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Lesson Four: Miracles, An Effective and Eloquent Proof

In the mission and summons of the Prophets, the human being's free will and choice are the first subject to attract our attention. If the human being had no share of free will and choice, he would never have any need of Prophets; he would travel along a predetermined path, advancing automatically.

Thus, in accepting the mission of the Prophets, we must necessarily accept also the freedom of the human being; otherwise, the fundamental themes in the mission of the Prophets could never be put forward, and it would not be possible to find any justification for their message, a message which, in reality, awakens the human beings who are asleep and transforms them into free and conscious beings, not torpid masses without will.

The general law of guidance is a universal law that covers the entirety of being. Given the insufficiency of the instinctual guidance the human being contains within himself, given the fact that his motion is not predetermined, given the various defects that negate the idea of reason being an adequate guide to perfection and happiness, given all this, it is necessary that the deficiency within the human being be made good, that the vacuum within him be filled.

Therefore, the scheme of creation lays open before the human being, the path of prophethood which will enable him to reach his unchanging goal. With the tools and resources that he has at his disposal to acquire knowledge and consciousness, he can then discover, within the sphere laid out by the Prophets, precise, clear and infallible instructions for the attainment of happiness, and find answers to both his long-standing and increasing needs.

It is a fundamental principle that nobody's claim can be accepted without proof, particularly if it is a big and lofty claim. Then more decisive and convincing proofs must be offered for the claim being advanced.

Therefore, for those who have accepted the worldview based on Divine unity as the foundation for their beliefs and their mode of viewing the world, whenever someone claims a particular relationship with

God, the importance of the matter necessitates that it be examined carefully. One must look for the properties and characteristics that are necessary in guides of humanity in order to be able to recognize a true Prophet.

Given the significance of the rank of prophethood, the great responsibility borne by the Prophets and the role of their message in determining the different concerns of human life, Prophets must be able to furnish a decisive proof for their claim to prophethood.

The proof must be of such a nature that it could be obtained only by means of God's infinite power, of forces that lie beyond nature.

History bears witness that the Prophets came to show the path of salvation to the human being who had become empty, and to remove the great obstacles that were standing in the way of his intellectual development and his innate perceptions, causing him to become alienated from himself. Thus, the human being was enabled to find anew what he had lost, and the groundwork was laid for the establishment of justice, a society based on equity, and an environment conducive to spiritual advancement.

The fulfillment of such a commitment was without doubt dependent on the possession of great spiritual capacities. The Prophets had first to be armed with the weapon of miracles, which provided them with a decisive force for entering the arena and beginning their mission.

A miracle is a deed performed by a Prophet, by the will of God, in order to demonstrate the truth of his claim to prophethood. The proof that the miracle constitutes is without any doubt an indication of the Prophets relationship with the source of revelation, the Creator of being.

For the one who claims to possess a mission from heaven, to have a message from God, and to be in contact with another world, must perform a deed that lies beyond the confines of nature, a deed that will serve as his letter of credentials from the Creator and confirm his claim to be in contact with revelation.

To prevent His servants from falling into the trap of false claimants to prophethood, God has placed this blazing lamp, this decisive proof, in the hands of his envoys to mankind, so that the face of truth should never be obscured by veils of trickery and deceit. Just as the form of the entire scheme of being and the existence of all phenomena is a clear proof of the existence of God and His pre-eternal unity, the miracle is a clear and manifest proof of the relationship of the Prophet with the source of revelation. Religion cannot be interpreted correctly except with reference to revelation; all the topics dealt with by religion become meaningless and worthless once severed from revelation.

A Prophet who loudly claims prophethood for himself is, in reality, issuing the human beings with a challenge to enter the field of struggle against him with greater seriousness and energy than his, through mobilizing all their capacities and resources. But despite their desperate efforts, they get nowhere in their confrontation with him, and in their utter impotence they are obliged to surrender.

The miracle of the Prophet is by its very nature a demonstration of his connection with the source of all being and the world of revelation; its properties are such that it is impossible for the human beings who are not connected to the world beyond nature to confront or resist it, however much they expend of their powers and energies.

Hence the demonstration of prophethood depends on the performance of a deed that transcends the limits set by natural norms and common laws, and the performance of such a deed is not possible without the permission of the Creator. This provides a criterion for distinguishing the true from the false.

Naturally, the miracle differs from other phenomena in the world only from our point of view, not from the point of view of the One Who has precise and complete knowledge of all the causes of existence.

Generally speaking, the proof of prophethood was provided by miracles in areas that were in each age the object of special attention, so that those specialized in each area might know that the deed in question was beyond the limits of human capacity. This is the starting point for the task of the Prophets; by taking into account the human beings' level of intellectual development, they conquer broad horizons of human belief and swiftly attain their exalted goals.

Denial and Negation on the Basis of Pride

Those who regard miracles as something impossible and unacceptable should know that their incredulity arises from a superficial and simplistic view of things. Many events occur in the material world of which the human being knows the causes, but there are other events which the natural sciences are unable to interpret and explain. We should not, therefore, arrogantly deny everything the cause of which is unknown to us, relying on our slight knowledge.

The human being's error is to imagine that he knows everything; when he cannot penetrate the depths of a problem, he proceeds simply to deny it. However, it is beyond dispute that certain limits have been set to the reach of our thought, and however much farther the realm of human knowledge be extended, it will always remain limited. It is not wise to try and extend our own limited knowledge and laws to embrace the whole of infinite being. The instruments of our science will not have enough power or capacity to examine many matters, for causes and determining factors are not limited to those things of which we are aware.

The miracles of the Prophets remain covered by the overall order of creation; it is we who on account of the limited scope of our awareness, and the cessation of our thought-mechanisms at the boundaries of the supra-natural realm, are unable to penetrate the unknown and virgin territories of the universe.

From the point of view of time and place, being is infinite, and that segment of it which has been studied by the human being cannot in any way provide him with a complete idea of being.

Why, then, should it be objectionable if our questions concerning the causes of the miracles wrought by

the Prophets remain unanswered?

It is not possible to compare miracles with the extraordinary states attained by ascetics, because deeds such as theirs do not lie beyond the scope of human thought and inspection, instruction and practice; they inevitably yield certain results and they can be performed by others who pursue the same course. Moreover since accomplishments such as these derive from the limited powers of the human being, they cannot be performed under all conditions and without the use of certain instruments.

Furthermore, the deeds of ascetics are in many cases a kind of frivolous entertainment; they do not play any positive, constructive role in human life nor do they bear any fruit worth speaking of.

No one will regard the deeds of ascetics as miraculous or a proof of communication with God.

As for the deeds wrought by geniuses, they result from their possessing the power of thought, intelligence and mental calculation, from their awareness of a series of precise scientific mysteries, the deduction and application of which depends on knowledge of certain complex and precise principles. None of this has anything in common with miracles. Anyone who studies the rudiments of one of the sciences can, in principle, reach the same result as a genius; it is a matter of education and instruction. Scientific accomplishment is restricted to certain cases and it is open to contradiction by other, similar attainments. A miracle depends on revelation and derives from the infinite power of God; it does not stand in need of education and instruction nor is it subject to rivalry.

Jesus, upon whom be peace, began speaking while still in the cradle without any teacher or instructor having the least to do with it, and without it being contradicted by another supra-normal phenomenon.

Imam Sadiq, upon whom be peace, said: "God bestowed miracles on Prophets to serve as a clear proof of their truthfulness and veracity. He does not give such proof to anyone except his Messengers and His Proofs, so that the true claimant to a connection with God should be distinguishable from cunning tricksters."[1](#)

It is for this reason that even a supra-normal act cannot withstand the force of a miracle; it loses its illusory power on the field of battle and is condemned to inevitable defeat.

We must bear in mind that the miracle never violates the law of causality or destroys the norms of creation. However, the powerful God Who has created the order now observable in the scheme of being through the relations of causes with effects is not Himself bound or imprisoned by these causes. Since He is absolutely empowered over them, there is nothing to prevent Him from originating miracles through an unknown and mysterious chain of causes, beyond the ability of today's science to interpret an unknown even to geniuses among the human beings of learning.

Taking into consideration the finiteness of our knowledge, our instruments of measurement and our powers of assessment, it is possible that the human being will never come to grasp those mysterious

causes which are controlled and willed by God. Nonetheless, those Divine norms which are unknown to us should not be imagined to be outside the sphere of the law of causality.

We have said that the miracles of the Prophets indicate a supranatural relationship; they arise from the manifestation of the light of Divine unity, and they are a part of the will of the Divine essence which has created all phenomena in the world and set universal schemes and unique laws and place to rule over them.

We are acquainted with some of these unique laws in our own world. We see that in the severe, freezing cold of winter when all vegetation is robbed of its verdure and freshness, the pine tree and the box tree withstand the pressure of the murderous cold and preserve their freshness and greenness.

Does the fact that these two trees form an exception to the general condition of plant life mean that the norms and laws governing all plants have been broken? We certainly have no proof establishing in a definite and empirical fashion that the factors and causes we have so far discovered for phenomena are eternally valid, or that nothing can occur in accordance with extraordinary causes.

Numerous scientists tell us today that we must not deny the existence of a whole series of phenomena that do not accord with natural causes, because we do not possess a decisive proof permitting us to negate paranormal phenomena.

Alexis Carrel writes in *The Human Being, the Unknown Being*:

"In every country and age, people have believed in the possibility of miraculous and almost immediate cures being effected at shrines and holy places. Today those beliefs have been weakened, and many physicians believe those cures to be impossible. Nonetheless, given the testimony we have at our disposal, it is necessary to examine the matter and think it over more carefully. The Lourdes Medical Institute has collected many of these testimonies.

Our present information concerning the immediate effect of prayer on the curing of diseases rests on the testimony of persons who had suffered from sicknesses such as tuberculosis of the bones, skin cancer and running sores. The nature of the cure does not differ much from one case to the next: first, a feeling of intense pain, then a complete cure. After a few seconds, minutes or, at most, hours, the wounds heal, no trace of the sickness remains, and the patient's appetite returns."

Although this passage does not apply to miracles, it does point to real occurrences that indicate the existence of phenomena the causes for which are unknown to the human being.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. XI, p. 70.

<https://www.al-islam.org/seal-prophets-and-his-message-sayyid-mujtaba-musavi-lari/lesson-four-miracles-effective-and-eloquent#comment-0>