

Home > Mushaf Fatimah (a.s) > Angelic Discourse With Those Who Are Not Messengers > Did Jibra'il descend (to earth) after the Messenger of Allah's(s.a.w) demise?

Angelic Discourse With Those Who Are Not Messengers

Muhaddathah

One of the titles of Lady Fatimah(a.s) was *muhaddathah*, that is, someone with whom the angels have spoken. We have already mentioned that *Mushaf Fatimah* was written from what was dictated by the Angel (Jibra'il), but, is it possible that angels would speak to someone not a prophet?

The Shi'a believe that the prophets and messengers are not the only ones with who angels have spoken.¹ They have also spoken with the Imams and lady Fatimah(a.s). This is certainly possible for we have a verse in the Quran which says that revelation is not exclusively for prophets, that Allah and the angles have spoken to ordinary people. One example is Maryam(a.s), the mother of Prophet 'Isa(a.s). In Aal-e 'Imran (surah 3), in the 42nd-45th verses we read, "Oh Maryam,' said the angels, 'truly Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you over all the women of the world'..."

Likewise in Maryam (surah 19), verses 17-21 we read,

So [Maryam] took a veil (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man. She said: Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent Allah, if you are one guarding (against evil). He said: I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I will give you a pure boy. She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste? He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy to Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed.

Among others with whom the angels have spoken are Sarah(a.s), the wife of prophet Ibrahim(a.s). In Hud (surah 11), verses 71-77 we read,

And his wife was standing (by), so she laughed, then We gave her the good news of Ishaq and after Ishaq of (a son's son) Yaquub. She said: "O wonder! Shall I bear a son when I am an extremely old

woman and this my husband an extremely old man? Most surely this is a wonderful thing.” They said: “Do you wonder at Allah's bidding? The mercy of Allah and His blessings are on you, O people of the house, surely He is Praised, Glorious.” So when fear had gone away from Ibrahim and good news came to him, he began to plead with Us for Lut's people. Most surely Ibrahim was forbearing, tender-hearted, oft-returning (to Allah), “O Ibrahim! leave off this, surely the decree of your Lord has come to pass, and surely there must come to them a chastisement that cannot be averted.” And when Our messengers came to Lut, he was grieved for them, and he lacked strength to protect them, and said, “This is a hard day.”

Also, Prophet Musa's(a.s) mother received revelation, as in noted in Qisas (surah 28), verse 7 where it says,

“And We revealed to Musa's mothers, saying: Give him suck, then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve; surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the messengers.”

Thus, there is no inherent connection between revelation and prophethood. In other words, it's possible for angels to converse with and give revelation to a person who is not a messenger. Imam al-Sadiq(a.s) says, “Fatimah was called 'Muhaddithah' because the angels descended from heaven and spoke with her in the same way that they spoke with Maryam, daughter of 'Imran.”²

In another hadith it says that the angels speak with the Imams. Imam al-Jawad(a.s) narrates that Imam Ali(a.s) said to ibn Abbas, “I and eleven of my descendents are all muhaddath.”³

Also, Imam al-Baqir(a.s) said, “Twelve Imams from the house of Mohammad are all muhaddath.”⁴

Imam al-Sadiq(a.s) narrates from the Messenger of Allah(s.a.w), “Truly among my Ahl al-Bayt are twelve people who are muhaddath.”⁵

Imam al-Sadiq(a.s) says, “A messenger sees and speaks with angels; a prophet sees them in his dreams. Occassionaly prophethood and messengership are found in one person.” When that happens, “muhaddath” refers to that type of person. “A muhaddath is the one who hears the voice but doesn't see [the angel].”⁶

Thusly, there is no inherent relationship between speaking with angels and prophethood, and angels can speak with those who are not prophets. Therefore it cannot be said that the Shi'a believe that Lady Fatimah(a.s) and the Imams(a.s) are prophets because they say that the angels spoke with them.⁷ It's worth mentioning that in the Sunni books are reports of certain persons who, according to them, spoke with angles. For example, Abu Bakr,⁸

'Umar,⁹ 'Imraan bin al-Hasein,¹⁰ Abu al-Mu'aali al-Saalih,¹¹ and Zakaariyah al-Naaqid,¹² and...

Did Jibra'il descend (to earth) after the Messenger of Allah's(s.a.w) demise?

In some hadith it has come that after the demise of Allah's messenger, Jibra'il gave a valediction saying, "My final mission on earth was for you and I will descend for no one after you."¹³ In light of this, how can it be that Jibra'il spoke to Lady Fatimah(a.s)?

Jalaal al-Din Al-Suyuti al-Shafi'i al-Ash`ari (d. 911, CE), who is one of the renowned Sunni scholars,¹⁴ answered this very question. He is of the belief that the chain of authority regarding this hadith and others similar in content are weak in content.¹⁵ Moreover, Muslim opinion on this matter is contradictory; all agree that each year Jibra'il along with other angels alight upon the earth on Laylat al-Qadr at the end of the month of Ramadan. A second point is that Jibra'il's carrying of revelation cannot have been suspended after the demise of the Prophet(S), for, Jibra'il must, according to Sunni hadith, bring revelation to Prophet 'Isa(a.s) after he had killed the Dajjal.^{10, 16}

Of course, there is no doubt that after the demise of Allah's Messenger(s.a.w) there will be no revelation in the sense of prophetic revelation for anyone. Imam Ali(a.s) after the Messenger's(s.a.w) passing said, "When he died, revelation ended too,"¹⁷ and, "With your death, prophethood and the news of heavenly affairs was cut-off like it never had with the death of other prophets."¹⁸

Likewise, Sheikh Mohammad Husein Aal-e Kaashif al-Ghita says, "The Imams believe that whoever believes or insists that after Mohammad(s.a.w) there came a prophet or revelation or scripture is an unbeliever."¹⁹

The Imam's words, and the opinions of the Shi'a scholars means that prophetic revelation will no longer occur. However, Jibra'il's descent and conversing with the friends of Allah is not an impossibility. Seyyed Mohsin Amin in his book, *A'ayaan al-Shi'ah* about this matter writes:

It is not farfetched and there is no doubt that Jibra'il would speak with Zahra(a.s) and that Ali(a.s) would hear it and scribe it in a book we call *Mushaf Fatimah*, because the reliable companions of the Ahl al-Bayt have related it to us from the Imams themselves.

To the one who cannot accept this matter, who considers it unlikely, who writes it off as hyperbole, we say, "Do you think that the beloved of the Prophet(s.a.w), Lady Zahra(a.s), did not merit this munificence? Is there any doubt that this hadith is correct given that this reliable narration was transmitted from our Imams? Such a munificence was bestowed on Aasif bin Barkhiyyah²⁰ and also Prophet Solomon(a.s) who are not dearer to Allah than the family of Mohammad(s.a.w). We must also add that the gracious Quran, that divine book, speaks of Musa's mother, that she too received revelation."

Ibn Khaldun²¹ says, "It has been narrated that the Prophet(s.a.w) said, 'There are among you those to

whom the prophets speak.” The author of *Irshaad al-Saari* narrates from one of the companions, “The angels would speak with me until the point that they began praising me.”²² In fact, some of the pious people had seen Khidr²³ guiding 'Umar 'Abdul 'Aziz, however others could not see (Khidr). These are all from (Sunni) sources.

The author of *Sirah al-Halabi*²⁴ and some others have said that there are reasons why Jibra'il came to the Ahl al-Bayt after the demise of the Prophet(s.a.w) and gave condolences to them.

“Don't all these narrations from the Shi'a and Sunnis remove all sense of improbability and doubt about the munificent blood and soul of the Prophet(s.a.w) (i.e. Lady Fatimah (a.s), mistress of the ladies of all the worlds and henceforth her pure and purified progeny?”²⁵

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1. There are a number of Sunni hadith that suggest the same. Ibn 'Umar stated that angels spoke to him in dreams (Sahih Bukhari, v.2, b.21, hadith #255). 'Umar bin al-Khattab (Ibn 'Umar's father) states that he, along with other companions, saw and listened to the Angel Gabriel speak with the prophet Mohammad (Sahih Muslim, v. 1, b. 1, hadith #1
 2. Dala'il al-Imamah, p. 14.
 3. Kulayni, M. Usul al-Kaafi, v. 1, p.533; Halbi, Taqrib al-Ma'arif, p. 132.
 4. Khisaal Sadduq, v.2, p.430, hadith #49.
 5. Nu'mani, Mohammad bin Ibrahim, Al-Ghaybah, pp.66-67.
 6. Aashub, Abu Ja'far Rashidaddin Mohammad bin Ali bin Shahr, Al-Manaaqib, v.7, p.776.
 7. This is in effect the argument laid out by one 'Abdullah Al-'Asimi in Al-Siraa' bayn al-Islaam wa al-Wuthniyyah on page 35 of that book. He states, “Fatimah and Ali bin Abi Talib and their children are prophets and messengers according to this sect (i.e. the Shi'ah).” If his conclusion is correct, then it can be said that the Sunnis believe that the first two Caliphs as well as others were prophets because according to Sunni beliefs, angels spoke with them.
 8. Bukhari, M. Sahih al-Bukhari, v.4, p.241, hadith #7679.
 9. Al-Masaahif, p.6.
 10. Al-'Iraqi, Zaynul Abideen Abu Fadhl 'Abd al-Rahim bin al-Husein, Tarah al-tathrib fi sharh al-taqrib, v. 1, p.90.
 11. Abu Jowzi, Siffat al-Sufuh, v. 17, p.72, researched by Ikhwayn 'Ata, Daar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah publications.
 12. Khatib Baghdadi, Taarikh Baghdaad, v.7, p.462, Daar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut.
 13. Sirah Halabi, v.3, p.353, Daar Ahya' al-Tiraath al-'Arabi.
 14. Suyuti was a renowned Sunni scholar and prolific author with over 700 extent works attributed to him. He was also a Shadhili Sufi. He was considered to be the foremost authority of hadith and 'Arabic language of his day. While he lauded Imam 'Ali in his work, Al-qawl al-jali fi fada'il `Ali (The manifest discourse on the virtues of `Ali ibn Abi Talib), he was no friend of the Shi'a. For example, he penned the polemic, Risala al-sayf al-qati` al-lami` li ahl al-i`tirad al-shawa'i` (Epistle of the sharp and glistening sword to the Shi'i people of opposition) as well.
 15. Sirah Halabi, v.3, p.353, Daar Ahya' al-Tiraath al-'Arabi.
 16. Dajjal refers to what is commonly referred to as the “Anti-Christ” in Islamic eschatology. He is a one-eyed person who will wreak havoc on the earth and destroy many towns. 'Isa will come back from heaven, where Allah had taken him to to save him from crucifixion, and kill the Dajjal, after which, according to Sunni traditions, he will receive a revelation. For example, in Sahih Muslim, book 41, chapter 21, hadith #7015 reads in part, “[‘Isa] will then search for [Dajjal] until he catches hold of him at the gate of Ludd and kills him. Then a people whom Allah had protected will come to 'Isa, son of Maryam, and he will wipe their faces and inform them of their ranks in Paradise; it will be under such conditions that Allah will reveal to Jesus these words: “I have brought forth from amongst My servants such people against whom none would be able to fight...”
 17. Nahj al-Balaghah v.2, p. 16, lecture 133, 'Aalami edition.

18. Ibid, p.233, sermon 235.
19. Asl al-Shi'ah wa aswahiha, p.20, Mu'assassah Imam Ali publication, Qom.
20. Aasif bin Barkhiyyah was a companion of the Prophet Solomon(a.s) and was the one who volunteered (and did) to retrieve the throne of Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba as is noted in the following Quranic verses, "One who had the knowledge of the Book said: 'I will bring [the throne] to you in the twinkling of an eye.' Then when [Solomon] saw it settled beside him, he said, 'This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own soul, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honored.'"(27:40)
21. Ibn Khaldun was the famous Sunni historian from Tunisia, laid the foundations for sociology, ethnography, and philosophy of history with his seminal work, Al-Muqaddimah. In it he repudiates the Shi'a, "Ahl al-Bayt have excepted themselves and deviated by schools (madhahib) innovated by them, and fiqh (jurisprudence) followed by them alone, and founded it upon their creed (madhhab) based on censuring some of the Companions" (Chapter on the Knowledge of Jurisprudence).
22. Al-Qistaani, Mohammad, Irshaad al-Saari li sharh Sahih al-Bukhari.
23. Hadhrat Khidr is the man who taught the Prophet Musa in the episode recounted in Chapter 18, verses 60-82 of the Quran.
24. Al-Suyuti. Cf. note 14.
25. A'ayaan al-Shi'ah, v. 1, p.714.

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