

كشف الشبهات حول علم الله الكامل

**LIFTING THE VEIL OF DOUBTS
AROUND ALLAH’S PERFECT
KNOWLEDGE¹**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IDENTIFYING THE SHUBHA

There are nine times in the Qur’an when Allah states with slight variations **لِيَعْلَمَ** (may know). For example, Allah states,

وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ﴿١٥﴾

“...and that Allah **may know** who helps Him and His apostles in the secret”

Different English commentaries have different translations for the epistemological verb **لِيَعْلَمَ** (may know). Saheeh International has “and so that Allah may **make evident** those who support Him and His messengers unseen”. Mushin Khan has “that Allah **may test** who it is that will help Him (His religion), and His Messengers in the unseen”. Shakir and Pickthall have the most literal translations. Shakir has “and that Allah **may know** who helps Him and His apostles in the secret” and Pickthall has “and that Allah **may know** him who helpeth Him and His messengers, though unseen”.

Not only is the English rendition “and that Allah **may know**” the most literal translation, but it is also the most controversial translation because it is the translation that quickly cultures the bacteria doubt. The doubt can be presented as follows: “If Allah is pre-eternally all-knowing,

¹ Compiled by Abu Ameenah AbdurRahmān Bennett.

how can He attribute to Himself the contradictory notion that He may know, which sounds like He will come to know?" We can contrast this verse with another verse wherein

Allah states,

هَذَا بَلَّغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ ۖ وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

This [Qur'an] is notification for the people that they may be warned thereby and **that they may know** that He is but one God.

In this verse, the verb **لِيَعْلَمُوا** is attributed to humans and humans by nature and nurture are beings who come to know and therefore there is neither contradiction nor controversy when applying the meaning to humans. However, one of Allah's perfect attributes is omniscience which necessitates that He pre-eternally and post-eternally knows all things whether related to Himself or to things outside of His divine Ipseity. So how can we maintain the phrase **"and that Allah may know"** without breaching the integrity of Allah's perfect attribute of knowledge?

ELIMINATING THE SHUBHA

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymeen answers this question in the following manner:

"And that Allah may know who helps Him and His apostles in the secret" The intended meaning [of knowledge here] is the knowledge which becomes manifest (concretised knowledge) which ultimately results in the reward or punishment. As for knowledge that is yet to be then this is a prior knowledge that predates the dispatching of the Messengers and the revelation of scripture, since Allah is omniscient. [And with this understanding], the matter at hand is no longer problematic. You should not say, "Allah only knows after the fact". [On the contrary], we say that Allah's knowledge is of two types: a) the knowledge of a thing before its existence and b) the knowledge of a thing after it comes into existence. So, what is the type of knowledge that ultimately results in reward and punishment? The first or the second type? The prior knowledge [that is known with Allah before the fact] does not entail reward and punishment until a person is put to trial. Therefore, the statement **"and that Allah may know"** refers to knowledge which becomes manifest (concretised knowledge), i.e., knowledge that becomes manifest and instantiated. This is one type of knowledge that results in reward and punishment. As for knowledge that is yet to be concretised then this is knowledge that

__ has been known [by Allah] for an eternity.

Off the back of this salient quote from the Shaykh, we can quickly grasp why some translators of the Qur'an have contextually translated the phrase “and that Allah may know” as “that Allah may test” or “Allah may make evident” so as to obviate the apparent epistemological contraction. However, only when we bifurcate divine knowledge and understand each type accordingly can we truly appreciate the wisdom for Allah's usage of the verb **لِيَعْلَمَ**. By divine dictates of Allah's perfect knowledge, it is not enough that Allah merely knows the potential reality of a thing from eternity. Rather, His perfect attribute of knowledge, in conjunction with His perfect attributes of will and creativity, necessitates that His prior knowledge is perfectly actualised. Thus, when Allah states “and that Allah may know” it means **that Allah may see the perfect concretisation of His perfect knowledge.**

As nestling synonyms, there is no contradiction between **knowing** and **seeing** because seeing adds a dimension to knowing that only transpires after concretisation of said knowledge. Now, this doesn't mean that Allah learns something new after the fact because Allah's absolute pre-eternal knowledge leaves no room to learn something new. Simply put, the novelty is not in the knowledge; the novelty is in the seeing which takes place afterwards. Thus, epistemologically speaking, as it relates to Allah, there is no distinction between **knowing** and **seeing**. The result of divine seeing is no different to divine knowing from a purely epistemological perspective. The distinction only transpires in relation to Allah literally seeing the perfect manifestations of His knowledge. It is the actual seeing that allows us to classify this phenomenon as a second type of knowledge—not from the perspective of raw epistemology because seeing adds nothing to Allah's knowledge—but rather from the perspective that He gets to witness the flawless actualisation of His perfect knowledge. It cannot be overstated that this does not add anything to His knowledge but it does give further insight into His perfection because a being who **knows all and enacts all He knows** is more perfect than a being who **knows all but falls short just once in manifesting His pre-eternal knowledge.**