

Miracle, a Testimony of Prophethood

Prophets claim to have connection with Almighty Allah and the unseen world and that they are appointed by God on the office of conveying His message to the people and to guide them to the path of religion. These claims are very great and people will not accept their statements without any reliable testimony. Therefore they should have evidence to prove the veracity of their claims. The greatest proof is the miracle of the prophets. Miracle is an extraordinary act which ordinary people are unable to perform. Prophets must have miracles in order to prove their extraordinary claims. So that the veracity of their claims is proved and the argument is exhausted. If it is not so how people would understand that they are true in their claims? And how can they distinguish the true prophets from false claimants of prophethood?

In view of the Holy Quran, it is necessary for divine prophets to display miracles, and this point is mentioned on numerous occasions. For example the staff of Prophet Musa (a.s.), which used to be transformed into a python and swallowed the ropes of sorcerers; he stroke the staff on stone and springs of water gushed out from it; he stroked the staff on the surface of water and it split exposing a path through which the Bani Israel crossed to the opposite side. Another example is that of the talking of Prophet Isa (a.s.) while he was yet an infant in a cradle; his curing the born leper and raising the dead, giving life to the bird of clay and the cooling of the inferno for Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.).

For example, pay attention to the following verses:

قَالَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ جِبْتُمْ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ / فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُبِينٌ / وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ

“He said: If you have come with a sign, then bring it, if you are of the truthful ones. So he threw his rod, then lo! it was a clear serpent. And he drew forth his hand, and lo! it was white to the beholders.” (7: 106–108)

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ

“And We revealed to Musa, saying: Cast your rod; then lo! it devoured the lies they told.” (7:117)

وَإِذْ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ
كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

“And when Musa prayed for drink for his people, We said: Strike the rock with your staff. So there gushed from it twelve springs; each tribe knew its drinking place: Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief.” (2:60)

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحَرَ فَانفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ / وَأَزْلَفْنَا نَمَّ الْأَخْرِينَ / وَأَنْجَيْنَا
مُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ / ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْأَخْرِينَ / إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Then We revealed to Musa: Strike the sea with your staff. So it had cloven asunder, and each part was like a huge mound. And We brought near, there, the others. And We saved Musa and those with him, all of them. Then We drowned the others. Most surely there is a sign in this, but most of them do not believe.” (26:63–67)

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ / قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

“They said: Burn him and help your gods, if you are going to do (anything). We said: O fire! be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim...” (21:68–69)

From these verses and tens of others like it, it can be concluded that existence of miracles of prophets in the view of Quran is a fact and whoever considers Quran as a heavenly book, cannot deny the origin of miracles. Basically, Quran introduces itself as a miracle and says:

قُلْ لِّئِنْ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

“Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others.” (17:88)

Definition of Miracle

Miracle is an extraordinary act performed through an unnatural and unknown way. In other words, law of causality is a complete rational law and Quran has also accepted it. That is why nothing comes into

existence without a cause; so much so that miracles are also not without a cause.

Finally, the fact is that a phenomenon can be produced in two ways: natural and unnatural (miraculous); for example a staff can transform into a python in two ways:

Firstly: Through the channel of natural causes and factors; that is by the passage of time, natural actions and reactions, when the matter of the staff develops the capability to accept the being of the python. After that from the side of Almighty Allah the form and being of the python is added to it. In this case the python has come into being through natural causes and factors and no miracle has been employed.

Secondly: Through miracle. In this instance also the matter of the staff develops the capability of accepting the soul of the python not through natural actions and reactions, on the contrary it is instantly through the spiritual power of the prophet and his absolute intention that such a capability has developed in the matter of the staff. At that moment the soul of the python is added to it by Almighty Allah and it is transformed into a real python. Therefore, in case of a miracle also the phenomenon does not occur without a cause; at the most its natural cause is not recognized; on the contrary it occurs as a result of divine will and unnatural and extraordinary causes. From this aspect, it is named as a miracle and it is a testimony to the veracity of the prophet.

Whose act is a Miracle?

Is the miracle a directly action of Almighty Allah without any intermediary or it is the act of the prophet only as a demand of circumstances? Or is it the act of the prophet himself that he performs with his own will?

In some verses, the Holy Quran has related miracle to the prophets; for example: He says in the words of Prophet Isa (a.s.):

أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ

“That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I determine for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah’s permission and I heal the blind and the leprous, and bring the dead to life with Allah’s permission and I inform you of what you should eat and what you should store in your houses.” (3:49)

In Surah Maidah, He says:

وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنْفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي

“...and when you determined out of clay a thing like the form of a bird by My permission, then you breathed into it and it became a bird by My permission, and you healed the blind and the leprous by My permission; and when you brought forth the dead by My permission.” (5: 110)

With regard to Prophet Musa (a.s.), He says:

قَالَ إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ / فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُبِينٌ

“He said: If you have come with a sign, then bring it, if you are of the truthful ones. So he threw his rod, then lo! it was a clear serpent. And he drew forth his hand, and lo! it was white to the beholders.” (7: 106–108)

In some verses, the miracle has also been related to Almighty Allah; for example:

وَوَضَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَى

“And We made the clouds to give shade over you and We sent to you manna and quails.” (2:57)

In any case, it can generally be concluded from the verses that miracle is the direct act of the prophet, which is performed through his will and intention; but the prophet is not independent in its performance; instead, his action is subject to the permission and help of Almighty Allah. Although will and intention of the prophet is a means to causes, but the one who has given reality to it is Almighty Allah. That is why in most verses, the performance of miracle is related to the prophet, but it is made conditional to His leave. In one verse, this point is mentioned with more clarity:

وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

“...and it was not meant for an apostle that he should bring a sign except with Allah’s permission, but when the command of Allah came, judgment was given with truth, and those who treated (it) as a lie were lost.” (40:78)

Difference between Miracle and Magic

At this point the question arises: If prophet from the aspect of miracle performs an extraordinary act that others cannot do, the sorcerer also performs amazing acts which others are unable to do. Thus what is the difference between miracle and magic? And how can one be satisfied that the act of the claimant of prophethood is a miracle and not magic? In reply to this question, we shall mention some differences:

Firstly: In magic, the occurrence which takes place is not real; on the contrary the sorcerer influences the

senses and perception of people in order to display a non-factual and unreal happening. Thus in the story of Prophet Musa (a.s.), the magicians threw ropes, staffs and other instruments of magic before the people and by magic performed acts so that in the view of people they appeared as pythons and snakes, who came into being and moved about here and there horrifying the audience, while in fact there were no pythons and snakes there. Therefore Quran says:

قَالَ الْفُؤَا فَلَمَّا أَفُؤُوا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسِحْرِ عَظِيمٍ

“He said: Cast. So when they cast, they deceived the people’s eyes and frightened them, and they produced a mighty enchantment.” (7: 116)

But in case of miracle, a factual and natural matter comes into existence. In the story of Prophet Musa (a.s.), his staff really changed into a python and it really swallowed up the magic of the magicians. Almighty Allah told Prophet Musa (a.s.):

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفُ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى / وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سَاحِرٍ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَى / فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَى

“We said: Fear not, surely you shall be the uppermost, and cast down what is in your right hand; it shall devour what they have wrought; they have wrought only the plan of a magician, and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from. And the magicians were cast down making obeisance; they said: We believe in the Lord of Harun and Musa.” (20:68–70)

That is why when the magicians saw that the python of Prophet Musa (a.s.) has swallowed the instruments of their magic, they understood that the act of Musa (a.s.) was a miracle and that it was totally different from their act. Therefore they surrendered before it and embraced faith.

Secondly: The sorcerer is needful of special acts for his job or he has to use some recitations and magic words; or to draw some figures etc. and write some charms. But no such thing is required for miracles; only the will and desire of the prophet is enough to perform that act through the help of Almighty Allah.

Thirdly: Miracle is never defeated; that is when the prophet desires something it definitely turns into a reality and no human power can prevent its occurrence or that he should be able to invalidate it after its occurrence, since it has originated from divine power; but such is not the case with regard to magic; because it is possible that a magician superior to him can defeat him or a prophet can invalidate it as happened in the story of Prophet Musa (a.s.).

Fourthly: Magic is considered as a science and a craft; on the contrary showing miracles cannot be taught and learnt. An ordinary person can learn magic through training and practice and he does not need to have faith in Almighty Allah or develop connection with Him; but the power of miracle is a divine

bestowal and is not obtained through learning and practice and the performer of miracle is in possession of extensively lofty faith and has a deep connection with Almighty Allah.

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