

Number of Prophets

Throughout the history, a large number of prophets were sent to guide human beings. His Eminence, Adam (a.s.) was the first of the divine prophets and The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was the last of them. The exact number of prophets is not known, but in some traditions their number is mentioned as 124000.

Some prophets were having special and particular laws and some others were not having special code of laws; on the contrary they promoted the Shariah of the previous prophet. Some of them brought scriptures and some others did not bring any books. Sometimes there were more than one prophet in a single town or city, who fulfilled the duties of prophethood.

It is narrated from Abu Dharr that one day he asked the Messenger of Allah (S): How many prophets are there in all? He replied: One hundred and twenty four thousand. He then asked: How many of them were messenger prophets? He replied: Three hundred thirteen from the above group. He asked: Who was the first of them? He replied: Adam. He asked: Was he a messenger prophet? He replied: Yes, Almighty Allah created him with His own hands and blew His spirit into him. At that moment the Holy Prophet (S) said: O Abu Dharr:

There were four from the Syriac prophets: Adam, Sheeth, and Ukhnuh, who is also called Idris and who was the first to write and Nuh. Four of them were Arabs: Hud, Salih, Shuaib and your prophet, Muhammad. The first prophet among Bani Israel was Musa and the last of them was Isa and they were in all six hundred prophets.

Abu Dharr asked: O Messenger of Allah (S), how many heavenly scriptures descended? He replied: One hundred and four, of which Almighty Allah revealed to Sheeth fifty scrolls, thirty on Idris and twenty on Ibrahim. He also revealed Taurat, Injeel, Zabur and Quran.¹

Five great divine prophets brought new sets of laws (Shariah) and they are known as Ulul Azm prophets. They were: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad (S).

Ismail Jofi has narrated from Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) that he said:

The Ulul Azm prophets are five in number: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad (S).²

We do not have detailed information about the names of all the prophets; in books of history also only some of their names are mentioned. In the Holy Quran, twenty-six of them are mentioned by names: They are: Adam, Nuh, Idris, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Lut, Ismail, Al-Yasa, Zulkifl, Ilyas, Ayyub, Yunus, Ishaq, Yaqub, Yusuf, Shuaib, Musa, Harun, Dawood, Sulaiman, Zakariya, Yahya, Ismail the keeper of his word, Isa and Muhammad (S).

1. Biharul Anwar, Vol. 11, Pg. 32.

2. Biharul Anwar, Vol. 11, Pg. 32.

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