

## Imamat versus Prophethood Part 2

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### Difference Between Nabi And Rasool

In Arabic there are no separate words for Messenger and Apostle. The distinction is between Nabi (Prophet) and Rasool (Messenger or Apostle).

- 1- Nabi (=Prophet)
- 2- Rasool (=Messenger=Apostle)

Note that the degree of prophethood is lower than the degree of messengership/apostleship.

By definition:

1. A Prophet (Nabi) is a person to whom the Divine Law (Shari'ah) descends; this divine law may be concerned with beliefs ('aqa-id) or with practical activities (Ibadat, like prayer). This Divine Law either deals with the Nabi's OWN life or with that of his community; or both.

This is the fundamental definition of prophethood, though the prophet may also be informed of other things. The descent of the Divine Law (Shari'ah) may be direct, or through an intermediary like an angel.

2. A Human Messenger/Apostle (Rasool) is a Prophet who receives a Divine Law that concerns himself and people other than himself. So every (human) Rasool is Nabi, while the reverse is not true. Also every Nabi whom Qur'an has mentioned along with a community (Umma), is consequently a Rasool.

Thus when Qur'an states that Muhammad (S) is the last Prophet (33:40), then by the above definition, he is the last Messenger/Apostle also. Note that the word "Human" is important in the definition of Rasool because the Qur'an uses the term "Rasool" also for angels who issue a command at the will of Allah (SWT):

***"Allah chooses Messengers from ANGELS and from men, for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things). (Qur'an 22:75)"***

***"There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, "Peace!"he answered, "Peace!"and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf. (Qur'an 11:69)"***

***"When Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account and felt himself powerless (to protect) them. He said: This is a distressful day. (Qur'an 11:77)"***

***"(The Messengers) said: O Lut! we are Messengers from thy Lord!...(Qur'an 11:81)"***

----Also see: 7:37, 15:57, 15:61, 19:19, 29:31, 29:33.

However, a Nabi is only a human being -- no angel can be called a Nabi. So every (human) Rasool is a Nabi, while every human Nabi is not necessarily a Rasool.

The number of Messengers (Rusul) is less than the number of Prophets (Nabiyoon); and every Rasool received a book, while some Nabees received a book. In addition, since he has to convince his people to accept a new religion with new practices, a Rasool's work is much harder than that of a Nabi.

This is on top of the fact that people's needs, minds, and abilities have changed; and accepting a new religion is not an easy task. This is while a Nabi's new religious instructions are for himself (unless he is a Rasool). Surely a Nabi invites people toward Allah (SWT); however, he does not set any new practices for the people. So, in essence, if a Nabi is NOT a Rasool, the people that he invites to Allah (SWT) would be ordered to follow the custom and practices of a previous Rasool.

Among Rasools, however, there are five individuals who are higher than the others. As you might know, the only difference between those five and other rasools is that they are assigned universally (for the whole mankind at their time), while the rest of rasools were locally (just for one city or area). My recollection is that the word 'Alameen and/or Jamee'an has been used in Qur'an for Prophet Jesus (as) supporting this idea.

Once a Bahai claimed that Rasools (who came before Bab!) were only those five who had book. But the rest were Nabi. This is not correct since Qur'an states that Dawood had Zaboor and yet he is not counted among those five great Messengers. So he is Rasool because he brought a book for people.

## **Imam/Muhaddath**

Imam means a person who is appointed by God as a leader and as a guide (see Qur'an 21:73 and 32:24) to whom obedience is due, and whom people should follow. Messengers are Warners and Imams are Guides (13:7). Imams are the Stars of Guidance (6:97).

Imam does not receive divine revelation about Sharia (divine law). He does not receive any commands

concerning new religious practices, and so on.

However, he may be informed of the events about the past and future. Another difference between Rasool and Nabi and Muhaddath (i.e., Imam) is on how they communicate with the angels, and is given in Usul Kafi, kitabul Hujjah usder verse 22:52:

Rasool sees and hears the angel in awakness and sleep. Nabi hears the angel and sees him while asleep, but does not see him while awake though hears the speech. Imam (muhaddith) is the one who hears the angel in awakness while does not see him in awakness or sleep.

In the previous part we quoted from Qur'an that Mary (as) had communication with angels. If according to Sahih al-Bukhari, Fatimah (sa) was the best of ladies in this world and in hereafter, then why can't she communicate with the angels?

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 4.819

Narrated 'Aisha:

The Messenger of Allah said to Fatimah (who was crying at her father's deathbed): "Are you not satisfied that you are the chief of all the ladies of Paradise or the chief of all the believing women?"

أما ترضين أن تكوني سيدة نساء أهل الجنة أو نساء المؤمنين؟

Furthermore, Ibn Abbas (ra) narrated:

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: Four women are the mistress of the worlds: Mary, Asiya (the wife of Pharaoh), Khadija, and Fatimah. And the most excellent one among them in the world is Fatimah."

Sunni references: Ibn Asakir, as quoted in Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthoor

For those who love Sahih al-Bukhari, I will quote this book once more which confirms that Lady Fatimah (sa) had, indeed, communication with Gabriel:

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 5.739

Narrated Anas:

When the ailment of the Prophet (S) got aggravated, he became unconscious whereupon Fatimah said, "Oh, how distressed my father is!"

He said, "Your father will have no more distress after today." When he expired, she said, "O Father! Who has responded to the call of the Lord Who has invited him! O Father, whose dwelling place is the Garden of Paradise (i.e. al-Firdaus)! O Father! We convey this news (of your death) to Gabriel." When

he was buried, Fatimah said, "O Anas! Do you feel pleased to throw earth over Allah's Apostle?"

Not only that, but also Sunnis reported that Imam Hasan Ibn 'Ali has said that Gabriel used to descend to Ahlul-Bayt. It is reported that Imam al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali (as) said the following in a discourse which he delivered on the martyrdom of Imam 'Ali:

"I am from the Ahlul-Bayt that Gabriel used to descend on us and ascend (back to heavens) from among us."

إِنَّا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْبَيْتِ الَّذِي كَانَ جِبْرَائِيلُ يَنْزِلُ إِلَيْنَا وَيَصْعَدُ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا

Sunni reference: al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, "Chapter of understanding the virtues of companions," v3, p172

Now, when Imam Hasan uses the word "us", it means that it was not just prophet who used to receive Gabriel. Surely Gabriel did NOT reveal anything of Qur'an to Imam Hasan. But, the above Sunni tradition shows that, they could communicate with the Gabriel.

Mushaf (book) of Fatimah (sa) was also of this type. Some booklets of hatred and lie published by anti-Shi'i groups allege that based on Usul Kafi, Shi'a believe there is a Qur'an called "Qur'an of Fatimah"! This is a false accusation. There is no tradition in Usul Kafi saying "Qur'an of Fatimah". There are however, very few traditions in one chapter of Usul Kafi which assert that Fatimah (sa) wrote a book (mushaf). The tradition states "The book of Fatimah". Surely Qur'an is a book (mushaf), but any book is NOT Qur'an. This allegation is as silly as saying "Qur'an of al-Bukhari" instead of "book of al-Bukhari"!

Also those few traditions in al-Kafi clearly state that there is no single verse of Qur'an in the Book of Fatimah. This shows that the book of Fatimah is totally different than Qur'an. Of course, it was three times bigger than Qur'an in length.

In one tradition it said that Lady Fatimah (sa), after the Prophet (S) passed away, used to write what she was told that would happen to her descendants and stories about other rulers to come (up to the day of resurrection). It was the sayings of Gabriel about what will happen. As I mentioned and proved by Qur'an and Hadith, talking to angels is not exclusive to the prophets and messengers.

Fatimah (sa) recorded (or asked Imam 'Ali to record) those information, which was kept in her family of Imams, and was called "The Book (Mushaf) of Fatimah". A tradition which follows this one clearly states that what is referred to by "The Book of Fatimah" is not a part of Qur'an and has nothing to do with Allah's commandments/halals/harams. It does NOT have anything to do with Shari'ah (divine law) and the religious practices. Let me give you some of those traditions:

Abu Abdillah (as) said: "... We have with us the Book of Fatimah, but I do not claim that anything of the

Qur'an is in it."(Usul al-Kafi, Tradition #637)

Abu Abdillah (as) also said about the book of Fatimah: "There is nothing of what is permitted and what is forbidden (al-Halal and al-Haram) in this; but in it is the knowledge of what will happen."(Usul Kafi, Tradition #636)

Abdul Malik Ibn Ayan said to Abu Abdillah (as): "The Zaydiyyah and the Mu'tazilah have gathered around Muhammad Ibn Abdillah (Ibn al-Hasan, the second). Will have they any rule?"He (as) said: "By Allah there are two books in my possession in which every prophet and every ruler who rules on this earth (from the beginning of the earth till the day of Judgment) has been named. No, by Allah, Muhammad Ibn Abdillah is not one of them."(Usul Kafi, Tradition #641)

"Mushaf" refers to a collection of "Sahifa" which is singular for "page". The literal meaning of Mushaf is "The manuscript bound between two boards". In those days they used to write on leather and other materials. They either rolled the writings -- what is known as scroll in English.

Or they kept the separable sheets and bound them together, in what could be called as "Mushaf", a book in today's terms. The equivalent to the word book "Kitab" used to (and still is) refer to either a letter (e.g. of correspondence) or to an document that was written down or recorded. The Arabic word for wrote "Kataba" is a derivative of the same word.

Although the Qur'an is commonly called a "Mushaf" today, perhaps referring to its "collection" after it was dispersed. Qur'an is a Mushaf (book), but any Mushaf (book) is not necessarily the Qur'an! There is no Qur'an of Fatimah! As the above and many other traditions suggest, The book of Fatimah has absolutely no connection with Qur'an. This concept is commonly pulled out of context and published by anti-Shi'i groups due to their hatred toward the Followers of the Members of the House of Prophet (S). I have seen it mentioned in a book printed by the government of Saudi Arabia.

What is also very important to recognize and understand is that belief in Mushaf Fatimah is not a requirement of belief to the Shi'a. It is just very few traditions which report such a thing. It is nothing crucial for us as the followers, nor any Shi'a (except Imam Mahdi) has access to it.

## [Some Side Comments](#)

A Wahhabi mentioned that the Shi'a believe:

"The Imams know when they will die, and they do not die except with their choice.

Well, this is also granted to the prophets. So consequently I don't see why Imam should not have it. Here are the two traditions in Sahih al-Bukhari which confirms such claim for Moses:

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 2.423 and 4.619

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The angel of death was sent to Moses and when he went to him, Moses slapped him severely, spoiling one of his eyes. The angel went back to his Lord, and said, "You sent me to a slave who does not want to die."

Allah restored his eye and said, "Go back and tell him (i.e. Moses) to place his hand over the back of an ox, for he will be allowed to live for a number of years equal to the number of hairs coming under his hand." (So the angel came to him and told him the same). Then Moses asked, "O my Lord! What will be then?" He said, "Death will be then."

He said, "Let it be now." He asked Allah that He bring him near the Sacred Land at a distance of a stone's throw. Allah's Apostle (S) said, "Were I there I would show you the grave of Moses by the way near the red sand hill."

Sahih Al Bukhari

Arabic English

Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan v2, p236 (2.423 reference)

Chapter: Whoever desired to be buried in the Sacred Land .....

Sahih Al Bukhari

Arabic English

Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan

v4, p409 (4.619 reference)

Chapter: The death Of Moses and his remembrance after his death.

According to the above tradition in Sahih al-Bukhari, Moses alleged to resist against death, and then was told by Allah when he would die (the number of hairs). Again Moses asked God to change that decision to be now.

The mockery tone of the above tradition by al-Bukhari is questionable for us, but since you call it authentic, then you should agree that prophets may know their death time. So why not Imam?

Here I should mention that according to Islamic teaching, Allah didn't/doesn't relinquish His authority to prophets and Imams. The authority of prophets and Imams is not independent of God. This authority is given to them by Allah and is controlled by Allah too. If they disobey Allah, such authority will be taken away immediately.

So if Moses or other prophets and Imams died in their choice, we should keep in mind that such sinless people do not desire anything that Allah does not desire. So their wish about the time of their death is exactly what Allah wished, since they are absolutely obedient toward Allah. Actually what I just said here is somehow contradicting the report of Abu Huraira given by al-Bukhari (saying that Moses resisted).

But since you believe in al-Bukhari, then you actually go further than the claim written in al-Kafi. In other words, the above tradition of al-Bukhari suggests that a prophet can resist and change the order of God and even knock out the angel of death. (May Allah protect us from such evil words).

“All of the Earth belongs to the Imams. (p.407)

Allah, to whom belong Might and Majesty said:

***"The earth is Allah's. He gives it as a heritage to whom He will, and the good end is for the righteous servants."*(Qur'an 7: 128).**

إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ...

May Allah guide those who have such beliefs to the True Islam. And make this net and its members a cause to that.

May Allah help all of us to understand the above Qur'anic verses, and may Allah let us understand the traditions mentioned above which are from authentic Sunni books and let us not die in ignorance. Amen

There is no denying that 'Ali was one of the most knowledgeable of the sahaba. Even if we do accept that 'Ali is the most knowledgeable, what then? Would that mean no one else had any knowledge?

No. It means others had much less knowledge. This implies those who chose other inferior people in knowledge to lead the community for their own desires, are responsible for the Misfortune of all Muslims throughout the history. Shiats say that Imam must possess above all such qualities as knowledge, bravery, justice, wisdom, piety, love of God etc., in order to assure the prosperity of the Islamic community.

Is Qur'an correct that Imam is a degree higher than prophethood and messengership?

There are different levels of imam. The imam of the Prophets is higher than any other imam. Certainly, an imam of a masjid is by no means higher than a Prophet or Messenger.

Certainly you did not answer my question. I was not talking about the degrees of Imam. Please read the question again. As for Imam of Masjid, this shows you did not read the definition that I gave for the Imam in my original article. I said:

Imam means a person who is appointed by God as a leader and as a guide to whom obedience is due, and whom people should follow.

Does the above definition fit to Imam of Masjid?! Allah said that Prophet Muhammad is a warner, and for every community (generation) there exists a guide (Imam). (Qur'an 13:7). It is clear that there is no

prophet after Prophet Muhammad. So those guides who are for every generation are not prophets.

because even the best pious person can only be pious if he believes in all the Prophets, how then can he become better than one in whom he must believe in order to be considered pious?

Prophet Muhammad believed in all prophets before him, but his position is higher than all of them.

Agreed?

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