

Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research

# An Ethical and Historical Necessity: The Proofs of Prophethood Series

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## Author Biography

**Mohammad Elshinawy** is a Graduate of English Literature at Brooklyn College, NYC. He studied at College of Hadith at the Islamic University of Madinah, and is currently completing his Bachelors in Islamic Studies at Mishkah University. He has translated major works for the International Islamic Publishing House, the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America, and Mishkah University.

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**This is the first of several essays in the Proofs of Prophethood series. It demonstrates that the coming of the final Prophet ﷺ was inevitable considering every generation's need for it, the world conditions of his age, and the biblical prophecies surrounding his ministry. The next paper will illustrate the character of the Prophet ﷺ, followed by the brilliance of his message, the fruits of his teachings, and finally an essay on his miracles.**

*In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Grantor of Mercy*

Independent works written on the topic of *dalā'il al-nubuwwah* (the proofs of prophethood) have always been part of the Muslim intellectual tradition, from as early as the eighth or ninth century. That this literature has been a mainstay of Islamic scholarship is a powerful testament to its commitment to rigorously establishing the bases of its truth claims. Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (d. 1037) reports that Imam al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820) was the first to compile a book on the proofs establishing the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, as the Brahmins had rejected the possibility of prophecy or divine revelation.<sup>1</sup> There are over ninety works from this canon whose titles are known until today, the most famous of them being *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* by Imam al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066). The aim of these authors was to increase the believers in their conviction, dispel doubts regarding Muhammad's ﷺ authenticity, and consolidate these evidences in a readily accessible location for anyone inquiring about the truth of his prophethood.

## The Proof Within Us

The primary proof of prophethood is God Himself, for it is He who guides us to intuitively seek Him out, and subsequently investigate the claimants to prophethood for an opportunity to better connect with Him. All people are instinctually driven to believe in the existence of God and have an innate impulse to discover this higher power which they sense so strongly. While not every human civilization was driven to develop craftsmanship or formal education, each one

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<sup>1</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Manāqib al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī, al-Kitāb al-Musammā Irshād al-Tālibīn ilā al-Manhaj al-Qawīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2015), 85.

committed itself to some form of religious practice. People have done this throughout recorded history, and thus anthropologists have yet to find an indigenous society of atheists, and some scientists today argue that belief in God or a higher power is hardwired into our genes.<sup>2</sup> Even communists who disavowed religion still deified Lenin by putting his statue everywhere and reciting his works as if they were scripture. Similarly, modern atheists exhibit a consistent pattern of quasi-religious behavior and are often found seeking alternate forms of spirituality. For instance, only about one million US adults identify as pagan or Wiccan, yet a staggering 60% of Americans ascribe to at least one “New Age” belief such as belief in astrology and/or psychics, or the belief that objects like crystals contain spiritual energy.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, this metaphysical yearning we all experience is a powerful, universal force, created within us by God, that drives us to seek out the prophets He elected to guide us to Him. Their message regarding God, His greatness, His guidance, and the reality of this life and the next resonates so deeply within us that we find ourselves compelled to faith.

We are not just “driven to God” by an inner surety about Him and the impetus to connect with Him, but also by a fascinating “trust” in our ability to find Him. People may not appreciate that while reason may argue for God existing, being wise, and being purposeful, it cannot explain why our minds are reliable instruments of reason in the first place. When the rationalist René Descartes embarked on his intellectual journey, he realized that unbridled skepticism would drown him in uncertainty. Descartes then sought a safeguard that would ensure that our existence is real, as are our senses that perceive, as are our minds that process. How can we dismiss the possibility that we are merely a figment of an extraterrestrial creature’s imagination, and what guarantee is there that our thinking is not manipulated by evil demons? Descartes was forced to conclude that “trust” was a fundamental necessity here, without which every mode of thought, investigation, and analysis would be pointless. His “I think therefore I am” proposition was adrift without this anchor, and nothing qualified to ground it but God Himself. In Descartes’ framing, we must accept that God cannot be a deceiver

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<sup>2</sup> Dean H. Hamer, *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired into Our Genes*. (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Gecewicz, “‘New Age’ Beliefs Common Among Both Religious and Nonreligious Americans,” *Pew Research Center*, October 1st, 2018.

because deception is an imperfection, and since He has equipped us with the faculties to arrive at certain truths, then we should pursue truth. He writes,

...that the sun is of such and such a figure, etc., or which are less clearly and distinctly conceived, such as light, sound, pain and the like, it is certain that although they are very dubious and uncertain, yet on the sole ground that God is not a deceiver, and that consequently, He has not permitted any falsity to exist in my opinion which He has not likewise given me the faculty of correcting, I may assuredly hope to conclude that I have within me the means of arriving at the truth even here.<sup>4</sup>

While being given the ability to correct “any falsity” is an overestimation of the human intellect, Descartes was correct in realizing that without first conceding that God is responsible for our capacity to think straight, no rational arguments can follow. When skeptics seek an explanation for God, when God is the explanation for us, circular reasoning becomes inescapable. This is why one of God’s divine names in the Qur’an is *al-Haqq*: the Ultimate Reality, the One without whom no truth or reality is possible.<sup>5</sup> Critical thinkers will recognize this as their indispensable philosophical stronghold, a refuge against dogmatism, and the bedrock upon which all empirical and rational proofs must stand. It is their only guarantee that polemical acrobatics and fancy language will never become a Trojan horse that breaches their defenses, corrupts their worldview, and renders them powerless prey before the fangs of radical skepticism.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, it is ultimately God who created within us knowledge of Him, an insatiable appetite to connect with Him, and a confidence in our ability to investigate the proofs offered by anyone who claims to speak in His name.

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<sup>4</sup> René Descartes, Elizabeth S. Haldane, and G R. T. Ross. *Philosophical Works: Rendered into English* (Cambridge: University Press, 1911), 191-192.

<sup>5</sup> The Qur’an 24:25.

<sup>6</sup> See: Nazir Khan, “Atheism and Radical Skepticism: Ibn Taymiyyah’s Epistemic Critique,” *Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research*, July 7th, 2020.

## The Multitude of Proofs

It is from God's mercy that He sent with each prophet and messenger signs that were relevant to his context, and He surrounded Muhammad ﷺ with a multitude of proofs, for he was God's "*mercy to the worlds*,"<sup>7</sup> and hence had to be relevant not only to all at his time but also for all time to come. The variety of proofs are what make them relatable to every era, culture, and mindset. During the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ lifetime, some accepted his ministry after one glance at his face. 'Abdullāh ibn Salām (rA)<sup>8</sup> said, "I immediately knew that this was not the face of a liar."<sup>9</sup> Another was brought to firm conviction after hearing a few short statements espousing the values of Islam. Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr (rA) said, "I have never heard anything superior or more balanced than this."<sup>10</sup> Others confirmed his prophethood based on his reputation for being truthful. The leadership of Quraysh said after living forty years with him, "We have experienced nothing but honesty from you."<sup>11</sup> Others believed after witnessing miracles, understanding that nothing ordinary could have explained these astonishing occurrences. By this variety, a nomadic shepherd in the Himalayas can follow any number of pathways to certainty, as can the ivory tower philosopher, as can the buzzing hordes under the skyscrapers of New York City, as can the banana workers in Ecuador.

God also made the proofs verifying the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ crystal clear, so that any honest seeker can recognize them. As for those who obsess over the material world, or those who give precedence to their social relationships over their supreme Creator, or those whose self-conceit has blinded them to the flaws of their arguments, they will only find clouded judgment. In many of these cases, their flawed justifications may go unnoticed even by themselves, for people have always been able to lock themselves in echo chambers, surrender to groupthink,

<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an 21:107, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>8</sup> An acronym for *raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*, which translates as: may God be pleased with him – usually used for the Prophet's ﷺ Companions.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1998), 4:233 #2485; authenticated by al-Tirmidhī in the comments.

<sup>10</sup> 'Abdul-Malik ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah* (Cairo: Maktabat wa Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 1:323.

<sup>11</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, 2002), 6:111 #4770.

and effectively silence their consciences and the guilt of denying the undeniable. As Allah says, “And [even] if We opened to them a gate from the heaven and they continued therein to ascend, they would say, ‘Our eyes have only been dazzled. Rather, we are a people affected by magic.’”<sup>12</sup>

In Islam, believing in all the prophets and messengers of God is a fundamental requirement of valid faith, and Muhammad ﷺ is certainly no exception to that rule. Allah says, “Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.”<sup>13</sup>

Given this verse, whoever believes in Allah’s words must accept that Muhammad ﷺ was His final prophet and messenger, and conversely, whoever rejects Muhammad has disbelieved in the One who sent him. But in case a person is still investigating the Qur’an, we will first begin with why prophethood in general is necessary, why Muhammad ﷺ in particular was most certainly a prophet of God, and then conclude by establishing the divine origins of the Qur’an.

## The Spiritual Necessity of Prophethood

Within us all is a restless craving for spiritual fulfillment. When ignored, the spirit experiences intense thirsts which send it chasing one mirage after another, each offering it momentary hope of an oasis before yet another letdown. This is the tragedy of the human condition whenever it seeks inner peace from the outer world, or seeks to self-actualize through carnal pursuits, when it was created to transcend all that for a higher purpose: sincere devotion to God. Allah says in the Qur’an, “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”<sup>14</sup>

Servitude to God, not just the inborn recognition of His existence, is therefore not only a duty but also a fundamental human need. It is necessary to nourish our spirit just as food and oxygen are necessary to nourish our body. It attunes us to our reality as spiritual beings in physical bodies, not physical beings that happen to

<sup>12</sup> The Qur’an 15:14-15, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>13</sup> The Qur’an 33:40, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>14</sup> The Qur’an 51:56, Saheeh International Translation.

enjoy a spiritual dimension. Of course, none of that is possible without the Creator communicating to us through prophets how to have a meaningful relationship with Him. Without this communication, we would be unable to know and love Him on deeper levels, and it is only through living for Him that we experience what it truly means to be alive. As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once said, “The similitude of someone who is mindful of Allah and someone not mindful of Allah is that of the living and the dead.”<sup>15</sup>

When Abraham Maslow amended his famous hierarchy of needs, he set the desire for self-transcendence as the greatest motivator of them all, above self-actualization.<sup>16</sup>

However, without the prophets and divine revelation, even that insight remains somewhat uninformative. It allows for notions such as monism (being one with the universe) or altruism (being selfless) to be misperceived as equally fulfilling as devotion to God. Altruistic people often report higher life satisfaction, and that is expected since being selfless is, by definition, a more transcendent purpose than being self-centered. But the essential need to self-transcend will never be fully satisfied by just any involvement in ends greater than oneself (such as serving the human collective). There is a unique tranquility that hinges squarely on one’s devotion to the absolute greatest: the Almighty. Serving others can be part of that, but can never replace it, as Allah says, “Unquestionably, it is only by the remembrance of Allah that hearts are assured.”<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350), a renowned Muslim theologian, writes,

In the heart, there exists an anxiousness that nothing can calm but drawing nearer to God. And a loneliness overcasts it that nothing can remove but enjoying His company in private. And a sadness dwells within it that nothing can alleviate but the joy of knowing Him and genuinely devoting oneself to Him. And a worry unsettles it that nothing can reassure but focusing on Him

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<sup>15</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:86 #6407; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah, 1955), 1:539 #779.

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd Greene and George Burke, “Beyond Self-Actualization,” *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration* (2007): 116-128.

<sup>17</sup> The Qur’an 13:28, Saheeh International Translation.

and fleeing from Him to Him. And the flames of regret continue to flare inside it, and nothing can extinguish them but becoming content with His commands, prohibitions, and destiny, and patiently holding onto all that until the time one meets Him. And in it exists a pressing demand; it will not stop until He alone becomes its pursuit. And in it is a dire need; nothing will satisfy it except loving Him, constantly remembering Him, and being sincerely devout to Him. And if a person were given this entire world and all it contains, it would never fulfill that need.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, to avert this psychospiritual tragedy, and to live for Almighty God, prophethood is an existential necessity. The same most compassionate God who afforded us all we need on this planet for life and what sustains it, has ensured for us through prophethood what we need most: guidance to Him and His pleasure in this life and the next.

## The Moral Necessity of Prophethood

With the notion of moral autonomy being widespread in our era, people often demand a rational explanation for why someone cannot “just be a good person” without faith and scriptural morality. Certainly, humanistic virtues such as compassion and justice are independently praiseworthy, partially inborn, and can invite God’s blessings in this life. However, in the grander scheme of salvific eligibility in the hereafter, accepting God’s message—upon discovering it—is necessary for validating one’s goodness before God. Being good is contingent upon one’s existence, good intentions, and the various faculties and resources (strength, wealth, etc.) by which a person enacts these intentions. Since all these qualities and characteristics are endowed by God, rejecting God would render this good unrewardable in the afterlife, for it would then be—in essence—a plagiarized goodness. We as people rightfully view the most impressive research with awe and admiration, but that sentiment quickly transforms into disgust upon realizing it was

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<sup>18</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn Bayna Manāzil Īyāka Na’budu wa Īyāka Nasta’in* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, 1996), 3:156.

actually the work of another whose contribution this fraudulent person deliberately hid. People do not just see plagiarism as disgraceful, but rather as condemnable.

Another reason why believing in the messengers is inseparable from being a good person is that only the messengers can thoroughly define good, through the inspiration they receive from God. Moral philosophers, for instance, have never been able to agree on how to apply the widely accepted principle of “do no harm” because of the complexity of varying contexts. Even with the “golden rule” of treating others as you would like to be treated, though it is accepted by nearly everyone in theory, striking the perfect balance between competing virtues is not always easy in practice. Aristotle famously discussed this challenging need to find the “golden mean” between two poles of excess in moral behavior. History also attests that people—even with good intentions and advanced education—often live their lives with principles that are destructive and, like cancer, the damage caused can sometimes remain hidden until it is irreparable. Such people may have genuinely sought “being good,” and “not hurting anyone,” while oblivious to the evil and hardship their ideas inflicted against themselves and society. In a word, the “do no harm” rule always risks being sacrificed at the altar of subjective morality. For this reason, God sent His final messenger ﷺ to fully define goodness, protecting humanity against shortsightedness, the desensitization we all experience from social conditioning, and the perversions of our perceptions that often follow. Allah says,

And know that among you is the Messenger of Allah. If he were to obey you in much of the matter, you would be in difficulty, but Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, defiance, and disobedience. Those are the [rightly] guided.<sup>19</sup>

*Tawhīd* (pure monotheism), which is to single God out in everything unique to Him, is the ultimate supreme good, and this would also be impossible without the messengers. Humanity cannot know God, nor know His beauty and grandeur, nor know the path to His pleasure, nor know His promises and threats, nor embody His

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<sup>19</sup> The Qur'an 49:7, Saheeh International Translation.

prescriptive will which He lovingly ordained for the betterment of His creation, without the prophets and messengers. Consider the dismal state of the world before God sent Noah (as),<sup>20</sup> or the darkness that smothered humanity after Jesus Christ (as) and shortly before the advent of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, to understand humanity's moral need for prophethood at every junction of human history.

## The Historical Necessity of Prophethood

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once said,

Indeed, Allah looked towards the people of the world and resented the Arabs and non-Arabs alike, except for some remnants from the People of the Book. And He said, 'I have sent you [O Muhammad] to test you and test [others] through you. And I sent down to you a Book that cannot be washed away with water...' <sup>21</sup>

Many experts believe that the sixth century was the worst in which to live. It was not 1346-1353, when the Black Death killed half of Europe, nor 1520, when smallpox killed 60-90% of the indigenous people of the Americas, nor 1918, when the Spanish Flu led to the deaths of over 50 million people. As Harvard University's Michael McCormick<sup>22</sup> posits, it was actually the year 536 and the misery it spawned which could be the worst period of all known human history.<sup>23</sup> While his books and research focus on ecology, the moral regression of the world followed in parallel. Wherever a person turned, darkness prevailed. In Roman coliseums, crowds would cheer a lion as it mauled a screaming prisoner. In Persia, even the imperial family practiced incest, as by the late Sasanian period, next-of-kin marriages had become normative in Zoroastrian law.<sup>24</sup> Uniformity of worship was only achieved by the Sasanians through violent persecution of

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<sup>20</sup> An acronym for '*alayhi al-salām*, which translates as: peace be upon him – usually used with the prophets and messengers of God.

<sup>21</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2197 #2865.

<sup>22</sup> Michael McCormick is the Francis Goelet Professor of Medieval History, and chair of the Initiative for the Science of the Human Past at Harvard University. He is an award-winning author, and a pioneer in bridging the worlds of archeology and climate science.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Gibbons, "Why 536 was 'The Worst Year to be Alive'," *Science Journal*, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Stausberg and Yuhan S.-D. Vevaina, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley, 2015), 292.

unorthodox practices, even against co-religionists within a common Zoroastrian framework.<sup>25</sup> In India, those at the bottom of the caste system were equivalent, if not inferior to, rodents and vermin—since such animals were sometimes considered holy temple-dwellers. In Arabia, finding a stony heart that could stomach burying his infant daughter alive was no challenge. In Christianity, mystery triumphed regarding the identity of Jesus Christ (as), many claiming he was God incarnate, while other faith groups alleged he was an imposter preacher born out of wedlock. Further East, people worshiped fire, water, weapons, and genitalia instead of the Creator. In many societies, a woman was seen as having no soul, or as having been created only to serve man, and at times that could even mean pawning her over a recreational gamble with his friends or being burned alive at his funeral. Many infants did not survive birth, and even fewer reached adulthood. Those born into slavery were generally unable to change their status, and in some major civilizations of that historical period, this sector of society exceeded 75% of the population.<sup>26</sup>

With this being the condition of the world, how could God not offer a glimpse of hope for the people of this planet? It is unfathomable that a supremely compassionate, all-capable God would not intervene. Indeed, the Most Merciful did not abandon His creation, but reached out to them yet again, “...so that those who perished [through disbelief] would perish upon evidence and those who lived [in faith] would live upon evidence.”<sup>27</sup> By sending the final prophet, Muhammad ﷺ, God did not fail them, even if some choose thereafter to fail themselves by deciding after the clarification to decline his message.

## The Biblical Necessity of Prophethood

In this grim sixth century, it was not only the condition of the world and its atrocities that necessitated relief from a most compassionate God. Alongside this, many of those versed in biblical scripture were awaiting a final prophesied

<sup>25</sup> Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *From Africa to Zen: An Invitation to World Philosophy* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2003), 175.

<sup>26</sup> Niall McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), 115.

<sup>27</sup> The Qur'an 8:42, Saheeh International Translation.

messenger, of whom there was a crystal-clear description in their literature. Hence, Allah says about the Qur'an and subsequently its bearer, "And has it not been a sign to them that it is recognized by the scholars of the Children of Israel?"<sup>28</sup>

Though some contemporaries of the Final Prophet ﷺ rejected him out of animosity and prejudice, and others simply had not yet been guided, some of the biblically versed—like 'Abdullāh ibn Salām (rA)—quickly accepted Islam, and that was one of the proofs Allah cited against the idolators of Arabia, since most Arabs were illiterate, did not ascribe to any scripture, and held that the Jews were superior to them for being People of the Book.

Despite adulteration, strong indicators of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ remain even today in the Judeo-Christian texts, of which we will showcase the following:

## A Gentile Prophet Like Moses

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.<sup>29</sup>

In this passage, God reveals to Moses that He will send another prophet to the Israelites, and that he will emerge from among their brethren. The New International Version of the Bible chose an exclusivist translation of this, qualifying it as "*from among their fellow Israelites*," but the Bible itself also refers to non-Israelites as their brothers. For instance, in Deuteronomy 2:4, God says that "*you are about to pass through the territory of your brethren*," referring to the lands of the Edomites. This led some biblical exegetes to suggest that a Gentile (non-Israelite) prophet could in fact be intended here;<sup>30</sup> a prophet hailing from some "*brethren*" of the Israelites such as the Ishmaelites or Edomites (Arabs or Nabateans). Also, restricting this prophecy to the Israelites would mean it has

<sup>28</sup> The Qur'an 26:197, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 18:18, New King James Version.

<sup>30</sup> Marc B. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 89.

never been fulfilled, since according to Deuteronomy 34:10, “*But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses...*”

Deuteronomy 18:18 also establishes that the awaited prophet would have a striking resemblance to Moses. Both Moses and Muhammad (peace be upon them) were prophets born of two parents, both married and had children, both came with a new comprehensive code of law, both faced persecution causing them to leave their homelands, both returned to defeat their oppressors, and both experienced natural death and burial. No other two prophets, especially in the Abrahamic tradition, come close to this degree of similarity.

Deuteronomy 18:18 also describes this awaited prophet as someone who will serve as a faithful mouthpiece for God, only conveying from Him that which He commands. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was tireless in teaching his followers this very fact: that not a single word of the Qur'an should be credited to him: “By the star when it descends, your companion (Muhammad) has not strayed, nor has he erred, nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is but a revelation revealed.”<sup>31</sup>

## John the Baptist and the Awaited Prophet

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”<sup>32</sup>

Here, we find John the Baptist (as) being questioned about the nature of his ministry and whether he was claiming to be “*the prophet.*” This proves that some Jews were still awaiting the fulfillment of this divine promise in Deuteronomy 18:18, that of the Mosaic antitype, up until the time of Jesus Christ (as) and even thereafter.<sup>33</sup> It also begs the question: who is this luminary who is neither Christ

<sup>31</sup> The Qur'an 53:1-4, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>32</sup> John 1:19-21, New King James Version.

<sup>33</sup> See: David K. Rensberger and Harold W. Attridge, “The Gospel According to John,” in *The HarperCollins Study Bible: Fully Revised & Updated* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2006).

nor Elijah? Who is being referred to here as “*the prophet*” and not just “a prophet,” as if his name does not even require stating, and his coming was eagerly anticipated? Indeed, they were awaiting the greatest prophet of all, the Final Prophet who would illuminate for humanity the path to God one last time, and whose identity could not be mistaken. It is for this reason that Allah said, “Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it].”<sup>34</sup>

## God’s Servant Where Kedar Lives

Behold! My Servant whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out nor raise his voice, nor make his voice heard in the street. A bent reed he will not break off and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice on the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for his law.<sup>35</sup> ... Sing to the LORD a new song, Sing His praise from the ends of the earth! You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it; You islands, and those who live on them. Let the wilderness and its cities raise their voices, The settlements which Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud, let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.<sup>36</sup>

This description of the “*servant*” in Isaiah 42 seems to position the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as its worthiest candidate. His primary title throughout the

<sup>34</sup> The Qur’an 2:146, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 42:1-4, New American Standard Bible.

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ—a Companion of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ—said that among what was foretold in the Torah about the Prophet ﷺ was, “You are My slave and My messenger; your name is al-Mutawakkil (the Reliant upon God). He is neither harsh nor aggressive, and he does not yell in the marketplace. He does not repay evil with evil, but rather overlooks and forgives. Allah will not take him (in death) until He has straightened a crooked nation through him, having them say there is no god but Allah, and [not before] he has opened hard hearts, deaf ears, and blind eyes.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3:66, #2125)

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 42:10-11, New American Standard Bible.

Qur'an is "*Our servant*."<sup>37</sup> His homeland being Arabia matches that of the Kedarites; the Bible identifies Kedar as the direct son of Ishmael (as).<sup>38</sup> It was under the leadership of Muhammad ﷺ that the Ishmaelites (Arabs) finally became a "*nation*" as God had promised Abraham they would,<sup>39</sup> after being scattered feudal tribes for around two millennia. And only after being unified did they amass enough power to successfully establish "*God's justice*" in the region as Isaiah 42:4 foretells. It is problematic to assume the servant in Isaiah was Jesus Christ (as) because Christianity and Islam agree that he rose without bringing justice to the nations; his handful of disciples did not possess the political strength to enforce God's law in their society. This servant also cannot be Moses (as) for the same reason; after forty years of wandering the desert, he died outside the Promised Land on Mount Nebo according to the Bible, without having "*established justice in the earth*." He also never abolished idolatry among the Kedarites, as Isaiah 42:17 explicitly says "*the prophet*" would, while the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ most definitely did.

## Jesus and the Comforter

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you...<sup>40</sup> I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide

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<sup>37</sup> "[All] praise is [due] to Allah, who has sent down upon His Servant [Muhammad ﷺ] the Book and has not made therein any deviance." The Qur'an 18:1, Saheeh International Translation; "Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may be to the worlds a warner." The Qur'an 25:1, Saheeh International Translation.

<sup>38</sup> "And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam." Genesis: 25:13, King James Version. See also: 1 Chronicles 1:29.

The rabbis understood Kedar to be a reference to the Arabs, would refer to all Arabians as Kedarites, and to Arabic as *layshon Kaydar*, meaning the tongue (*lisān* in Arabic) of Kedar. See: Wilhelm Gesenius, "Qêdâr," in *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, translated by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Piscataway: Gorgias Press), 2019.

<sup>39</sup> "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." Genesis 21:13, King James Version.

<sup>40</sup> John 16:7, New King James Version.

you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak; and he will tell you things to come.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus (as) could not be implying the Holy Spirit here, calling him the Comforter that cannot arrive until Jesus departs, since the Holy Spirit was always with Jesus. Jesus could not be implying Paul or the papacy, since they did away with laws instead of perfecting them, and did not present proof that they communicated with the heavens. It was only the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who revived the honor of Jesus without burying his legacy of worshipping the Creator alone. In this respect, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “I enjoy the closest proximity to Jesus, the Son of Mary, in this life and the hereafter.” His Companions asked, “How is that, O Messenger of God?” He said, “The prophets are all paternal brothers, with different mothers, but they have one religion. Also, there was no other prophet between us (myself and Jesus Christ).”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, he ﷺ would accurately foretell future events, and brought definitive guidance on all truths, perfecting the divine code of law for humanity until the end times.

In conjunction with this, Jesus Christ (as) also supplied the famous Vineyard Parable in Mark 12 amidst his final sermon, wherein he prophesied that the allegorical “*vineyard*” would be pulled from the corrupt murderous tenants “*and given to others.*” Ultimately, the Jews were enraged upon realizing that this parable was about them, their hostilities towards God’s prophets, and God’s covenant and prophecy leaving them as a result. This further elucidates that the awaited Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, must be a non-Israelite prophet who also came from the Abrahamic line.

## Zamzam and the Flourishing City

Then God opened her [Hagar’s] eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink. So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 16:12-13.

<sup>42</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:1837 #2365.

He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.<sup>43</sup>

Within Arabia's city of Mecca, the historical epicenter of Islam and birthplace of Muhammad ﷺ, there exists the well of Zamzam—what may be the oldest active spring of water the world has ever known. Put the two millennia before the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ aside, and merely consider the millions of pilgrims visiting for Hajj and *'umrah* over the past 1,500 years, who each return home with gallons of Zamzam water. In addition, a round-the-clock supply of this water is transported to Qubā' and the Prophetic Mosque in Madinah, while residents of Mecca have tanks installed in their homes for regular Zamzam delivery. This was clearly a blessed well which Hagar and Ishmael received, and the first brick set by God for this sacred city to flourish.

In addition to Zamzam, consider the construction of the Ka'bah. Even the idolatrous Arabs recognized Abraham as the ultimate patriarch, and due to their esteem for him, all paid homage to him by visiting the House he built for God's worship in Mecca (the Ka'bah). Even though they were idolaters, these polytheists affirmed that Mecca was a special sanctuary venerated by God. They saw themselves as the heirs of that heritage, and thus they felt compelled to honor this Ka'bah that Abraham had erected. Why else would God command Abraham to just leave Hagar and his firstborn infant in a particular place, and a barren wilderness at that? It is difficult to conceive that Allah sent Abraham to construct the Ka'bah, established the blessed well of Zamzam beneath it, gave rise to a great nation because of it, and protected it from invasions—just so it would be surrounded by idols and become a venue for depravity. It is no surprise, then, why many people at that time believed that something was about to happen, something momentous that would change the entire scene in that part of the world and far beyond it.

Some may wonder how this writer can invoke the Bible as evidence for the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, when the Qur'an asserts that parts of the previously revealed texts have been distorted. As quoted earlier, the Qur'an also calls our attention to biblical experts affirming these descriptions in their

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<sup>43</sup> Genesis 21:19-21, New King James Version.

scriptures. To reconcile, we recognize that the original message of Jesus Christ (as) has been at least partially lost, as is exemplified—for instance—in the non-traceability of the Bible’s revisions and source manuscripts. However, this does not prevent us from being critical readers of history who infer from an inductive scan of these texts a preponderance of evidence in favor of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. Put simply, while no single passage in the Bible today squarely says “Muhammad,” they collectively point to him more than anyone else. In defining those who will win God’s grace and salvation, Allah said,

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written [i.e., described] in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and prohibits them from what is wrong, and makes lawful for them what is good and forbids them from what is evil, and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him, and followed the light which was sent down with him—it is those who will be the successful. Say, [O Muhammad], “O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death.” So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The Qur’an 7:157, Saheeh International Translation.