

# وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ

37:181

## PROPHECY

### النبوة

#### Objectives >>>

##### Students should:

- Understand the necessity of looking towards Prophets for guidance, particularly in moral conduct
- Gain an insight into the concept that there must be a Proof of God on earth.
- Understand the reasons why Prophets must be divinely protected (ma'sūm)
- Understand that as Muslims we must demonstrate good conduct at all times
- Understand that although people do not believe in the same religion, the duty of a Muslim is to treat them kindly and fairly
- Understand how to deal with people of other faiths in different situations according to the commands of Allah

## FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

## LEVEL 4

### Lesson 1: Prophecy

In previous years we have discussed the roles of the Prophets and understood that the Prophets of God are the practical guides of mankind who have come with a revelation from God. They are practical examples whose guidance we are in need of.

In this lesson we shall review what we have learnt in the past, while also discussing the reasons why the Prophets must be ma'sūm (Divinely Protected from sinning). We shall also discuss the concept that the Prophets are the divine guides and the proofs of God on this earth. This will lead us to the conclusion that the Prophets of God did not only come with theoretical teachings, but were also practical examples of the teachings of God. As their followers, we should also be the best examples of the teachings of our religion.

### MISCELLANEOUS FACTS

Number of Prophets: 124,000

Number of Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an: the names of 26 Prophets are mentioned in the Qur'an. There are also references to other prophets without a specific mention of their names.

Prophets all around the world: the Prophets did not only come from the Middle-East, rather from all around the world. Allah (SWT) states:

وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا حَلَّا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

"...and there never was a nation but a warner had passed among them." [35:24]

Ūlul ‘Azm Prophets: Possessors of strong will, the distinguished Prophets of God, these were: Prophet Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (as).

The Final Messenger: The Final Messenger to mankind was the Prophet Muḥammad (saw), He came with the Final Revelation from God (the Holy Qur’ān). The Holy Qur’ān is the most complete form of guidance for mankind. The teachings of Islam are the most complete teachings. We have discussed the fact that the different religions are like grades within a school, in which a person moves from one grade to the next, building on their previous knowledge but gaining more knowledge every year.



## PROOF (HUJJAH) OF GOD

For every community throughout the ages, God sent a proof for (and against) that community, in the form of a prophet. This proof of God is called a Ḥujjah in Arabic. This includes all communities throughout history without exception.

People cannot be held accountable unless there was a proof present in their time. If that proof was there but they ignored it, then they are liable. Because the prophets showed practically that the laws of Allah (SWT) could be put into practice and showed people miracles, they were a proof against people. Whoever ignored these signs would then be liable for censure or punishment.

In the absence of a practical proof, people would have no way of knowing how to apply the theoretical teachings of religion in their daily life.

## WHY WE NEED PROPHETS

Living in this world we are all moving closer to our perfection and success as human beings. To attain the highest degrees of perfection man has found himself with two tools, an inner Prophet (intellect) and an outer Prophet (messengers of God)

Our intellect is capable of realising some of the realities and truths in this world. However, the realities of the Hereafter, as well as some of the deeper realities of this world are beyond the scope of our intellect, especially when it is clouded by our desires and inclinations. Because of this, we need Prophets, whom because of their purity have been given direct access to these realities by God. They teach us about these realities and show us signs for their truth, and help us to live our lives according to these truths.

### **PROPHETS ARE GUIDES**

Whenever we are faced with a problem we cannot solve, or something we do not know, we turn to those who know or who have more experience than us and seek their advice. Think of how many times during the last week you asked your parents, teachers or friends for help or advice? Similarly, whenever we are in need of guidance in matters in any way related to our religion, we need guides, who because of their real, true knowledge; give us the perfect advice in all situations in life.

Our life is a journey towards Allah (SWT) and just as when we are going on an excursion our teacher guides us with his compass or map, on the journey towards Allah (SWT) the prophets are the guides who show us the best and easiest way.

### **PROPHETS TEACH US OUR DUTY BEFORE ALLAH**

The Prophets guide us on our journey by teaching us our duty before Allah, our Lord and Creator. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

"Surely, once one knows he has a Creator, then it is expected from him to also know that his Lord is pleased with certain things and displeased by certain other things and that they will not be understood except through revelation or through a Messenger. Thus, those who do not receive the revelation should seek the knowledge from the Messengers (of God) for they are the proof of God and their obedience is obligatory."<sup>ii</sup>

## THE BEST LIFE IN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

As we discussed above, the Prophets have direct access to the realities of knowledge. They are not like the scientists, economists or even jurists of today, who use their limited resources and knowledge to get as close to the truth as possible. Rather, prophets have access to the truth, as it is, in matters related to both the Hereafter and this world. Therefore, their presence amongst their community gives that community the opportunity to know how to improve their life, both in this world and the Hereafter.

“Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet...who believe in him and honour him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful.” (7:157)

### Review Questions

#### Q1. The Prophets (as) teach us:

- The realities of the Hereafter that we are unable to comprehend with our intellect
- The deeper realities of this world that our intellect cannot understand
- Both a & b

#### Q2. The Prophets (as) teach us about what is :

- Best for our Hereafter
- Best for our worldly life
- Best for our Hereafter and worldly life

#### Q3. The Prophets (as) were proofs for and against their communities because:

- They showed practically how the laws of Allah (SWT) can be followed
- They performed miracles
- Both a & b

## Lesson 2: ‘Iṣmah (Sinlessness of the Prophets)

### PROPHETS ARE SINLESS (MA’ṢŪM):

We have already established two principles:

- The Prophets are the practical examples which we must follow
- The Prophets are our guides who tell us what Allah (SWT) wants from us

These two principles necessitate that the Prophets must be sinless or *ma’ṣūm*. This will be our main point of discussion in this lesson.

*Ma’ṣūm*: means to be protected from sinning by Allah (SWT). This does not mean that they do not have the ability to sin. They are still human and they still have free will and are able to sin. However, they have been given the ability to see the reality of sins and so they avoid them completely. If we could see that when a group of people gossip they are literally ‘eating’ the flesh of their brother, we would not even come close to such an act. One who is *ma’ṣūm* can see exactly this and so they avoid all sins.

One day, a man came to one of our Imams (as) and asked if the Imams were truly sinless. The Imam (as) answered that yes, they were sinless. The man could not fathom this and said ‘how is this possible?’ The Imam (as) was sitting next to a small fire. He picked up one of the pieces of coal in the fire which was intensely hot and asked the man to put it in his mouth. The man was surprised at the Imam’s request and obviously refused. The Imam (as) then explained that when the Imams come across a sin, they see its horrible reality and for them sinning is just like putting a piece of burning coal into their mouth, something which no sensible person would do.

This is the meaning of divine protection or ‘*Iṣmah*’.

We can see from this that the sinlessness of the Imams is not like that of the angels. The angels have no desire to sin, nor do they have the ability to do so. In contrast, the Imams have both the initial desire and the ability to sin, but in each and every instance they choose not to do so.

## WHY DO PROPHETS NEED TO BE MA'ŞŪM?

Protecting the revelation: if prophets could possibly commit sins or make mistakes, how can we know that they have not made a mistake or lied about the revelation? They are our only route of access to the revelation and so if it is possible for them to lie or commit a mistake, then we have no guarantee that the revelation is in fact true. For example, if Prophet Muḥammad could possibly lie, how can we know that the Qur'ān is all true and is the actual word of God?

So if prophets could commit mistakes or lie, the whole point of sending prophets would be lost. Therefore, once we believe in prophets who come with revelation, we must necessarily believe that they are sinless and free from mistakes when delivering revelation.

Being true guides: the Prophets are guides, and so if they commit sins or make mistakes, people would have no reason to follow them. Again, this would defy the very purpose of their mission and message. Therefore, the Prophets must be sinless and free from mistakes for the entirety of their life in order for the people to be able to trust them. It is for this reason that even before Prophet Muḥammad (saw) became a Prophet, he was known as 'The Truthful' and 'The Trustworthy'.

The Prophet (saw) used his previous good standing with his community as a proof against them. When he first announced his message, he went to the hill on the outskirts of Mecca and asked his people 'have you ever known me to lie to you before?' They answered 'no!' He then proceeded to tell them: 'would you believe me if I told you there was an enemy coming from behind the hills to attack you?' They answered 'yes'. He then asked them to declare that there is no God but Allah and began delivering his message. If he had not been of immaculate character previously, he would not have been able to use this as a proof against his people.

The Prophets are Islam in Practice: as we established earlier, the prophets are the practical examples of how the theoretical teachings should be applied. So, if they made mistakes or committed sins, we would have no point of reference, and would not know how to apply the teachings of our religion. In other words, we would no longer have point of reference to tell us what is right and what is wrong. For example, Allah (SWT) commands us to give charity. How would we know how much charity to give, when to give it, and who it is most

important to give charity to? We learn all this from the lifestyle of the Prophets (as).

## THE PROPHETS WERE IMMACULATE ROLE MODELS

Now that we have established the above principles, let us look at how the Prophets fulfilled their role of passing on the revelation and being the perfect examples.

Because of the above reasons, the Prophet (saw) never stated something or made an order, without applying it to himself first. This was firstly to show people his sincerity and secondly to give them a practical example of how to apply the teachings correctly. When the Muslims had arrived in Medina, one of the first orders of the Prophet (saw) gave was to construct the Mosque. As the companions began to collect the stones to build the mosque, they were expecting the Prophet to stand back and take a supervisory role. However, he refused to just watch his followers build the Mosque as a king might do. The Prophet (saw) worked along with his companions, gathering and carrying stones from one place to another. A companion by the name of Usayd ibn Ḥuzayr came to him and said: 'O Prophet of Allah! Permit me to carry it (the stone)'. The Prophet said: 'Go and bring another'. In this manner he showed a glimpse of his sublime character. He said: 'I am a practical man. I am a man of action and not of words only'.

Here is another example of how the Prophet (saw) never preached without practicing first: a woman came to him and asked if he would advise her young son to not eat so many dates, as they were starting to harm him. The Prophet (saw) asked her to come back the next day, and when she did come back the Prophet (saw) advised the young boy as his mother had requested. The Prophet (saw) was then asked why he did not advise the boy on the first day. He answered that he himself had eaten dates that day, and so he could not bring himself to give advice before following it first.

This is the way the Muslims took the example of the Prophet and this is the way all of the Prophets of God had guided mankind: through their actions. In his worship, in war, in peace, amongst family members, and in particular his manners with people, he was the practical example of Islam. It is to this extent that Imam Ali (as) describes the Prophet (saw):

“Certainly in the Prophet (saw) of Allah (SWT) was a sufficient example for you...You should follow your Prophet, the pure, the chaste, may Allah bless him and his descendants. In him is the example for the follower, and the consolation for the seeker of consolation. The most beloved person before Allah is he who follows His Prophet and who treads his footsteps.”<sup>iii</sup>

## WE ARE NOW THE ROLE MODELS OF ISLAM

So far, we have come to see that Prophets taught and spread Islam primarily through their actions. Today, we, who identify ourselves as Muslims and call ourselves by Muslim names such as Muḥammad, ‘Ali, Ḥasan, Zaynab, and Zahrā’, must strive our best to be the best examples of our religion that we can. If we are good examples of Islam, then Islam will look good, and if we are bad examples of Islam, then Islam will look bad.

### Memorisation Task

“Be ornamentations for us and do not be a shame upon us”<sup>iv</sup>

It is not enough for us to say that we are Muslims without acting upon our words. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do.” (61:2-3)

One of the best way in which we can make Islam look good and make our Prophet and Imams proud of us is to display good manners and social etiquette.

The Prophet, our highest example, was humble, kind, and compassionate, showed amazing subtlety when dealing with people’s emotions, always made them feel comfortable, would smile very often and never insulted or humiliated people or treated them rudely. We should follow his example and tread in his footsteps. Imagine the following situations and how the choice of action you make can influence others’ opinion of you and Islam:

- *Letting someone into line before you vs. fighting over the spot in the line*
- *Insulting with anger vs. Replying to an insult with kind words*
- *Holding the door open for someone vs. ignoring them and walking through yourself*
- *Smiling at a person vs. frowning at a person*
- *Being humble before your teachers and respecting them vs. being rude and arrogant towards them*

The following story serves as an example for us:

A man from Syria saw Imam Ḥasan (as) riding a horse and started insulting him. Imam Ḥasan (as) did not reply to the man. When the Syrian stopped, Imam Ḥasan (as) proceeded towards him, cheerfully greeted him and said:

“Old man, I believe you are a stranger. Maybe you have confused me with another person. If you ask forgiveness, it is granted to you. If you ask for a means of transportation, we shall provide it for you. If you are hungry, we shall feed you. If you are in need of clothes, we shall clothe you. If you are deprived, we shall grant you. If you are being sought, we shall give you refuge. If you have any need, we shall fulfil it for you. And if you wish to proceed with your caravan be our guest until you leave, it would be more useful to you, for we hold a good position, great dignity and vast belongings.”

When the man heard the words of Imam Ḥasan (as) he cried and said: ‘I testify that you are Allah's heir on His earth. Allah surely knows to whom He assigns His Message. You and your father were the most hated of Allah's creatures to me, but now you are the most beloved of Allah's creatures to me.’

Here is another example from the life of our seventh Imam, Musā al-Kāḍim (as): there was a poor uneducated farmer who was very rude to our Imam. He would insult the Imam whenever he got a chance. However, our Imam never said anything or got angry in return. One day Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) rode out to the rude man's farm where the man was working. When the man saw the Imam, he stopped working and put his hands on his hips, ready to be abusive again.

Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) dismounted, went towards the man and greeted him with a friendly, smiling face. The Imam then told him that he should not overwork himself and that the land he had was very good. He then asked him how much he was expecting to receive for the crop.

The farmer was amazed at Imam Musā al-Kāḍim's (as) politeness and sincerity. He waited a little then said that he was expecting to get around 200 gold pieces. Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) took out a purse and gave it to the farmer telling him that in it was 300 gold pieces, more than the value of his crop. Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) told the man to take the money and also to keep the crop, and that he hoped the man would receive more for it. The farmer, faced with such kind behaviour and good manners, was very ashamed of himself and asked Imam Musā al-Kāḍim (as) for forgiveness.

After that whenever the man would see Imam Musā al-Kāḍim, he would greet him very politely.

We should emulate our prophets in practising our religion in all aspects of our daily life, especially when it comes to our manners and how we treat the people around us.

## Review Questions

### Q1. Being *ma'sūm* means:

- A person is not able to sin
- A person is able to sin but always chooses not to do so
- A person does not sin after becoming a prophet

### Q2. The Prophets and Imams (as) always:

- Practised good manners
- Practised good manners only towards those who were good to them
- Practised good manners only towards their followers

### Q3. The Prophets are *ma'sūm* so that:

- We have a perfect example to follow when we want to apply our religion
- We know for sure that there are no mistakes or lies in the revelation
- Both a & b

## Lesson 3: Other Religious Texts

In previous years we have learnt a little about other faiths and how to deal with people who have different religions such as the Jews, Christians, Buddhists, etc. In this lesson we will expand on the way we interact with people of other faiths by looking at what the Qur'an teaches us about this.

### HOW DO WE DEAL WITH NON-MUSLIMS?

We come across a variety of people every day in different situations such as at school, when shopping, at work, in the street, neighbours and so on. As we all know, these people are all created by Allah (SWT) and so we feel inclined to respect them. At the same time they do not have a similar belief as we do as Muslims and others may not believe in God at all so we become confused as how we are to treat them. How does Allah (SWT) tell us to deal with His creatures and what is our duty towards them?

When it comes to dealing with people in general, there are two key āyat that we need to keep in mind:

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily the most honourable of you with Allah is the most dutiful (of his duty towards God)...”  
(Quran 49: 13)

“Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who did not fight against you on account of your religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily Allah loves those who deal with equity. It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of your religion and have driven you out of your home, and helped to drive you out, that Allah forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the wrong-doers” (60: 8-9)

We need to treat all people with justice and kindness regardless of their faith, religion or race because we are all created by Allah. We should treat others the way we would like to be treated.

We also need to remember that the people we take as friends have a great influence on the way we think, behave, believe etc... and so we need to be careful when it comes to whom we befriend. We also have to be

careful not to befriend the enemies of Islam, who fight against us or our fellow Muslims because of our religion.

Allah (SWT) describes to us the limits that we should observe in certain situations:

- When people of other religions try to debate with us, we should try our best not to cause fights and divisions amongst people. Try to see the similarities between each religion and build on that; this also has the advantage of leading them to see the beauty of Islam. Try not to argue about things which will only cause harm and from which no one will benefit. However discussing issues that cause unity is favourable. For example, many Christians do not know that we believe in Jesus (as a prophet) so when we mention this to them they feel happy and more comfortable and it can open up many positive discussions.
- We should not insult other religions or the 'gods' of other religions such as Buddha, or the Christian faith because if we do, there is a big chance that in return they will insult Islam and Allah (SWT).
- Regardless of the religious or cultural background of those who try to defame Islam, we should never take them as friends as there is a good chance that they may lead us astray or deceive us somehow when we befriend them. Not being their friend does not mean that we attack them or say insulting or harmful things to them. Rather it means that we should not keep regular company with them and we should not follow their bad habits nor encourage their anti-Islamic (or anti-religion) attitude.

## PEACE WITH NON-MUSLIMS

We see in many instances during the life of the Prophet (saw), that he entered into peace treaties with people of different religions. One of the best examples of this was what happened between the Muslims and the Christians of Najrān.



When the Christians of Najrān challenged the Prophet about Jesus being the son of God, the Prophet explained to them the truth in a logical manner. However, when they refused to accept the truth the last option was for the Prophet (by the command of Allah) to challenge them by invoking Allah's curse on the liar (regarding the 'divinity' of Jesus).

This type of challenge is called Mubāhala and hence this event is known as the event of Mubāhala. The next day, once they saw that the Prophet had taken with him his household (Imam 'Ali, Sayyedah Fāṭimah, Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusain) to the challenge, they saw the light in their faces and knew that if they were to challenge the prophet and his household God would destroy the Christians. Instead they resorted to asking the Prophet to come to a different agreement amongst the Christians and Muslims, which the Prophet accepted.<sup>v</sup> Due to the success of the treaty and the honour it proved to the Prophet and Ahlul Bayt, the day of Mubāhala became a celebrated event in the Islamic calendar.

We see successful relations amongst Muslims and Christians in other instances also. At the beginning of Islam, Muslims were oppressed and tortured by the pagans of Quraysh. The Prophet (saw) decided to send a group of Muslims to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) where a Christian Emperor ruled to ask for his refuge. He dispatched the group of Muslims under the command of Ja'far (the brother of Imam 'Ali). Upon their arrival, they were greeted well due to the Muslims' respectful mannerism and behaviour. Ja'far was asked about Islam and in particular Jesus in the view of Islam. Ja'far recited verses of Ṣurat Maryam which touched the Christian Emperor deeply and so he offered the Muslims protection in his land. Allah (SWT) describes the Emperor's reaction as follows:

“And when they hear what has been revealed to the apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognise...” (5:83)



This is the effect of good behaviour towards non-Muslims. If we treat them kindly, they will be willing to listen to you when it comes to Islam. Even if they don't accept Islam, they are inclined to remain at peace with Muslims and this prevents a great deal of fights, wars and chaos. This is explained in the following Ayah of the Quran:

“And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! He between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.” (41:34)

## Review Questions

### Q1. Prophet Muḥammad:

- a. Never made peace treaties with non-Muslims
- b. Made peace treaties with non-Muslims on many occasions
- c. Always made peace treaties and never fought in any wars

### Q2. Which non-Muslims are we not allowed to treat with kindness?

- a. All of them
- b. Jews
- c. Those who fight Muslims because of their religion and force them out of their lands

### Q3. When debating with non-Muslims:

- a. We should be very aggressive so we can convince them
- b. We should maintain our manners and debate only about useful things
- c. We should never debate with non-Muslims

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#### <sup>i</sup> Bibliography

- 1- Ehawza, Semester 1, Course 3, Lectures 7-9
- 2- Man and Universe, Shaheed Muradha Muttahari
- 3- Shi'ah, Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai
- 4- The Holy Qur'an
- 5- Nahjul Balagha
- 6- Behar Al-Anwar
- 7- Imamate and Leadership, by Sayyed Mujtaba Mousavi Lari

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 1- Short Clips of stories from the life of the Prophet (s): [www.youtube.com/lostprophet786](http://www.youtube.com/lostprophet786)  
Subsequently type in Prophet Mohammed Stories in the search tab.
- 2- More information about 'Esmah:  
Go to the online library at: [www.ihic.org.au](http://www.ihic.org.au) and click on the link titled, 'Infallibility'
- 3- Seal of the Prophets and His Message Lessons on Islamic Doctrine (lessons 1-8)- <http://www.al-islam.org/Seal/index.html>
- 4- The Prophet and Prophetic Tradition - The Last Prophet and Universal Man- <http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/default.asp?url=prophet.htm>
- 5- For more stories from the life of the Prophet (s) and the Imams (as)

<sup>ii</sup> (Majlesi, Beharul-Anwaar, vol.23, p.18)

<sup>iii</sup> (Nahjul-Balagha, Semon 158)

<sup>iv</sup> (Biharul Anwar, v. 85. P. 83)

<sup>v</sup> See surat Aali Imran (ch 3) ayat 61-64