

Our Lord descends every night to the sky of this world when the last third of the night remains - Imam Ibn Uthaymeen



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Our Lord's Descent

The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said in an authentic ḥadīth:

يَدْعُونِي نَمَ : يَقُولُ ، الْآخِرُ اللَّيْلِ ثَلَاثُ يَبْقَى جِوَانِ الدُّنْيَا السَّمَاءِ إِلَى لَيْلَةٍ كُلِّ وَتَعَالَى تَبَارَكَ رَبُّنَا يَنْزِلُ لَهُ فَأَعْفِرَ ؟ يَسْتَعْفِرُنِي مَنْ ؟ فَأُعْطِيَهُ يَسْأَلُنِي مَنْ ؟ لَهُ فَاسْتَجِيبَ

Our Lord, the blessed and exalted, descends every night to the sky of this world when the last third of the night remains. He asks, "Who is calling on me so I can answer him? Who is asking me (for anything) so I can give (it to) him? Who is asking for my forgiveness so I can forgive him?"

[Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1145) and Muslim (no. 758)]

This ḥadīth is a proof confirming the descent of Allah to the lowest heaven, the sky of this world.

Some people of knowledge said this ḥadīth has come with many different chains of narration, and the scholars have always agreed that it is one of the famous ḥadīth often mentioned by the scholars of the Sunnah.

The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) says, "Our Lord descends every night to the sky of this world." Allah's descent is real and actual because, as we have mentioned before, anything mentioned with a pronoun that refers back to Allah, it must be attributed to him in a real, actual manner.

So we should believe in it and accept it as truth, saying just as the ḥadīth says, "Our Lord descends to the sky of this world," to the lowest heaven closest to the earth. There are seven heavens, and Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) descends at this time during the night to be near his worshippers just as he does during the afternoon on the Day of 'Arafah (during the pilgrimage), praising and boasting to the angels about his worshippers. [41]

As for "every night" it is general to include every single night of the year. "when the last third of the night remains". In Islamic legislation, the night begins at sunset and this is unanimously agreed upon. The difference (among scholars) however comes with regards to when the night ends. Does it end with the appearance of first light or the actual rising of the sun? Apparently, the night, according to legislation, ends with the appearance of first light, and the common, "astral" night ends with sunrise. Allah asks, "Who is calling on me...". This is a question yet really intended as an encouragement and motivation rather than expecting an actual answer. It is like his statement (in the Qur'an):

أَلَيْمَ عَذَابٍ مِّنْ تُنْجِيكُمْ تِجَارَةً عَلَيَّ أَذْذُكُمْ هَلْ

Shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment? [Sūrah al-Şaf, 61:10]

"...calling on me..." saying, "Oh Lord..."

"...so I can answer him?" This is the result and reward for doing the first part – calling on Allah.

"Who is asking me (for anything) so I can give (it to) him?" such as saying, "I ask You for Paradise," or similar things.

"Who is asking for my forgiveness..." saying, "Oh Allah, forgive me," or "I seek your forgiveness, Allah."

"...so I can forgive him?" Forgiveness means to conceal one's sins and overlook them.

With this, it should be clear to every person who reads this ḥadīth that what is meant by "descends" here is that Allah Himself descends. We do not even need to say He descends "personally" because as long as the verb is associated with Him, then He himself does it. Still, some scholars did say, "He personally descends." They resorted to saying that, compelled to adding "personally" only because there are those people who twist the meaning of ḥadīth, claiming that what really descends is the decision and decree of Allah. Others say it is Allah's mercy that descends, and even others say it is one of his angels that descends.

All of these are incorrect. For one thing, Allah's decision and decree are constantly descending, and not only during the last third of night as he (عِلَاعَت) says generally:

إِلَيْهِ يَعْرُجُ ثُمَّ الْأَرْضِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ يُدَبِّرُ

He arranges each matter from the heaven to the earth then it will ascend to him.[Sūrah al-Sajdah, 32:5]

And he says:

كُلُّهُ الْأَمْرُ يُرْجَعُ إِلَيْهِ وَ

And to him the matter will return, all of it.[Sūrah Hūd, 11:123]

As for their statement that it is really only the mercy of Allah that descends to the worldly sky when the last third of night remains, Allah is above such deficiencies and insults! Mercy does not descend except at that time?! Allah (تَعَالَى) :syas

اللَّهُ فَمِنْ نِعْمَةٍ مِّنْ بَيْنِكُمْ وَمَا

And whatever you have of blessing, it is from Allah. [Sūrah al-Naḥl, 16:53]

Every blessing and favor is from Allah, and they are the results of his mercy; they can be witnessed at all times.

We could then ask: What good does it do for us if mercy descends only down to the sky (and no further)?

As for those who say it is really only an angel that descends, we ask: Does it make sense that an angel would say, “Who is calling on me so I can answer him? Who is asking me for anything...”?!

So it is clear that these claims are distorted meanings, they are incorrect and proven so by the ḥadīth itself.

By Allah, such people who claim these things do not know more about Allah than Allah’s messenger, they are certainly not more sincere in advising the servants of Allah than his messenger, and they are not more precise and eloquent in speech than the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Some people also ask: How can you say Allah descends? If He does so, then what about His being high above everything? What about His being over the throne? If He descends, this would involve movement and relocation. Also, if He descends, this would be an action that happens and anything that happens must have a cause.

To this we say: This is baseless and pointless arguing. There is no reason not to say that Allah’s descent is real. Do you know what Allah deserves (of characteristics and descriptions) more than the companions of the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)?

The companions never made any of these false assumptions and conjectures. Instead they listened, they believed, they accepted, and they trusted it as absolute truth. Yet now, you people come and challenge the meanings, arguing for the sake of falsehood, asking, “How? Why?”

We say Allah descends, and we do not delve into asking, “What about his throne? Does this mean he leaves it or not?”

As for his being above, we say he descends and yet he is still high above his creation because “descent” here does not necessarily mean that he is surrounded by the lowest heaven to which he descends while the other heavens are above him. Rather, he is not contained within anything of his creation.

So Allah actually descends in a real manner while he is actually high above in a real manner, and nothing is similar to him.

Rising over the throne is an action, not a permanent, personal characteristic. We should not, as far as I am concerned, begin asking whether he leaves the throne or not. Instead, we should keep silent about it just as the companions did, may Allah be pleased with them all.

However, the scholars of those who follow the Sunnah take one of three positions regarding the issue of whether Allah leaves his throne during his descent. Some say he leaves the throne, others say he does not leave it, and others say we should remain silent and not delve into the issue.

Ibn Taymiyyah says in his *al-Risālah al-'Arshiyyah* that Allah does not leave the throne (during his descent) because the evidence confirming he is on the throne is strong and explicit just as this ḥadīth is also a strong, explicit proof of his descent. The actions and characteristics of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) are not to be measured by those of creation. So we should leave the texts of his being on the throne confirmed as they are just as we leave the text of his descent confirmed as it is. We say he is established on his throne and yet he still descends to the sky of this world; Allah alone knows the “how” of it. Our minds are too deficient and incomplete to know everything about Allah, the Most High.

The second position is that Allah leaves the throne during his descent and the third position is to remain silent – in other words, not to say whether he does or does not leave his throne.

Some people more recently bring up yet another point of confusion. **Since the earth is round and revolves around the sun, they ask how Allah can descend during the last third of the night when the last third is a constant time.** For example, when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia leaves this time, Europe and surrounding countries enter it. So is Allah constantly and forever descending?

In reply, we say: First and foremost, you should simply believe and accept that Allah descends during this specific time. If you do believe in it, then there is nothing else required from you. Do not go into asking, “How?” Instead, accept that when the last third of night remains in Saudi Arabia, then Allah descends, and when it remains in America, Allah also descends. And His descent finishes when the light of morning appears in any place, respective to it.

To conclude, our position is that we believe and accept everything that has come to us from Allah’s messenger, Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in that Allah comes down to the sky of this world, the lowest heaven, when the last third of night remains and he asks, “Who is calling on me so I can answer him? Who is asking me (for anything) so I can give (it to) him? Who is asking for my forgiveness so I can forgive him?”

Beneficial Points We Learn from This Ḥadīth

This amazing ḥadīth:

- Confirms that Allah is high above creation based on the words, "**Our Lord descends.**"
- Confirms that Allah does actions by his choice and will—these are known as “action” characteristics (see footnote no. 7 of the [main article](#))—based on the statement, "**Our Lord descends...when the last third of the night remains..**"
- Confirms that Allah speaks based on the statement, "**He asks...**"
- Confirms Allah’s kindness and generosity based on his questions, "**Who is calling on me...? Who is asking me...? Who is asking for my forgiveness...?**"

People should take advantage of this part of the night, asking for whatever they need from Allah, calling upon him, and asking his forgiveness as he asks, “Who is calling on me...? Who is asking me...? Who is asking for my forgiveness...?” And again, the word “Who” here is presented in the form of a question but is actually intended to motivate rather than ask.

So we should take advantage of this chance because nothing that has passed of your life is in your favor except the times you spent in obedience to Allah. Perhaps more days may pass you by, but when death comes it will be as if you were only born that minute. At that time, everything of one’s past life will mean nothing to him.

Footnotes:

[41] The ḥadīth about this is recorded by Muslim (no. 1348). The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

فَيَقُولُ ، الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِهِمْ بِيَاهِي ثُمَّ لَيَذْنُو وَإِنَّهُ عَرَفَهُ يَوْمَ مِنَ النَّارِ مَنْ عَبَدَا فِيهِ اللَّهُ يُعْتِقَ أَنْ مِنْ أَكْثَرِ يَوْمٍ مِنْ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ أَرَادَ مَا :

There is no day on which Allah frees more servants from the fire than the Day of ‘Arafah. He comes near (them) and praises and boasts about them to the angels, saying, “What do these want?” (or “Anything they want!”)

Posted from the appendix of the article : [In the Company of Allaah: Confirming Allaah is with His Creation](#) –

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