

Muhammad's Claim to Prophethood

1-Proofs of His Prophethood



Divine facilitation is proportionate to human need. God makes acquisition easier as the need of humans increase. Air, water, and sunlight are necessary for human survival, and thus God has granted their acquisition to all without hardship. The greatest human need is to know the Creator, and thus, God has made it easy to know Him. The evidence for God, however, differs in its nature. In its own way, everything in creation is evidence of its Creator. Some evidence is so obvious that any lay person can immediately ‘see’ the Creator, for instance, the cycle of life and death. Others ‘see’ the handiwork of the Creator in the elegance of mathematical theorems, universal constants of physics, and the development of the embryo:

“Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding.” (Quran 3:190)

Like the existence of God, human beings need evidence to establish the truth of prophets who spoke in His name. Muhammad, like the prophets before him, claimed to be God’s final prophet to humanity. Naturally, the evidence for his veracity is diverse and numerous. Some are obvious, while others are apparent only after deep reflection.

God says in the Quran:

“...Is it not enough (for them to know) that your Lord is witness unto everything?” (Quran 41:53)

Divine witness by itself is sufficient without any other evidence. God's witness for Muhammad lies in:

(a) God's past revelations to earlier prophets which prophesize Muhammad's appearance.

(b) God's Acts: the miracles and 'signs' He gave to support Muhammad's claim.

How did it all begin in the early days of Islam? How were the first believers convinced he was God's prophet?

The first person to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad was his own wife, Khadija. When he returned home trembling out of fear after receiving divine revelation, she was his solace:

“Never! By God, God will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your relatives, help the poor, serve your guests generously, and assist those hit with calamities.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

She saw in her husband a man God would not humiliate, because of his virtues of honesty, justice, and helping the poor.

His closest friend, Abu Bakr who had known him all his life and was almost the same age, believed the moment he heard the words, *'I am God's Messenger'* without any additional confirmation other than the open book of his friend's life.

Another person who accepted his call on merely listening to it, was 'Amr' [\[1\]](#) He says:

“I used to think before Islam that people were in error and they were on nothing. They worshipped idols. In the meantime, I heard of a man preaching in Mecca; so I went to him...I asked him: ‘Who are you?’ He said: ‘I am a Prophet.’ I again said: ‘Who is a Prophet?’ He said: ‘God sent me.’ I said: ‘What did He send you with?’ He said: ‘I have been sent to join ties of relationship, to break the idols, and to proclaim the unity of God so nothing is associated with Him (in worship).’ I said: ‘Who is with you in this?’ He said: ‘A free man and a slave (referring to Abu Bakr and Bilal, a slave, who had embraced Islam by that time).’ I said: ‘I intend to follow you.’” (Saheeh Muslim)

Dimad was a desert healer who specialized in mental illnesses. On his visit to Mecca he heard the Meccans say that Muhammad (may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him) was insane! Confident of his skills, he said to himself, 'If I

were to come across this man, God might cure him at my hand.’ Dimad met the Prophet and said: ‘Muhammad, I can protect (one) who suffers from mental illness or under sorcery, and God cures one whom He so desires at my hand. Do you desire to be cured?’ The Prophet of God responded, starting with his usual introduction to his sermons:

“Indeed, praise and gratitude is for God. We praise Him and ask for His help. He who God guides, none can lead astray, and he who is led astray cannot be guided. I bear witness no one deserves worship but God, He is One, has no partners, and Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger.”

Dimad, stuck by the beauty of the words, asked him to repeat them, and said, ‘I have heard the words of diviners, sorcerers, and poets, but I have never heard such words, they reach the depth of the oceans. Give me your hand so I may pledge my allegiance to you on Islam.’^[2]

After Gabriel brought the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad, Khadija, his wife, took him to visit her old cousin, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, a biblical scholar, to discuss the event. Waraqa recognized Muhammad from the prophecies of the Bible and confirmed:

“This is the Keeper of Secrets (Angel Gabriel) who came to Moses.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

The face can be a window to the soul. Abdullah ibn Salam, the chief rabbi of Medina at the time, looked at the face of the Prophet when he arrived in Medina, and exclaimed:

“The moment I looked at his face, I knew it was not the face of a liar!” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Many of those around the Prophet who did not accept Islam did not doubt in his veracity, but refused to do so for other reasons. His uncle, Abu Talib, aided him throughout his life, confessed to the truthfulness of Muhammad, but refused to break off from the religion of his ancestors out of shame and social status.

Footnotes:

^[1] Amr b. Abasa Sulami.

^[2] Saheeh Muslim.

2-Was He a Liar?

A Logical Analysis of His Claim

As discussed earlier, Muhammad made the claim, '*I am God's Messenger.*' Either he was true in his claim or he was not. We will begin by assuming the latter and investigate all possibilities raised by skeptics of past and present, discussing some of their misconceptions. Only if all other possibilities are exhausted can one reasonably claim that the only possibility left is that he was true in what he claimed. We will also look at what the Quran has to say on the matter.

Was He a Liar?

Is it possible for a liar to claim for a period of 23 years with unwavering certitude that he is a prophet like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, that there will be no more prophets after him, and that the scripture he has been sent with will remain his lasting miracle till the end of time?

A liar will falter sometimes, perhaps with a friend, maybe with his family members, somewhere he will make a mistake. His message, delivered over two decades, will contradict itself sometimes. But what we see in reality is that the scripture he brought declares freedom from internal inconsistencies, his message remained consistent throughout his mission, and even in the midst of a battle, he proclaimed his prophethood!^[1]

His life story is a preserved book open for everyone to read. Before Islam, he was well-known to his own people to be trustworthy and reliable, an honest man, a person of integrity, who did not lie.^[2] It was due to this reason they named him "Al-Ameen", or "The Trustworthy". He was strongly opposed to lying and warned against it. Is it possible for him to tell a consistent lie for 23 years, a lie so monstrous that it would make him a social outcast, when he was never known to have lied even once about anything? It's simply against the psychology of liars.

If one was to ask why a person would make claim to prophethood and lie, their answer might be one of two:

- 1) Fame, glory, wealth and status.
- 2) Moral progress.

If we were to say that Muhammad claimed prophethood for fame glory and status, we would see that what actually occurred was the exact opposite. Muhammad, before his claim to Prophethood, enjoyed a high status in all aspects. He was of the most noble of tribes, of the most noble of families, and was known for his truthfulness. After his claim, he became a social outcast. For 13 years in Makkah, he and his followers faced excruciating torture, which led to the death of some of his followers, ridicule, sanctioning, and excommunication from society.

There were many other ways which a person could gain fame in the society of that time, mainly from valor, and poetry. If Muhammad had made the claim that he himself authored the Quran, as will be explained later, that would have been enough for his name and poetry to be engraved in gold and hung inside the Ka'bah for eternity, people from all over the world hallowing him. Rather, he proclaimed that he was not the author of this revelation, and that it was from the One high above, causing him to be ridiculed in his time until ours.

The Prophet was the husband of a wealthy tradeswoman, and he enjoyed the comforts of life available to him at his time. But after his claim of prophethood, he became of the poorest of people. Days passed without stove fire being lit in his house, and at one time, hunger drove him to the mosque in hope of some provision. The leaders of Makkah in his time offered him the riches of the world in order for him to leave his message. As a response to their offer, he recited the verses of the Quran.. The Following are some of these verses:

“(As for) those who say: ‘Our Lord is God,’ and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend upon them, saying: ‘Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the garden which you were promised. We are your guardians in this world's life and in the hereafter, and you shall have therein what your souls desire and you shall have therein what you ask for. A hospitable gift from one Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!’ And who is better in speech than one who calls to God, works righteousness, and says, ‘I am of those who has submitted in Islam?’ Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel (evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate. And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint,- none but persons of the greatest good fortune.” (Quran 41:30-35)

If one were to say that Muhammad lied and claimed prophethood in order to bring moral and religious reform to a society ridden with ills, this argument is futile in itself, for how can one bring moral reform through a lie. If Muhammad was so keen to uphold and preach upright morals and worship of One God, then could he have lied himself in doing so? If we say that this is not possible, the only answer is that he was speaking the truth. The only other possibility is that he was insane.

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[2] 'Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources' by Martin Lings, p. 34.

3-Was He Insane, a Poet, or a Sorcerer?

Was He Insane?

Someone who has dealt with mentally ill knows people can be identified by their symptoms. Muhammad displayed no symptom of insanity at any time in his life. No friend, wife, or family member suspected or abandoned him due to insanity. As for the effects of revelations on the Prophet, such as perspiration and the likes, it was due to the intensity of the Message which he had to bear and not due to any epileptic fit or instance of insanity...

Quite to the contrary, Muhammad preached for a long time and brought a Law unknown in its completeness and sophistication to ancient Arabs. If the prophet was insane, it would have been obvious to those around him at one point in a period of twenty three years. When in history did an insane man preach his message to worship One God for ten years, three of which he and his followers spent in exile, and eventually became the ruler of his lands? Which insane man has ever won the hearts and minds of people who met him and earned the respect of his adversaries?

More so, his closest companions, Abu Bakr and Umar were recognized for their abilities, nobility, skills, and finesse. They were willing to sacrifice anything for the religion he brought. On one occasion, Abu Bakr, brought all his material possessions to Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, and when asked what he left for his family, responded, *'I left for them God and His Messenger!'*

Abu Bakr, a merchant by profession, after being elected the ruler of all of Arabs after Muhammad, spent a mere two dirham on himself and his family!

Umar became the ruler of Arabia after Abu Bakr and conquered Syria, Egypt, and subdued the Persian and Roman Empires. He was a man known for his scrupulous justice. How can someone suggest these people were following a mentally deranged individual?

God suggests: stand before God without bias or pre-conceived beliefs, and discuss it with another person or think about it yourself, this prophet has no madness, he is as stable today as you had known him for forty years.

“Say: ‘I counsel you one thing only: Be (ever conscious of) standing before God, whether you are in the company of

others or alone; and then bethink yourselves (that) there is no madness in (this prophet,) your fellow-man: he is only a warner to you of suffering severe to come.” (Quran 34:46)

The Meccans of old rejected his call out of tribal partisanship, and they were not truthful in their accusations of his insanity. Even today, many people refuse to accept Muhammad as a prophet simply because he was an Arab and self-gratify themselves by saying he must have been insane or worked for the devil. Their hatred for Arabs translates into their rejection of Muhammad, even though God says:

“Nay, but he (whom you call a mad poet) has brought the truth; and he confirms the truth of (what the earlier of God’s) message-bearers (have taught).” (Quran 37:37)

Although the pagan Arabs knew Muhammad all too well, but they still through accusations of insanity at him, for they considered his religion a sacrilege against the tradition of their forefathers.

“And when our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, they say, ‘This is not but a man who wishes to avert you from that which your fathers were worshipping.’ And they say, ‘This is not except a lie invented.’ And those who disbelieve say of the truth when it has come to them, ‘This is not but obvious magic.’ And We had not given them any scriptures which they could study, and We had not sent to them before you, (O Muhammad), any warner. And those before them denied, and they (the people of Mecca) have not attained a tenth of what We had given them. But they (i.e., the former peoples) denied My messengers, so how (terrible) was My reproach.” (Quran 34:43-45)

Was He A Poet?

God mentions their accusation in the Quran and responds to it:

“Or do they say (of you), ‘A poet for whom we await a misfortune of time?’ Say, ‘Wait, for indeed I am, with you, among the waiters.’ Or do their minds command them to (say) this, or are they a transgressing people? Or do they say, ‘He has made it up?’ Rather, they do not believe.” (Quran 52:30-32)

God describes the poets of that time so the Prophet can be compared with them:

“And as for the poets - (they, too, are prone to deceive themselves: and so, only) those who are lost in grievous error would follow them. Art thou not aware that they roam confusedly through all the valleys (of words and thoughts)[1], and that they (so often) say what they do not do (or feel)? (Most of them are of this kind -) save those who have attained to faith, and do righteous deeds, and remember God unceasingly, and defend themselves (only) after having been wronged, and (trust in God’s promise that) those who are bent on wrongdoing will in time come to know how evil a turn their destinies are bound to take!” (Quran 26:224-227)

Arabian poets were the furthest from the truth, speaking of wine, womanizing, war, and leisure, unlike the Prophet who invites to good manners, serving God, and helping the poor. Muhammad followed his own teachings before anyone else unlike the poets of old or philosophers of today.

The Quran which the Prophet recited was unlike any poetry in its style. The Arabs of the time has strict rules in regards to rhythm, rhyme, syllables and endings to each verse of poetry. The Quran did not conform to any of the rules which were known in the time, but at the same time, it surpasses any type of text which the Arabs had ever heard. Some of them actually became Muslims after hearing only a few verses of the Quran, due to their certain knowledge that the source of something so beautiful could not be any created being..

Muhammad was never known to have composed a poem before Islam or after prophethood. Rather, the Prophet had a sever dislike for it. Compilations of his statements, called Sunna, have been diligently preserved and are completely different in its literary content than the Quran. The store-house of Arabic poetry does not contain any couplets by Muhammad.

Was He A Sorcerer?

Prophet Muhammad never learned or practiced sorcery. On the contrary, he condemned the practice of sorcery and taught his followers how to seek protection against it.

Sorcerers have a strong relationship with the devil. Their partnership allows them to deceive people. Devils propagate lies, sins, obscenities, immorality, evil, and they destroy families. The Quran clarifies those upon whom the devils descend:

“Shall I inform you upon whom the devils descend? They descend upon every sinful liar. They pass on what is heard, and most of them are liars.” (Quran 26:221-223)

Prophet Muhammad was known and recognized to be a man of integrity true to his word who was not known to have ever lied. He commanded good morals and fine manners. No sorcerer in world history has brought a scripture like the Quran or a Law like his.

Footnotes:

[1] The idiomatic phrase is used, as most of the commentators point out, to describe a confused or aimless - and often self-contradictory - play with words and thoughts. In this context it is meant to stress the difference between the precision of the Quran, which is free from all inner contradictions, and the vagueness often inherent in poetry.