Prophets are the Best of Mankind

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the main message of all prophets.
2. Learn about the main characteristics of prophets.
3. Learn about some of the miracles our prophets brought with them.
4. Learn how we should respect our prophets.

All Prophets Were Human Beings

Although they were very noble and pious role models, prophets and messengers were all human beings. They were neither divine, nor angels or jinn. Every prophet was born to a mother and a father, except Prophet Isa (P) who had no father and Adam (P) who had neither. Some Prophets had brothers like Prophet Musa (P), whose brother was Prophet Haroon (P). Also, Isma’eel and Is’haq were both brothers and prophets.

Other Prophets got married and had children, like Prophets Adam, Nuh, Ibraheem, Lut, Ya’qoob, Is’haq, Isma’eel, Yousuf, Musa, Dawood, Suleyman, Zakariyya, Muhammad and others.

Although the prophets and messengers were ordinary men, Allah gave them special qualities. They all had high morals, manners and attitudes. They were faithful, honest, patient, tolerant, and honorable. None of them had committed major sins, shameful actions or crimes.

Some of the prophets had a long life span. Prophet Nuh (P) lived for nine hundred and fifty years and Prophet Ibraheem (P) lived more than two hundred years! Other prophets died much younger than that, such as Prophet Muhammad. He became a prophet at the age of forty and died at the age of sixty three.

Prophet Isa (P) was the only prophet who is yet to die. Instead, Allah has raised him to Heaven and will bring him back to Earth before the Day of Judgment. He will confirm Islam as the true and final religion of God. He will also prevail over all evil people and powers.
All Prophets Were Men

Being a prophet or a messenger was not an easy task. It was a very serious responsibility, which required a great deal of perseverance and strength. Some prophets got killed, like Prophets Zakariyya (Zachariah) and Yahya (John), who was Prophet Isa’s cousin. Others were put in prison for years like Prophet Yousuf (Joseph), the son of Prophet Ya’qoob (Jacob). Almost all prophets where persecuted and harassed, like Nuh (Noah), Ibraheem (Abraham), Younus (Jonah), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), Muhammad, and others. Therefore, Allah in His glorious wisdom carefully selected those who would be most suited to serve as Prophets. Allah also stated that he chose only men to be prophets and messengers.

وَمَا أُرْسِلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجُالًا نَوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أُهُلِّ الْقَرْءَاءِ

“And We have not sent before you but men from (among) the people of the towns, to whom We sent revelations.” [12:109]

However, Allah chose certain faithful women to play major historical roles. Asiah, the wife of Phir’oun, Maryam (Mary) and her mother, Khadeejah and many others were exceptional role models. These women were not prophets, but they were great women of faith.

How did They Become Prophets?

There are two ways in which Allah reached out to his prophets. The first way was by sending an angel to them. For example, Prophet Muhammad received the message of prophethood from the Angel Jibreel while he was in the Cave Hiraa’. In other times, Allah spoke directly to his chosen prophets. For example, Prophet Musa (P) went to a desert valley where Allah spoke to him directly. And this is why he is called in Islam “Kaleem-ullah,” or the one to whom Allah spoke.
Jabal-un-Noor, or the Mount of Light near Makkah on top of which is Cave Hiraa’ where Prophet Muhammad first received the revelation of the Qur’an through Angel Jibreel, or Gabriel.

The Sinai desert, where Prophet Musa received revelation from Allah that he became a prophet.

All the prophets received the same basic message: Allah is the only true Creator of the universe, thus the only One worthy of complete obedience and worship. Adam, Nuh, Ibraheem, Musa, Isa, Muhammad, and all the prophets brought their people this same message. None of them claimed to be divine or God-like in any way, and they all conveyed and taught a pure belief in the one true God.

1. The Prophets of Allah were the best in their communities. They were the most moral and the most intelligent among their peoples. This was necessary because the life of every prophet served as a model for his followers and all mankind. His personality had to be pleasant in order to attract people towards his message rather than drive them away.

2. They usually came from well-known and highly respected families. Most prophets came from great lineage. Prophets Isma’eel, Is’haq, Musa, Haroon, Ya’qoob and Yousuf, were the offsprings of Prophet Ibraheem, the Father of Prophets. Prophet Muhammad was the descendent of Prophet Isma’eel. Isma’eel was also the son of Prophet Ibraheem. 

Characteristics of the Prophets

Allah chose his prophets and messengers and provided them with great moral and spiritual characteristics. Prophets are the best humans who lived on Earth. Below are some of the beautiful characteristics our great prophets had:
3. Prophets had to possess strong personalities. They had to be strong and resilient in the face of challenges and difficulties. Many prophets had to face fierce and evil enemies.

4. Prophets had to be patient and tolerant. Each prophet had to bring the message of Tawheed to his people and teach this message for many years. Many prophets, including Prophet Muhammad were persecuted and ridiculed for teaching Allah’s message. Others, like Nuh, taught for hundreds of years, but were joined by only few followers. In the case of Prophet Younus, however, more than one hundred thousand people accepted his message.

Prophets and Miracles

Allah provided some of his prophets with miracles. These miracles usually had one of three purposes:

- To serve as a proof of Allah’s greatness and power. For example, Allah caused the great flood in the time of Prophet Nuh that destroyed all of the evil disbelievers. He also destroyed the evil people in the time of Prophets Hud and Salih.

- To help them during times of danger or trouble. For example, Prophet Ibraheem was saved from the huge fire that was lit to burn him. He was thrown in a huge fire but he was never burnt. Also Prophet Musa and his followers were saved from Phir’oun and his army when Allah split the sea for Musa as you learned in your elementary years.

- To prove that the prophet is a true prophet. For example, Prophet Isa could heal the sick and raise the dead. Also Prophet Muhammad brought the Qur’an and challenged the eloquent Arabs to write one verse like it, but they failed. Allah also split the moon as the pagans of Makkah were watching to prove that Prophet Muhammad was a true prophet. These miracles made many people follow Prophets Isa and Muhammad, peace be upon them.

Allah knew that people would be most impressed by miracles, especially those miracles that are relevant to their lives and situations. For example, Prophet Musa’s contemporaries in Egypt were skillful at magic. So his major miracle was to defeat the best magicians of the day in Egypt. Jesus’ contemporaries in Palestine under the Roman Empire were recognized as skillful physicians. Therefore, his miracles included raising the dead and curing the incurable diseases.

The Arabs, the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad, were known for their eloquence and magnificent poetry. So Prophet Muhammad’s major miracle was Al-Qur’an. The people of Arabia were impressed by the eloquence of Al-Qur’an and Arab poets and orators could not make even a few verses like it. Later, all Arabia became a Muslim nation. Al-Qur’an is the best miracle Allah gave to Prophet Muhammad (P), no human being could write even one verse like its beautiful verses.

Respecting our Prophets

Allah’s prophets deserve all our love, respect and appreciation. Muslims appreciate the many sacrifices that these prophets made. We must be grateful that they worked so hard and even sacrificed their lives to bring Allah’s message to mankind. However, beside the emotions we hold for them in our hearts, Allah requires us to fulfill our duties toward these great role models. Following are some important actions we must do concerning our prophets:

1. Believing in all of the true prophets and admiring them is the first thing a Muslim must do toward these great human beings.
2. The best way to respect prophets and messengers is to follow their guidance and manners. If you want to give great respect to Prophet Muhammad, for example, you must obey him and try to follow his manners and Sunnah.

3. When Muslims mention the name of Prophet Muhammad or any other prophet, they make a prayer for them out of respect. This is a prayer asking God to grant the Prophet His peace and blessings. In Arabic, we say:

صلاة الله عليه وسلم

4. Muslims do not portray or draw pictures and images of the prophets. In addition, Muslims do not impersonate the characters of the prophets in movies or plays. It is prohibited in Islam for actors to portray prophets in movies or plays. Muslims believe that portraying a prophet of God in a movie is disrespectful. No matter how good an artist or an actor is, it would be impossible for them to accurately portray the Prophet’s greatness. Also, Muslims do not want to create images of prophets, as other groups have done, because that could lead to idolizing those images. For example, although the famous movie “The Message” reenacted the life story of Prophet Muhammad, no actor played the person of Prophet Muhammad. And even in the animated movie “Muhammad: The Last Messenger” no image of the Prophet is ever drawn.

**Related Text**

Surat-ul-Baqarah: Ayah 285

آمنِ الرسول بما أنزل إليهُ من ربيّ وفعلِهُ وفعلَ الكتاب ﷺ كتبُ ورسِلُهُ لأنتَ خيرٌ بين أولياءِ ربي وُلُدُّت بهُ في السّماوات وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَئِنْ تُخْرِجُكَ مِنْهُ أُمِّيَّةٌ مَّالٍ وَمَيْلاً وَرَأَيْتَ وَهُمْ لا يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤوِي مَبَاحٍ وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّماوَاتِ ﷺ

The messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers; We make no difference between any of His messengers; and they say: We hear and obey, our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is the eventual course. [2:285]

**FAITH IN ACTION**

- Always show love and respect for all the prophets of Allah.
- Always follow the Sunnah and manners of Prophet Muhammad.
- Say “Sallâ-Allahu Alayhi wa Sallam” or “Alayhi-Salâm” whenever you hear or say the name of Prophet Muhammad or other prophets.
CHAPTER REVIEW

Projects and Activities
Create a poster that portrays the many miracles which Allah supported his prophets and messengers with. Relate each miracle to the correct prophet.

Stretch Your Mind
Why do you think Allah chose only humans, not angels for example, to be prophets and messengers?

Study Questions
1. Explain how prophets were ordinary men.
2. Who is the prophet that didn’t die? What will happen to him?
3. What were the two ways in which these ordinary men learned that they were prophets?
4. Why did Allah provide some of his prophets with miracles?
5. What are some of the characteristics of a prophet?
6. Write at least three significant qualities of Prophet Muhammad (P)?
7. List three ways that reflect how Muslims show respect to the prophets.