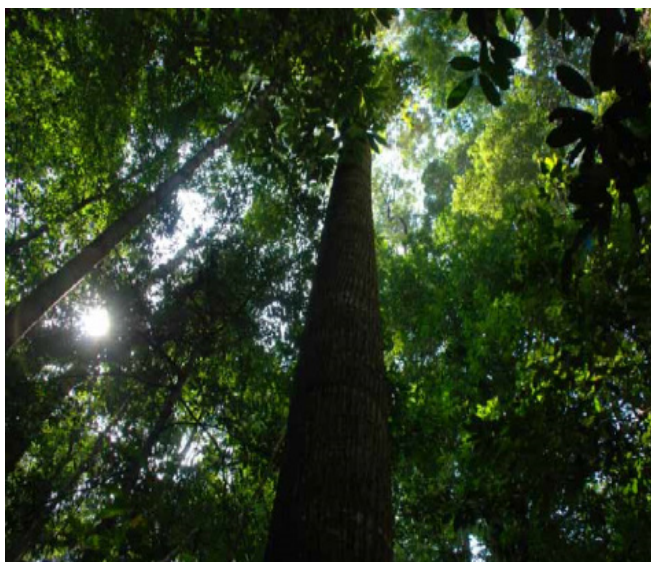
Say: 'He is Allah, the One.'

Surat al-Ikhlâs describes the nature of Allah in four short *ayat*:

"Say He is Allah the One, Allah is unique, He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like Him."

Tawhid is understanding that Allah is not a 'body', He has no physical form and will never be seen. He is unique and He does not have any equal.

Close your eyes and imagine you are in a forest. Tall green trees surround you. Bees are humming in and out of the delicate flowers blossoming across the floor of the forest. Birds are chirping from the branches high above and the wind is whistling through the earthy air. As you lift your face upwards the warm bright rays of the sun cover you, and you feel the intense heat of the sun coming through the gap between the leafy branches.



Just as warmth and light are part of the sun's rays, Allah's attributes are a part of Him. They belong totally to Him and cannot be separated from Him. He is that quality and that quality is Him. When we feel the sun's heat through the warmth of its rays we know that the sun is hot.

Similarly, it is through Allah's attributes and names that we will come to know and understand Him more. Everything in creation reflects the beautiful names of Allah and His attributes. If we think back to the forest, it is only with the ears and eyes that Allah has blessed us with that we can hear the chirping birds and see the blossoming flowers. Our sight is a manifestation of *al-Basir* (the All-Seeing).

Surat al-Hajj 22:61



ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ
وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ

That is because Allah makes the night pass into the day and makes the day pass into the night, and verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

Our sight is limited according to the ability we have been given by Allah, whereas His sight is unlimited, just as He Himself is unlimited.

The attributes of Allah are countless. To recognise and know our Creator we need to understand these qualities or attributes, known as *as-sifat*.

There are certain qualities that we cannot attribute to Allah. These include any attribute which is limiting in nature, because it can be proven rationally that Allah is limitless in every aspect. These attributes are known as *As-sifat as-salbiyyah*: the attributes that Allah is not and never will be.

We will explore one of these in this lesson and the remainder will be explained in the following lessons as we journey towards knowing more about our Creator.

Allah is not **visible** and never will be

Human beings, animals, plants, the moon, the stars, and all of creation, can be seen with the eyes. Even though some creatures are hard to see because they are very small or very far away, we can still see them through the help of special tools like microscopes and telescopes. Allah, however, cannot be seen with the eyes at all. He is not visible and never will be.

In *Nahj al-Balaghah*; sermon 49 Imam Ali (a) says:

“He cannot be seen by the eye of an onlooker, but the eye which does not see Him cannot deny His existence. The mind that accepts His existence cannot perceive Him. He is so high in magnificence that nothing can be more magnificent than He, while in nearness, He is so near that no one can be nearer than He.”

Imam Ali (a) reminds us that Allah is so limitless and absolute that even those who believe in His existence and know Him through His *sifat* will not be able to understand His essence completely. This is because we, as Allah's creation, are finite and limited, and so when we use words to try and describe someone so amazing and unique such as Allah, they are just not enough! Allah is so special that His greatness has no bounds.

Remember that the qualities of Allah that we see are just a reflection of His greatness. We would not be able to fully understand His greatness.

The Holy Qur'an narrates the story of Nabi Musa (a) when he asked to see Allah (to show his people that it was not possible), and Allah responded by saying:

Surat al-A'raf 7:143

لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ انْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ
مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ
جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ
سُبْحَانَكَ ثُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

‘You shall never see Me. But look at the mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.’ So when his Lord manifested (His Glory) to the mountain, He levelled it, and Musa fell down in a swoon. And when he recovered, he said: ‘Glory be to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers.’

Allah manifested a little of His power to the mountain and the large mountain crumbled to dust in front of Nabi Musa (a). Nabi Musa (a) experienced a small glimpse of Allah's glory, and as a result, he fell unconscious. On recovering, Nabi Musa acknowledged Allah's greatness and glory.

This shows us that even the *anbiya* and *a'immah* were unable to physically see Allah with their eyes, but could perceive His Greatness with their hearts.



ACTIVITY...

As a class, brainstorm all those things we know exist, but cannot see with our eyes.

Faith in Action

Everything in creation is a manifestation of the names and attributes of Allah. The beautiful *Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir*, taught to us by Rasulullah (s), contains 1000 of Allah's names and attributes!

With your parents or an older sibling look at an English translation of *Du'a al-Jawshan al-Kabir*; pick a section and read through its translation.

What do you understand about Allah from the names and qualities that you read?



One day a man called Abu Shakir who was an atheist, accused Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) of making up stories about the existence of a god who cannot be seen.

Imam (a) asked Abu Shakir if he could see inside his own body, to which Abu Shakir replied that he could not.

The following conversation then took place between Imam (a) and Abu Shakir.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a):

“If you could see what is inside you, you would not have said you do not believe in Allah, who cannot be seen.”

Abu Shakir:

“What is the connection between seeing inside one's own body and the existence of your unseen Allah?”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a):

“You said that something which cannot be seen, touched, tasted, or heard, does not exist.”

Abu Shakir:

“Yes I did, and I believe it to be true.”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a):

“Can you hear the sound of the movement of blood inside your body?”

Abu Shakir:

“No, but does blood move in the body?”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a):

“Yes, it does. It circulates around your whole body and if it stops for a few minutes you will die.”

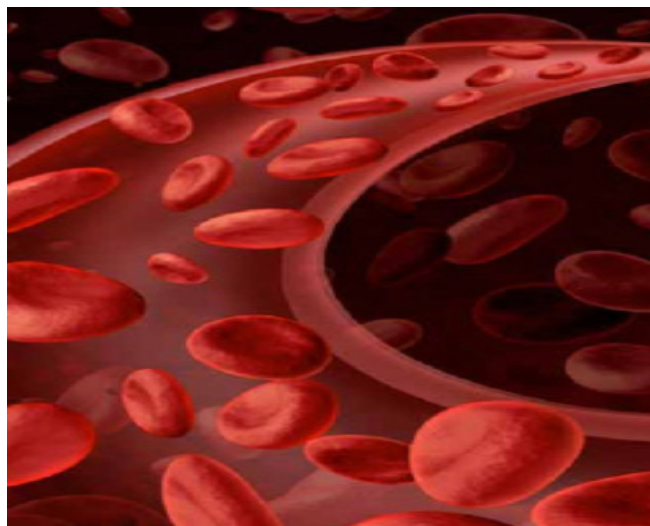
Abu Shakir:

“I cannot believe that blood moves in the body.”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a):

“Your ignorance does not let you believe that blood moves in the body or in the existence of Allah who cannot be seen.”

Imam (a) continued:



“Have you seen the tiny living things that Allah has created within the body? It is because of these small creatures and their wonderful work that we are kept alive. They are so small that we cannot see them. Since you are a slave of your senses, you do not know about their existence. If you increase your knowledge and decrease your ignorance, you will learn that there are as many small beings within the body as there are particles of sand in the desert!

These small creatures are born inside the body; they multiply in the body, work in the body and die in the body. But we never see them, or touch them, or taste them or hear them in our lifetime!

It is true that one who knows himself knows his Lord. If you had known yourself and had the knowledge of what is going on inside your body, you would not have said that you do not believe in Allah, without seeing Him.”

Imam (a) then said:

“Abu Shakir, I am too small and too weak to create Allah with my brain. He has created my brain, so that I may think of Him and know Him, as my creator. He was there before I came into being and He will be there when I am no more. I do not mean that I would be totally destroyed. Nothing in the universe is totally destroyed. Everything is subject to change. It is only Allah, Who does not change.

Abu Shakir, do you now believe that Allah who can not be seen does exist and what you worship is the unseen Allah?”

Abu Shakir replied:

“I am not yet convinced. I am still not sure. I am full of doubts about my faith and my beliefs.”

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 100 trillion bacteria around the human body? Bacteria are tiny organisms found everywhere on the body, including skin, eyes, hair, around the teeth, and inside the gut as well! They are invisible helpers of the body and exist in great numbers but we cannot see them with our eyes! Scientists use special tools called microscopes to see these tiny creatures!



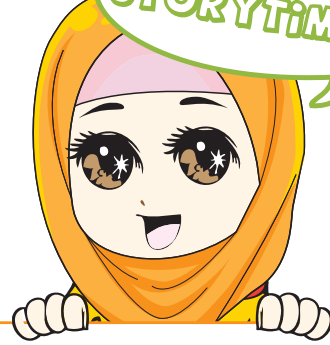
FIQH FACTS

Najasah means impurity and *Taharah* means purity.

According to the rules of *fiqh* if an object in the possession of a Muslim becomes *najis* and he or she disappears and is no longer around to ask, the object is said to be *tahir* (pure). However, there is a checklist we must go through to make sure that the object is pure.

- 1 Does the Muslim believe in *Najasah*?
- 2 Does the Muslim care about the difference between *taharah* and *najasah*?
- 3 If he or she is careless of the rules of *najasah* and *taharah* then the object cannot be accepted as pure.

STORYTIME!



Abu Hanifah was a student of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) and a teacher in his own respect. One day he was telling his students about the three things Imam had taught him that he did not agree with:

- 1 Shaytan will go to hell.
- 2 Allah cannot be seen.
- 3 Every person is responsible for his/her own actions.

Abu Hanifah questioned how Shaytan could be punished in hell when he was made of fire as well, and how fire could ever burn fire. He was also not convinced that Allah could not be seen, whereas everything else around us can be seen. He believed that we would see Allah on the Day of Judgement. And finally, he disagreed that every person is responsible for his or her own actions; he believed that Allah made people do things.

When Buhlul, a companion of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) heard this, he picked up a lump of clay and threw it at Abu Hanifah's forehead. He was caught by Abu Hanifah's friends and brought to the court. In the court, Abu Hanifah explained his complaint against Buhlul.

Buhlul asked Abu Hanifah to show him the pain. Abu Hanifah answered:

“How can I show you pain that is invisible?”

To this, Buhlul replied with three points:

- 1 The pain could not be real, because according to Abu Hanifah, only visible things are real, and there is nothing that cannot be seen.
- 2 The clay could not have hurt him, because according to Abu Hanifah, if hell fire cannot harm Shaytan because he is also made out of fire, then a lump of clay should not hurt Abu Hanifah as he is also made of clay.
- 3 The person responsible is not Buhlul, it is Allah, because according to Abu Hanifah, Allah makes people do things, and so Allah should be blamed.

Abu Hanifah could not answer Buhlul's points and he left the court!



HIGHER LEVEL

Dha'lab al-Yamani, a companion of Imam Ali (a), once asked him if he had seen his Lord.

Imam Ali (a) replied,

“How can I believe in a Lord I have not seen?”

When asked how this was possible, Imam (a) replied:

“Eyes do not reach Him with physical sight, but the hearts reach Him with the realities of belief.”

Here, Imam Ali (a) explains beautifully that we can be sure of the existence of Allah through His presence in our hearts.

Allah says in *hadith al-qudsi*:

“Nothing can contain Me except the heart of My faithful servant.”

Although we cannot see Allah with our eyes, we can feel His ever-lasting compassion, mercy, and love within our hearts, and we can be sure of His existence.

In this way, we can see Allah with our spiritual eyes like Imam Ali (a).

Using your knowledge of Allah's attributes, explain why Allah cannot be seen.



DID YOU KNOW?

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) was one of the most patient and tolerant teachers of his time. Everyday after his lectures he would listen to his critics and answer their questions. Imam (a) was very knowledgeable and was a respected scholar in a wide range of subjects.

KEYPOINTS

- 1 *Tawhid* is the belief that there is only one God, Allah. He is unique and there is none like Him.
- 2 All of creation is a reflection of *al-asma al-husna* and *as-sifat* of Allah. We can know Allah by increasing our knowledge of His names and attributes. *As-Sifat as-salbiyyah* are the attributes that Allah is not and never will be.
- 3 Allah does not have a physical form and is not (and never will be) visible to the eyes, but His presence can be felt with the heart.



- 1 *Tawhid* is the belief that there is only _____
- 2 The attributes of Allah are known as _____ in Arabic.
- 3 There are *as-sifat as-*_____. These are qualities that Allah is not.
- 4 Allah is not visible. Can you explain why?

