



How many Prophets and Messengers does the Qur’ān mention?

Twenty-five. They are as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Aadam, عليه السلام (Adam) | 14. Dhu’l-Kifl, عليه السلام (Isaiah) |
| 2. Idrīs, عليه السلام (Enoch) | 15. Mūsa, عليه السلام (Moses) |
| 3. Nuh, عليه السلام (Noah) | 16. Hārūn, عليه السلام (Aaron) |
| 4. Hūd, عليه السلام | 17. Dāwūd, عليه السلام (David) |
| 5. Sālih, عليه السلام (Salah) | 18. Sulaimān, عليه السلام (Solomon) |
| 6. Ibrāhīm, عليه السلام (Abraham) | 19. Ilyās, عليه السلام (Elija) |
| 7. Lūt, عليه السلام (Lot) | 20. al-Yasa’, عليه السلام (Elisha) |
| 8. Ismā’īl, عليه السلام (Ishmail) | 21. Yūnus, عليه السلام (Jonah) |
| 9. Ishāq, عليه السلام (Isaac) | 22. Zakarīyya, عليه السلام (Zacharias) |
| 10. Ya’qūb, عليه السلام (Jacob) | 23. Yahyā, عليه السلام (John) |
| 11. Yūsuf, عليه السلام (Joseph) | 24. ‘Ēsa عليه السلام (Jesus) |
| 12. Shu’aib, عليه السلام (Jethro) | 25. Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم |
| 13. Ayyūb, عليه السلام (Job) | |



That’s an interesting list. These are the Prophets whose names we know. You said there were many more, whose names we don’t know? Can we speculate as to who they may be?

There were many more, maybe tens of thousands. We can’t say for certain how many. We believe in those that are named, as well as in those that remain unnamed. However, with regard to those that are unnamed, we cannot and should not speculate about their identity. We can’t, for example, say that such and such past religious leaders of other faiths or so and so persons in history could have been Islāmic Prophets. This is unacceptable and would be nothing more than pure conjecture.



Many of those names are so familiar. They are famous names for non-Muslims also.

Yes. It’s actually a pleasant surprise to many Christians and Jews, when they see these names and discover that these self-same Prophets of their religion and culture, are actually Prophets of Islām, mentioned in the Qur’an. For Muslims these Prophets are special people. We respect and love all of them.



Are any of the Prophets considered better than others?

Allāh Himself mentioned some Messengers as being raised above others, and even amongst these, there are the so-called *Ulū al-’Adham* (Messengers of Strong Will).



Who were they?

They were, Nūh, Ibrāhīm, Mūsa, ‘Ēsa عليهم السلام, and Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. They are all mentioned in the following verse,

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ
وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۗ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا

And (mention O Muhammad), when We took from the Prophets their covenant and from you and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, the son of Mary, and We took from them a solemn covenant

Sūrah al Azhāb, 33:7



What was Muhammad's صلى الله عليه وسلم status amongst them?

To cite Sheikh Muhammad ibn Ibraheem al Tuwayjri: "... and the best of the Messengers of Strong Will is Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. For each Prophet was sent only to his own people, until Allāh sent Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to all of mankind. He is the last and the best of the Messengers"¹



If some Prophets were raised above others, how are we meant to regard those 'others' then?

We accept that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى raised some of them above others. We also accept that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was the best of creation. However, we do not make these facts a point of argument or dispute. Basically, we accept ALL the Prophets of Allāh and reject none of them. The true believer is one, 'making no distinction between any of His (Allāh's) apostles.'² Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said, himself, "Do not prefer some Messengers to others."³



So, we must believe in all the Prophets, not just Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم?

Yes, and in terms of our 'belief', we make no distinction between them. We believe in all of them. However, we follow only Allāh and His Messenger, Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. His code replaced all other codes that came before it. In any event, we know from our discussion of the Books of Allāh, that the messages of the previous Prophets can no longer be relied upon. Through no fault of their own, over the centuries, their message has been altered beyond recognition.



You say 'through no fault of their own' but could it not be that through careless or innocent mistakes, they may have caused confusion with people? Then after they died, those errors just grew and grew?

No. The Prophets were infallible in their delivery of the message.



What does 'infallible' mean?

Without fault, making no mistakes.



But I thought they were human like me and you? 'We' make mistakes! Didn't 'they'?

¹ Usool al Deen al Islāmi

² Translated Qur'an 2:285

³ As narrated by Abu Saïd رضي الله عنه and mentioned in Sahih Bukhāri

We are talking here only about delivery of the message. The Prophets did make mistakes, as well as errors of judgement. They even committed sins, minor ones, not major ones⁴. However, bear in mind two things:

1. They were always quick to recognise their mistakes and ask forgiveness from Allāh;
2. Such mistakes had no bearing at all on their delivery of the message.



So, they conveyed the message of Islām exactly as it was meant to be conveyed?

Yes. They did not hide, cancel or conceal anything,

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ

And if he (Muhammad) had made up about Us some (false) sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand, then We would have cut from him the aorta. And there is no one of you who could prevent (Us) from him
Sūrah al Hāqqah, 69:44-46

Neither did they add anything of their own,

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

Nor does he (Muhammad) speak from his own inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed
Sūrah an Najm, 53:3,4

The Prophets were the best of people with the best of qualities, infallible in their delivery of the message. To cite the classical Sheikh of Islām, Ibn Taymīyah,

We must believe that the Messengers are safeguarded against any faults that adversely affect their faith and obedience to Allāh, or their ability to communicate the message entrusted to them..... Allāh has given the Messengers the perfection of trustworthiness, honesty, insight and other qualities necessary for completion of the mission and delivery of the burden⁵



It seems the Prophets had qualities of the highest order.

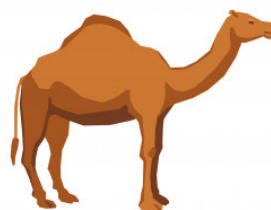
Yes. They were the very best examples of humankind. They were the most truthful,

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

And mention in the Book (the story of) Abraham. Indeed, he was a man of Truth and a Prophet.
Sūrah Maryam, 19:41

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

When their brother Sālih said to them (the doomed people of Thamoud), “Will you not fear Allāh? Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger.”
Sūrah ash Shu’arā, 42:142,143



⁴ According to the consensus of scholarly opinion

⁵ Book of Ēmān according to the classical works of Sheikhul Islām Ibn Taymīyah

They were often strong and courageous,

اصبر على ما يقولون واذكر عبدنا داود ذا الأيد ۖ إنه أوابٌ

Be patient over what they say and remember Our servant, David, the possessor of strength; Indeed he was one who repeatedly turned back (to Allāh)

Sūrah Sād, 38:17

They were humble,

إن إبراهيم لحليم أواه منيبٌ

Indeed, Abraham was forbearing, grieving⁶ and (frequently) returning (to Allāh)

Sūrah Hūd, 11:75

They were wise and knowledgeable,

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ ۖ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۚ وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ ۚ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

And We gave understanding of it (i.e., the case) to Solomon, and to each We gave judgment and knowledge. And We subjected the mountains to exalt (Us), along with David and also the birds. And We were doing (that)

Sūrah al Anbiyā, 21:79

They had *sabr* (patience),

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ ۖ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

And mention Ishmā'īl and Idrīs and Dhu 'l-Kifl; all were of the patient

Sūrah al Anbiyā, 21:85

Infact *sabr* was one of the greatest traits of the Messengers of Allāh. They were often tested with their lives, their health and their wealth. Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, once said when asked which people are the most severely tested,

The Prophets, then those nearest to them, then those nearest to them. A man is tried according to his religion; if he is firm in his religion, then his trials are more severe, and if he is frail in his religion, then he is tried according to the strength of his religion. The servant shall continue to be tried until he is left walking upon the earth without any sins.

Tirmidhi 2398 narrated by Mus'āb ibn Sa'ad from his father

So, the above were just a few examples of many describing the qualities of the Messengers of Allāh. Allāh mentions them generally,

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ ۚ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

And We made them leaders guiding (men) by Our Command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakāh; and they were worshippers of Us

Sūrah al Anbiyā, 21:73

⁶ i.e., sighing or moaning during supplication out of grief for people and fear of Allāh.

Were all the Prophets followed by their people?

No. The response from the communities receiving Prophets and Messengers varied. Allāh tells us,

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ
فَمِنْهُمْ مَن هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ

*And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, (saying),
"Worship Allāh and avoid false objects of worship. And among
them were those whom Allāh guided, and among them were
those upon whom error was (deservedly) decreed
Sūrah an Nahl, 16:36*



Did any community ever mistreat a Prophet?

Yes. Often. They were rejected, abused and ridiculed by many amongst their communities. Many of them were even killed. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى tells us about the *Bani Isra'īl* led by Mūsa,

لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَارْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ رَسُولًا قُلْنَا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَرِيقًا
كَذَّبُوا وَفَرِيقًا يَقْتُلُونَ

*Whenever there came to them a messenger with what their souls did not desire, a party (of
Messengers) they denied, and another party they killed
Sūrah al Ma'idāh, 5:70*

How did the Messengers cope? They must have had a lot of patience.

As mentioned above, they all had *sabr* and, indeed, needed it to put up with the ignorance and arrogance of their communities. Consider the example of Nūh. He preached amongst his people for 950 years encouraging them towards *tawhīd*.⁷ However, they were steeped in idolatry and stubbornly refused to listen. They even put their fingers in their ears.

Fingers in ears? That's a bit childish. So, how did Nūh persuade them?

He pleaded with them to the point of exhaustion. Finally, he prayed to his Lord to deal with them as He saw fit. As you read the following extract from the Qur'ān, just consider the sheer exasperation felt by the Prophet Nūh. Consider whether you could face the taunts, abuse and humiliation he faced here, and yet still remain patient and hopeful of Allāh's support,

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ
يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَاءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ ۚ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ قَالَ
رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَائِي إِلَّا فِرَارًا وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوا
أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصْرَوْا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا ثُمَّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُهُمْ جَهَارًا ثُمَّ إِنِّي
أَعْلَنْتُ لَهُمْ وَأَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ إِسْرَارًا فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا

⁷ As mentioned in the Qur'ān (29:14). Indeed, longevity was a feature of many of the Prophets of Allāh.

He (Noah) said, “My Lord, indeed I invited my people (to truth) night and day, but my invitation increased them not, except in flight. And indeed, every time I invited them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments,⁸ persisted, and were arrogant with (great) arrogance. Then I invited them publicly. Then I announced to them and (also) confided to them secretly. And said, “Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver.”
Sūrah an Nūh, 71:1-10



Did Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم face similar pressures?

Yes. Our beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not spared adversity. Throughout his life, difficulties, danger and death were ever-present companions for Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. However, Allāh comforted him and his followers with reminders of the hardships endured by the previous Messengers,

الم أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ وَالْقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

Alif Lām Mīm; Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe" and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them
Sūrah al ‘Ankabūt, 29:1-3



Were there any people at all, who supported the Prophets?

Yes, there were. So many people heaped scorn and ridicule upon the Prophets, but still there were some true believers who supported them with vigour. Ēsa, Ibn Maryam received immediate and unequivocal support from the *al huwairiūn* (the disciples). The Qur’ān tells us,

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَى مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ۗ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّ رَبَّنَا اللَّهُ ۖ فَتَوَلَّى مُسْلِمُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

But when Jesus felt (persistence in) disbelief from them, he said, "Who are my supporters (for the cause) of Allāh?" The Disciples said, "We are supporters for Allāh. We have believed in Allāh and testify that we are Muslims (submitting to Him). Our Lord! We have believed in what you have revealed and have followed the messenger (i.e., Jesus), so register us among the witnesses to (the truth)"
Sūrah ‘Āli ‘Imrān, 3:52,53

And, of course, we know that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was surrounded by *sahābah*, who supported him in the most phenomenal way. In a famous incident under a tree, a number amongst them, swore a *bai’ya* (oath of allegiance) to the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم,

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَابُهُمْ فَتَحًّا قَرِيبًا

Certainly, was Allāh Pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, (Oh Muhammad), under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity upon them and rewarded them with an imminent conquest.⁹
Sūrah al Fath, 48:18

⁸ Refusing to look or listen

⁹ That of Khaybar, which preceded the conquest of Makkah.

Imagine Allāh, Lord of the Worlds, being ‘pleased’ with you! What a privilege.



It must be very interesting to read about the lives of the Prophets and their followers.

Yes, it is. The expression, *Qasās al Anbiya* means ‘Stories of the Prophets.’ They are the very best stories and biographies to read, unlike many life stories out there of the rich and famous. Bookshops around the world are dominated by books about the late and the ‘great.’ These books sustain a multi-billion-dollar sub-industry in the world of publishing and provide motivational fodder for an all-consuming public.

Readers in their millions search for inspiration, comfort and encouragement from all sorts of biographical examples, many of them living, the majority of them dead. They read about inventors and explorers, presidents and monarchs, sports stars and actors, from Cook to Kennedy, from Chaplin to Churchill. They examine the way these people struggled against the odds. They turn them into superheroes, whilst conveniently ignoring the fact that, more often than not, these people were hardly the greatest role models.

Alhamdulillah, we, as Muslims, are not required to adopt any of these ‘role models.’ For our guidance, we refer simply to the lives of the truly pious, the Prophets and Messengers of Allāh and their followers. Their biographies are the ones to study, with the most inspiring of all being the biography of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. His life story is known in Arabic as *the Sīrah* or *Sīrat-un-Nabi* (*The Sīrah of the Prophet*) صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Islām stands in its pure form today precisely because we are, in the main, following *his* example,

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allāh an excellent pattern [example] for anyone whose hope is in Allāh and the last day, and (who) remembers Allāh often
Sūrah al Ahzaab, 33:21

The Messengers of Allāh [part b]

Questions

1. Name the five 'Messengers of Strong Will.'
2. Were all the Prophets and Messengers of Allāh followed by their people? Discuss.
3. Which messenger invited his people to Islām for over 950 years? What was their reaction?
4. Who were *al huwairioon*?
5. What does the word '*bai'ya*' mean? Who gave this to whom and where?
6. Are we required to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allāh? If so, are we also required to believe in the ones 'unnamed' in the Qur'ān? Explain your answer.
7. Some might say that, considering the divisions in the world today, the Prophets and Messengers failed in their task to convey the message fully and completely to their people. Is this true? If not, why not?
8. What does the word 'infallible' mean?
9. Describe some good qualities possessed by the Messengers.
10. There are three random pictures in this chapter, connected to stories of certain Prophets. Do you know which stories they relate to?



Meet the dragons. Dragon trees of Socotra Island, Yemen