



### Who were the Messengers of Allāh?

They were people sent by Allāh to every community to instruct men and women in *tawhīd* and guide them towards submission to His Will.



### What is the Arabic word for ‘Messenger?’

The Arabic for ‘Messenger’ is *rasūl*, meaning ‘the sent one.’ It comes from the verb ‘*arsala*,’ meaning ‘He sent.’ The plural form, (i.e., Messengers), is *rusul*.



### But I have also heard *rusul* being described as *anbiya*?

Yes, we discussed this briefly when talking about the Books of Allāh. *Anbiya* is the plural of *nabi*. *Nabi* comes from the word ‘*naba*’ which means ‘news.’ A *nabi* is one who is given news and carries that news to others. More popularly though, *nabi* is translated as ‘Prophet.’



### What is the difference between a Messenger and a Prophet?

The renowned classical scholar Ibn Taymīyyah stated, “*The correct view is that the Messenger is one who is sent to a disbelieving people, and the Prophet is one who is sent to a believing people with the sharī’ah (Law) of the Messenger who came before him, to teach them and judge between them, as Allāh says*

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ ۖ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا

*Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted (to Allāh) judged by it for the Jews*

*Sūrah al Mā’idah, 5:44*



### One of the Pillars of Faith is belief in *rusulih*. What does *rusulih* mean?

It means ‘His Messengers’ i.e., Allāh’s Messengers. We are required to believe in the Messengers that Allāh sent.



### So, who is that referring to? Is it only those five Messengers who received Books?

In the Pillars of Faith, *rusulih* covers both Messengers and Prophets. A fundamental pillar of our faith is that we believe in *all* those individuals sent by Allāh *سبحانه وتعالى* to guide mankind, whether they came to a believing or disbelieving people.<sup>1</sup>



### What kind of things did the Prophets preach?

They spoke of many things, but what do *you* think was the most important lesson they preached.

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<sup>1</sup> In this material, to avoid confusion, I will refer to them all as the Prophets of Allāh.



**It has to be the Oneness of Allāh.**

Yes. This is the first thing you must know about the Message of the Prophets of Allāh. They *all* instructed their people in, and guided them towards *tawhīd*, the Worship of One God.



**All the Prophets did this?**

Yes. All of them, without exception. This is confirmed on numerous occasions in the Qur'ān:



لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

*We had certainly sent Noah to his people, and he said, "O my people, worship Allah, you have no deity other than Him. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous Day.*

*Sūrah al A'arāf, 7:59*

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

*Or were you witnesses when death approached Jacob, when he said to his sons, "What will you worship after me?" They said, "We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac - one God. And we are Muslims (in submission) to Him."*

*Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:133*

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۖ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

*And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Sālih. He said, "O my people, worship Allāh ; you have no deity other than Him.*

*Sūrah Hud, 11:61*

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۗ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

*And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And it was not for us to associate anything with Allāh. That is from the favor of Allāh upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful.*

*Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:38*



**Did they ever tolerate idolatry, maybe to convey the general message?**

No. They never tolerated idolatry in any form. They always spoke against it and made it's evil very clear to their people. Even Ibrāhīm عليه السلام told his own father of its evil:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَرَ اتَّخَذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً ۗ إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

<sup>2</sup> Yūsuf عليه السلام (Joseph) is speaking here in jail to fellow prisoners.

And (mention, O Muhammad), when Abraham said to his father Azar, "Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in manifest error."  
Sūrah al An'ām, 6:74



**OK, so *tawhīd* was the primary message of the Prophets. What else did they preach?**

- Information about Allāh and *al ghaib*;
- Guidance about the purpose of our creation;
- Legal codes: the *sharī'ah*;
- Moral guidance;
- Warnings about specific events to befall the community;
- Reminders of the rewards for doing good;
- Warnings about the consequence of doing bad.



**That's pretty comprehensive. It seems that no one can plead ignorance on the Day of Judgement.**

What you say is correct. No one can say, 'How can I be punished? A warner was not sent to me!' Allāh reminds us that He sent a warner to every nation:

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

*(We sent) messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners, so that mankind will have no argument against Allāh after the messengers. And ever is Allāh, Exalted in Might and Wise.*  
Sūrah an Nisā', 4:165

Remember. Allāh *تعالى* سبحانه *و* تعالی is not unjust. He will never punish a people without warning them first. In fact, the entire act of sending Prophets, is an example of His Profound Mercy towards His slaves. It demonstrates how much Allāh *تعالى* سبحانه *و* تعالی cares for us, and how much He wanted that we be guided towards His path.



**How many *anbiya* were there? I seem to recall the number 124,00? Is that true?**

There have been many Prophets since Allāh's Creation of the earth, but Allāh knows the real number. But one thing is for sure, there has never been a community that was *not* sent a Messenger to warn them.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

*And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, (saying), "Worship Allāh and avoid Tāghūt<sup>3</sup>"*  
Sūrah an Nahl, 16:36

Now, the specific number that you refer to, is actually given in one particular hadīth. In the hadith of Abu Dharr, as related by Abu Hātim ibn Hibbān, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to mention the number of Prophets as being 124,000 and the number of Messengers as 313. However, that hadīth is considered weak (da'īf) by a majority of scholars.

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<sup>3</sup> all false deities, besides Allāh.

To quote Shaikh Bin Bāz: “All the hadīths that speak of this matter are da‘fī; in fact Ibn al-Jawzi regarded the hadīth of Abu Dharr as being fabricated. The point is that there is no reliable report about the number of Prophets and Messengers; no one knows their number except Allāh, may He be Glorified and Exalted.”

Also, to cite Shaikh ‘Abdullāh ibn Jibrīn: “So, it is better to refrain from discussing this matter. What is required of the Muslim is to believe specifically in those Prophets whose names were mentioned by Allāh and His Messenger, and to believe in the rest in general terms.”<sup>4</sup>



### What language did the Prophets speak in?

They spoke the language of their own people. This was so that the Message of Islām could be given clearly to the people being spoken to. The Qur’ān mentions,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ ۚ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ  
الْحَكِيمُ

*And We did not send any messenger except (speaking) in the language of his (own) people to state (things) clearly for them,*

*Sūrah Ibrāhīm, 14:4*



### Their own people? I thought they travelled around from place to place, strangers to different people?

Different Prophets were sent to different nations at different times. Often, they were born and grew up in those nations in which they preached. They knew the customs, traditions and, as mentioned above, the language of those nations.



### So, are you saying that the people in their communities knew them already?

Yes. Very often that was the case. In fact, a prime example of this is that of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. He grew up amongst the disbelieving tribe of Qur’aish. Although they hated his message, by the time of his Prophethood, he was already known, loved and respected by them, respected for who he was. He was already noted for his kindness and honesty, even carrying the title *Al Amin*, the Trustworthy. So, it was very strange that many of them refused to accept His message. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى mentions this in the Qur’ān,

قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَأَكُمْ بِهِ ۚ فَفَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

*Say, "If Allāh had willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you, for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?"*

*Sūrah Yūnus, 10:16*



### It seems then that the Prophets were normal human beings like me and you?

Yes, they were. They were not an alternate creation like angels or *jinn*. They were human. They needed to rest and sleep like you and me. They needed to eat and drink. They went to the bathroom like us. Allāh tells us of His Messenger, Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم,

وَقَالُوا مَا لِذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمَشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ ۚ لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

<sup>4</sup> Both quotes respectively from Majmū‘ Fatāwa ash-Shaikh Ibn Bāz (2/66, 67) and Fatāwa Islāmiyyah (1/41) and extracted from Islamqa.com

And they say, "What is this messenger that eats food and walks in the markets? Why was there not sent down to him an angel so he would be with him a warner?"  
Sūrah al Furqān, 25:7



**Is it true that the Prophets of Allāh were able to perform miracles?**

Yes, by Allāh's Permission, the Prophets were given the ability to perform miracles. The word for miracle in Arabic is *mu'jiza*. Allāh did this as a support for them to confirm their Prophethood to people around them.



**Can you give me some examples?**

- Musa عليه السلام, by Allāh's Permission, changed a stick into a serpent before the Pharaoh;
- Esa عليه السلام, by Allāh's Permission, moulded clay in his hands into the shape of a bird, blew into it, made it come to life and let it fly away;
- Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, by Allāh's Permission, pointed to the full moon in Makkah and caused it to split, separate into two halves and join back together again.



**If they were normal human beings, how did they perform miracles?**

Notice the words that are mentioned repeatedly above – 'By Allah's Permission.' All these miracles were performed only by the Command of Allāh. The Messengers were NOT superhuman. They could not perform these miracles by themselves. Allāh reminds us:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ

*And We have already sent messengers before you and assigned to them wives and descendants. And it was not for a messenger to come with a Sign<sup>5</sup> except by Permission of Allāh. For every term is a decree.*  
Sūrah Ra'd; 13:38<sup>6</sup>



**Who was the first ever Prophet?**

The first ever Prophet of Allāh was also the first man on earth, Ādam عليه السلام.



**And Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was the last?**

Yes. Allāh says,

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

*Muhammad is not the father of (any) one of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allāh and last of the Prophets. And ever is Allāh, of all things, Knowing.*  
Sūrah al Ahzāb, 33:40

No Messengers or Prophets were sent after Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and none will be sent in the future. He is the Prophet for all mankind and for the *jinn* until, *Yawm al Qiyāmah* (The Day of Judgement). He himself said, 'There will be no Prophet after me,'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Including miracles

<sup>6</sup> This *ayah* also confirms the human qualities of the Messengers, informing us that they were married with children.

<sup>7</sup> Sahih Bukhari; 4:661, narrated by Abu Hurairah





**Is it a sin to believe that another Prophet will come after Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم?**

Yes, it is a very serious sin. If you believe that other Prophets followed Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم or are due to follow him in the future, then you fall outside the pale of Islām and become a *kāfir*, May Allāh preserve us from that.



**Is it obligatory upon all Muslims to believe in the Messengers and Prophets of Allāh?**

Yes. As Muslims, we are required to believe without doubt in all the Prophets of Allāh. Again, any Muslim who denies that Allāh sent Prophets to this earth, falls outside of Islām and into the realms of *kufr*, may Allāh preserve us from that. Allāh says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ  
وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا

*O you who have believed, believe in Allāh and His Messenger and the Book that He sent down upon His Messenger and the Scripture which He sent down before. And whoever disbelieves in Allāh, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day has certainly gone far astray.*

*Sūrah an Nisā, 4:136*



**You mentioned that there were ‘many’ Messengers and Prophets sent to us. Are they all mentioned in the Qur’ān?**

Allāh tells us that many Prophets were sent, but He has only mentioned a few in His Book:

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ

*And (We sent) messengers about whom We have related (their stories) to you before and (other) messengers about whom We have not.*

*Sūrah an Nisā’, 4:164*

In fact, there are only 25 mentioned by name in the Qur’ān. We will look at those names next, Insha’Allāh.

## The Messengers of Allāh [part a]

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### Questions

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1. What do the words *rasūl*, *rusul* and *arsala* mean in English?
2. State the basic difference, as simply as you can, between a ‘Messenger’ and a ‘Prophet.’
3. What was the primary message that the Prophets of Allāh preached?
4. Who advised his father not to worship idols?
5. What would you advise if someone asked you how many Prophets there were?
6. Who was the first ever Prophet?
7. Who was the last ever Prophet and Messenger sent to mankind?
8. What language did the Prophets speak? English? Latin? Greek? What?
9. Give two examples from the Qur’ān of the Prophets preaching *Tawhīd*.
10. How is it that Prophets could perform miracles?
11. There are three random pictures in this chapter, connected to stories of certain Prophets. Do you know which stories they relate to?



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