

## Aqeedah Corner: Prophethood

The second item of the Islamic Aqeedah is the belief in all the prophets and messengers of Allah and that Muhammad is the last and final messenger and prophet of Allah. Before we discuss the role of Muhammad (saaws) as a Messenger and a Prophet, there are two issues that must be addressed. These issues are:

- 1) Need of Prophets for Human beings, and
- 2) Difference between a Prophet and a Messenger

### NEED FOR PROPHETS

As we have already illustrated in previous issues, the human being is limited in the scope of his thoughts and his capacity to comprehend all that is around him. Part of the inherent nature of the human being is that he has certain urges that push him to glorify and sanctify things that he deems greater than himself, or things that are "larger than life." Throughout the history of mankind, human beings had always sanctified or worshipped something. Some civilizations worshipped idols, stars, cows, spirits, humans, or Allah. Even the communists, who dismissed the validity of religion, claiming that religion was like opium which kept the people drugged and undertook drastic steps to outlaw religious expression, had institutionalized worship. Instead of glorifying and sanctifying God, they transferred this glorification and sanctification towards Marx, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, and other so called "great" socialist/communist ideologues, and even institutionalized this glorification towards them. So they built "larger than life" statues and shrines of these "great" people, and established certain rites and practices towards these statues, shrines and mausoleums, practices which are not unlike that of Hinduism or Christianity. These examples are proofs that it is a part of human nature to seek out an object to sanctify and worship.

In the previous edition, however, we proved that the *only* deity worthy of worship and sanctification is Allah, and hence the only rational conviction is that THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT ALLAH, meaning that Allah should be worshipped, sanctified and obeyed, alone.

Being limited in his thinking and having a cognitive inability or limited realm of perception with regard to what lies outside the boundaries of the universe, the human being cannot suggest a method towards the sanctification and glorification of Allah. The human's limited mind cannot, on its own, determine what Allah likes or dislikes. History has shown that when human beings tried to suggest a way of their own, they ended up as idol worshippers. For example, the Arabs before Islam initially intended to worship Allah, but ended up with over three hundred idols, which they claim were intermediary gods between them and Allah. Therefore, anything evolving from the human mind aimed at worshipping and sanctifying Allah is invalid, and consequently, this way or method has to be given by Allah, Himself.

Furthermore, human beings live together in social units starting from the basic family unit to the level of a nation or state. These social units have to be organized systematically or there would be chaos and anarchy. The system must be organized to address the various relationships of the human being, i.e. the relationship among human beings, and the relationship of the human being with himself, etc. Again, since the human being has intellectual incapacities he should not suggest any rule to govern either of these two relationships. At the most, each human being is familiar with only his experiences and if he suggests a rule to deal with a problem, this rule would be a subjective one, influenced by that person's experiences, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies. Since the human being is also limited in the place and time in which he lives, he would be at a loss to suggest a rule to a problem that would occur in the future, or away in another place, another continent. Consequently, when a human being attempts to legislate rules in all aspects of life, attempting to solve the problems of other human beings and attempting to create social order, the result will be utter chaos, anarchy, and social disorder. Since the laws are subjective and based on the lawmaker's experiences, whims, and prejudices, the resulting system will be biased to those who share similar experiences, and it will be biased against those who do not share those experiences. For example, a white man would set rules that favor white people and would be biased against all other peoples.

Inevitably, all man-made systems share these characteristics of social disorder and elitism, and the more degenerative the experience of the lawmakers the more chaotic and prejudiced the

resulting system will be. Capitalism, Socialism, and the hodge podge of other regimes, now existent in the world, illustrate this point. Misery, chaos, and social disorder is now the order of the day, and this is due only to the fact that the human being should not attempt any role in legislation. Only Allah, who is perfect and the One who created the human being and his nature, has the right to legislate, since legislation means to initiate laws which solve the human being's problems, satisfy the human beings urges, systemize the social units of the human being in a truly harmonious way eventually creating a true social order. Therefore, the system and laws set by Allah are perfect and satisfy the nature of the human being according to the way and extent in which his nature was meant to be treated and satisfied.

Consequently, since Allah alone can detail the way mankind must glorify and sanctify HIM, and since Allah alone has the right to legislate or to initiate the rules with which the human being uses to organize and systemize his daily life and to solve his problems, therefore there has to be a channel through which Allah can send these rules to mankind. This channel or link between Allah and humanity are the messengers and prophets who deliver and explain to mankind how he should glorify his Creator, and how he should organize his life and solve his problems. Hence, there is a need for messengers and prophets. They are the vital link between Allah and humanity, with regard to human actions and the organization of his societies.

It should be clear that these prophets and messengers are not Allah's representatives on earth, rather, their purpose is to explain, detail, and illustrate how the human being should live his life according to his relationship with his Creator (worships) , his relationship with others (economic, social, political, etc), and his own personal relationship (morals, food, clothing, etc.).

## **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS**

The main difference between a messenger and prophet is that a messenger is given a new and unique message to convey to the people he was sent to, while a prophet conveys to the people an already existent message. Therefore, every messenger is a prophet, but not each prophet is a messenger. To illustrate this point, it is sufficient to look at Prophets Musa and Haroon.

Prophet Musa was a messenger and a prophet, who received a message or revelation from Allah and was ordered to deliver it to his people. During Prophet Musa's absence, Prophet Haroon conveyed and delivered not a new message, but the message of Prophet Musa, to the people.

A prophet/messenger was sent to each nation or people. Prophet Muhammad was unique among all other prophets, in that he was sent to all humanity, from his time to the end of humanity. This means that no prophet will be sent by Allah after him. Each prophet was sent using the language of his people or nation. The last and final prophet, Muhammad, spoke the Arabic language, which is also the language of the Quran and the Sunnah (they constitute the message). This means that Arabic language, after the advent of Prophet Muhammad, is no longer a national language, representing the Arab nation. Rather, the Arabic language is now the language of all humanity. This is due to the fact that the explanation of how the human being should glorify and sanctify Allah, as well as the rules which solve humanity's problems and organize humanity's life, were sent by Allah in this Arabic language.

In addition to this, both messengership and prophethood have certain characteristics which are unique to them. These characteristics;

- 1) Each prophet was given a mu'jizah or a miracle by the one who sent him, and
- 2) Each prophet was ma'soom or infallible in delivering the message.

In the next issue, in shaa'a Allah we will discuss both of these aspects of prophethood/messengership.

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