

# Prophet Muhammad (S), a Divine Mercy for the Worlds

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## Preface

Each and every one of the Prophets (May peace and mercy of God be upon them all) is a manifestation of Divine Names and Attributes. As there is no repetition in Divine Manifestation, there is no repetition in the story of the Prophets. The story of every Prophet is unique in its style.

What happened with Prophet Noah (as), Prophet Ibrahim (as), Prophet Moses (as), and Prophet Jesus (as) did not repeat for any other Prophet, nor did what happen with other Prophets happen for these Prophets. For, every Messenger of God demonstrates a particular divinity, unlike the man made stories in which their themes are nearly the same. We all know that Iranian and Indian movies must end with a marriage ceremony. The theme of Hollywood movies is nothing other than sex or violence.

All Prophets are the Signs of Allah and the shadow of ‘The Light of the heavens and the earth’. Nonetheless, the holy Messenger of Islam (S) was the shadow of ‘and there is none like unto Him’. Thus, the story of the life of Prophet Muhammad (S) overshadows the stories of all the previous Prophets, as he is the ring and the seal of all of them.

## The Ranks of the Prophets

When the Almighty Allah chooses a human being for His great divine mission, he must enjoy the highest

degrees of virtues. Hence, the messengers of Allah are the most virtuous of people on earth.

Are there any degrees in rank amongst the Prophets themselves? The holy Quran confirms that whilst the messengers of Allah are more virtuous than other people, there are degrees in rank and preference in virtues amongst them. The Almighty Allah states:

***“Those Messengers! We preferred some of them to others; to some of them Allah spoke (directly); others He raised to degrees (of honour); and to Jesus, the son of Mary, We gave clear proofs and evidences and supported him with the Holy Spirit.”(2:253)***

***“And indeed, We have preferred some of the Prophets above others, and to David We gave the Psalms .”(17:55)***

Whilst the demonstrative pronoun ‘those’ (*Telka* in Arabic) is utilized in the first Ayah to express their higher status in comparison to other people; the rest of the Ayah clearly indicates the degrees of the Prophets are not equal.

Although the ranks of the Prophets are not the same in the sight of God, they are all His Messengers, absolute obedient servants, and as such we should not make any distinction in that sense between any of them. Thus, Islam denotes the wrong dogma of the divinity of Christ and blames Christians for exaggerating about the personality of Prophet Jesus. The Holy Quran as such teaches the Muslims:

***“Say (O Muslims), We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibrahim, Ishmael, Isaa, Jacob, and to the offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob, and that which has been given to Moses, and Jesus, and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have submitted.”(2: 136)***

The different degree of the Prophets in their ranks does not also mean they differed between themselves. The Prophets were like teachers of one school teaching one subject (Islam) for different grades. Should all the Prophets descend on earth and live in one city, there will be no disagreement among them whatsoever.

Thus, the Almighty Allah in explaining the degrees of the Prophets states:

***“We preferred some of them above others”. But to state the different opinion between the ordinary humans, He states: “If Allah had willed, succeeding generations would not have fought against each other, after clear Signs of Allah had come to them, but they differed – some of them believed and others disbelieved.”(2:253)***

# Muhammad, the Most Preferred Prophet

***“Amongst all the Prophets and the Messengers of Allah, the last and the Seal of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad is the most preferred of all and the highest in rank in the sight of Allah. The Almighty Allah states: ‘Those Messengers! We preferred some of them to others; to some of them Allah spoke (directly); others He raised to degrees.’” (2:253)***

The phrase ‘others He raised to degrees’ is meant for Prophet Muhammad (S). There are several reasons as to why the Almighty Allah has raised the degrees of His last Messengers above all other Prophets. The following are some examples:

The Almighty Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (S) but as a mercy for the worlds. Thus, he must be the most virtuous of all creation, material and immaterial. Allah states:

***“and We have sent you (O Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the worlds”.(21: 107)***

The Almighty Allah elevated the name of Prophet Muhammad (S) to be declared five times a day after the Name of Allah during Adhan and Iqama.

***“And have We not raised high your fame?”(94:4)***

The holy Quran considers the obedience to Prophet Muhammad equal to the obedience to God.

***“He who obeys the Messenger, has indeed obeyed Allah.” A covenant with Prophet Muhammad is a covenant with God. “Verily, those who give pledge to you (O Muhammad) they are giving pledge to Allah.”(48: 10).***

Satisfaction of Prophet Muhammad is coupled with the satisfaction of Allah.

***“It is more fitting that they should please Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad).”(9:62)***

Answering the call of Prophet Muhammad is regarded the same as answering the call of the Almighty Allah.

***“O you who believe! Answer Allah and (His) Messenger when he calls you.”(8:24)***

The Almighty Allah honoured Moses (as) by granting him nine Signs (miracles)<sup>1</sup> but Allah established every sentence of the Quran –which was granted to Prophet Muhammad– as a Sign (miracle) and calls for a challenge upon all the humans and the jinns if they could produce something like unto it. The main miracle of Prophet Muhammad, i.e. the holy Quran is more virtuous than the miracles of the previous Prophets, because not only it is the verbatim Word of God, it is an everlasting miracle.

If the miracle of Prophet Muhammad is more virtuous than the miracles of the previous Prophets, then

Prophet Muhammad himself must also be more virtuous than other Prophets. The Almighty God addressed the Prophets with their names. For instance, He says: **“O Moses!”(20: 10)**, or **“O Adam!”(2:35)**, or **“O Ibrahim!”(37: 104)**. But He is addressing the Prophet of Islam with his title ‘O Messenger!’ or ‘O Prophet!’ which indicates a special honour.

The Almighty Allah ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam out of respect to him, but ordered the angels to give their *Salat* to Prophet Muhammad (S) in order for them to be nearer to Allah. Also, *Salat* for Prophet Muhammad continues until the Day of Judgment, whereas the prostration for Adam (as) had to be offered only once. Moreover, Allah ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam (as) in respect of the light of Muhammad (S) that Adam (as) had on his forehead. In short, all the virtues of the previous Prophets were also given to Prophet Muhammad (S) in addition to his own unique virtues.

## Unique Characteristics of Prophet Muhammad

As mentioned earlier, the Prophets of Allah are the manifestation of divine beauty and names, and the Prophet of Islam demonstrates the divine attribute of ‘there is none like unto Him’. The following are some of the unique characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (S).

- The light and spirit of Muhammad was the first creation of Allah.
- **Universal Mission:** The most we can say about the scope of the mission of the previous prophets is that their mission included all people of their time across the globe and remained in force until the advent of the next law-making prophet. The mission of the Prophet of Islam, however, was for the whole of mankind across the globe and until the Day of Judgment. The Almighty Allah states:

***“And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a giver of glad tidings and a warner to all mankind.”(34:28)***

- He is mercy for the whole worlds:

***“And We have not sent you but as a mercy for the worlds.”(21: 107)***

- The seal of the Prophets:

***“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last (end) of the Prophets.”(36:40)***

- His Scripture is a protector and a guard over all the previous scriptures, safeguarding the truth in them which has been perverted by man throughout history.

***“And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it and Muhayman (a protector and controller) over it.”(5:48)***

- The religion of Prophet Muhammad (S) was Islam in its complete form with no perversion in it, and hence it is the right and straight (*Qayyem*) religion.

***“So set you (O Muhammad) your face on the straight and right religion.”(30:43)***

## **The World of al-Thar (Particles)**

Has there been any world before this physical world? Or to be more precise, is there any world other than the world of matter? Did creation begin with the creation of the physical world or are there other types of life beyond this matter?

Many *Ayaat* in the Quran and numerous Ahadith indicate that there has been a world of spirit prior to this physical world. All humans had a form of existence in that world. It was in that world that the Almighty Allah introduced Himself to mankind and took a covenant from them not to worship other than Him. Mankind in that world witnessed the Almighty God and was free from the filth of polytheism and doubts.

The late Allamah Tabatabaei suggested in his *al-Mizan* that the world of *al-thar* does not have a temporal preceding to this, our physical, world rather it does exist with it and encompasses it. It is the world of Sovereign (*malakout*) that the Almighty Allah showed to Prophet Ibrahim<sup>2</sup> (as); it was in the world where the instinct of knowing God was enforced in man’s nature.

The following *Ayaat* reveals the existence of the world of al-Thar:

***“And when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed and made them testify as to themselves (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We testify, lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: Verily, we have been unaware of this.”(7: 172)***

***“How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life and then unto Him you will return.”(2:28)***

One of the most complicated philosophical issues is about the relation of a changeable to the Unchangeable, i.e. the relation between the creation and the Creator. Muslim philosophers have dealt with this issue under the topic of ‘actuality and potentiality’.

It is proven in Islamic mysticism as well as transcendental metaphysics of Mulla-Sadra that the Almighty Allah is the Extended Existence (*wujud munbasit*) in all respects. The first being who appeared by God and became His first manifestation, must be the nearest to God and demonstrate the most possible divine Names and Attributes.

## **Stages of the Bow of Descent**

To understand the concept of the first creation and manifestation of God, you need to activate your

sense of imagination and fly out of the world of matter. Let your mind go beyond the four dimensions of matter. Now you are in the world of spirit. You may even endeavour to pass the entire contingent world be it matter or immaterial worlds. Muslim mystics consider the stages of life as follows:

## **1. The stage of the Unseen of the Unseens**

**1. The stage of the Unseen of the Unseens<sup>3</sup>:** In this stage all that is considered is but the essence of Allah without even any Names or Attributes, let alone His creation. This is the stage that no contingent being can ever reach.

## **2. The Stage of the First Appointment**

**2. The Stage of the First Appointment: The stage of Uniqueness: (ahadiyyat).** This is the stage where one being or the appointment of one being can be considered. What we mean by the appointment of one being is that an attribute could be related to God. i.e. an attribute that is the source of all other attributes and beings. This is the stage of God witnessing His essence for Himself which is called the stage of uniqueness (of God) or the stage of “or nearer”.

## **3. The stage of the Second Appointment**

**3. The stage of the Second Appointment: The stage of the Oneness (the distance of two bows lengths).** This is the stage of all divine names and attributes. All Knowing, All Mighty, All Living and all the names of God is considered at this stage.

After the stage of Oneness is the stage of *A'yanneh sabiteh* as named by Ibn Arabi. This is the stage of the manifestation of divine names and attributes. This is the stage of the appearance of the manifestations of divine names and attributes, manifestations which were concealed in the previous stage<sup>4</sup>.

Creation<sup>5</sup> begins from this stage and the question is what would be the first creation. Some philosophers regarded the first creation or manifestation the intellect for it is immaterial and is not limited to space and time<sup>6</sup>.

## **The Law of the Noblest Contingent**

From the time of Aristotle a law was accepted by philosophers known as the law of the Noblest Contingent; Muslim philosophers, whether the peripatetics, the illuminists as well as the transcendental metaphysics all regarded this law with special attention. The meaning of the law of the Noblest Contingent, in a nutshell, is that there is no leap in the cone of creation be it in the bow of descent or ascension.

This means in the bow of descent until and unless the Noblest Contingent doesn't exist the less noble

contingent cannot come into existence for the leap is impossible. Similarly, in the bow of ascension, unless and until a contingent fulfills the perfection of all the previous contingents, cannot elevate to a higher stage for leaping is impossible. The conclusion of this law is that the first manifestation of God must be the noblest of His creation.

Now the question is what is and who is the Noblest Creation of God? Numerous *ahadith* introduce the first manifestation of God as 'the light of the lights', 'the light of Muhammad', 'water', 'the pen', 'the manifest Imam', 'the intellect' and similar expressions which are different names for one reality who is by definition the noblest manifestation of divine attributes and for whose sake the rest of creation appeared.

According to Ibn Arabi he is the perfect man who is the manifestation of the greatest name of God and all His attributes of beauty and glory. Ibn Arabi asserts that this is none other than the reality of Muhammadia.<sup>7</sup>

It is narrated from Prophet Muhammad (S) to have said about himself that 'I am Qotham' which means 'I am the owner of comprehensiveness and the collection of all goodness'<sup>8</sup>. It is for this reason that in the supplication of the night of Mab'ath it is narrated in respect to the Prophet of Islam (S) "O Allah, Surely I ask You by Your greatest manifestation in this night and in this great month and Your most honoured messenger."

Ibn Arabi in his mystical encyclopedia states that the first creation who is the nearest to God is the reality of Muhammad who is known as the intellect and is the master of the entire world and the first who appeared in the world of contingents. He furthers that the nearest to Him is Ali ibn Abu Taleb (as) the Imam of the world and the secret of all the prophets<sup>9</sup>.

## **The First Manifestation in Ahadith**

Numerous *ahadith* indicates that the first manifestation of God is the light of Muhammad and Ali Muhammad and all the rest are created in honour of them. Note that the light of Muhammad is an expression for his essence and spirit which is before the creation of matter.

Jabir ibn Abdullah said, "I asked the Messenger of Allah what was the first that God created? The prophet replied, "Light of your prophet O Jabir. God created him and then from him created every good."<sup>10</sup>

Jabir ibn Yazid narrated from Imam Baqir (as), "O Jabir. Verily the first that God created was Muhammad and his pure family. Those who guide and are guided. They were the spirits of light before the mighty hand of God." Jabir said I asked the Imam what he meant by the spirits of light? The Imam replied, 'Shadow of the Light'<sup>11</sup>.

It seems the meaning of the shadow of the Light refers to the fact that God is "The Light" as is refers to in *Ayatul Noor* and the spirit of Muhammad is His shadow and His first Manifestation.

Jabir ibn Abdullah narrated from the Prophet (S), "The first that the Almighty God created was my light who created it from His Light and it derived from the glory of His greatness. Then that light approached circulating by the might until it reached the Glory of the Greatness in seventy thousand years and then prostrated for God in glorification. Then from that light the light of Ali gushed out and so my light was encompassing by the Glory and the light of Ali was encompassing by the Might. 12"

Abu Dharr al Ghifari in a long hadith in description of the journey of ascension narrated from the prophet, "I said O angels of my Lord. Do you know us as we deserved to be known? They said, 'O Prophet of God. How don't we know you and you are the first creation of God, He created you as the spirits of light from His Light in a light from the sublimity of His Dignity and the sublimity of His Kingdom and the sublimity of His Honourable Face.'" 13

Imam Ali (as) said, "Surely the Almighty God created from the light of Muhammad twenty oceans of light. In every ocean there is knowledge that none other than God knows about... Surely the light of Muhammad was sent down from the ocean of dignity so he came down to the ocean of patience then to the ocean of reverence then to the ocean of humbleness then to the ocean of satisfaction then to the ocean of loyalty then to the ocean of forbearing then to the ocean of piety... Until it went through twenty oceans. When it exited from the last ocean the Almighty God said 'O My friend and the master of My messengers and the first of My creation and the last of My messengers, you are the intercessor on the day of gathering.' Thus the light prostrated then he stood up and from that light many drops dropped that they numbered 124000 drops. So the Almighty God created from every drop of his light a prophet. 14"

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1. Refer to 27: 12: "Now put thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain (or harm): (these are) among the nine Signs (thou wilt take) to Pharaoh and his people: for they are a people rebellious in transgression."

2. Refer to 6:75: "So also did We show Ibrahim the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude."

3. The West Griffin: Anqa Maghrib.

4. Ibn Fanari, Mesbahul-Ouns, p.72, Mulla Sadra, al-Asfar vol.2, p.332.

5. Creation in a mystical term is 'manifestation' of divine attributes, not production. That means God will demonstrate whatever which did exist in the world of divine knowledge (Faydh Aqdas), in the perceptible world.

6. Sharhe Manzoumeh vol.2. p58-59.

7. Sharhe Fusoos al Hikam, Fass Adami.

8. Beharul Anwar Vol. 16 p. 130.

9. Al-Fotoohatul Makkiah vol2 p227.

10. Behar 15:24.

11. Al Kafi 1:442.

12. Behar 25:22.

13. Behar vol. 1, 5:8.

14. Behar 57:200

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