

The Manner Of Descent Of Revelation (nuzulu'l-wahy)

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Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far: Our belief concerning this is that there is a tablet between the two eyes of Israfil. Whenever Allah wishes to speak by way of revelation, the Tablet comes in contact with the forehead of Israfil, then he looks into it and reads what is in it.² Israfil would then convey it to Mika'il and he in turn would convey it to Gabriel, and the angel Gabriel, would convey it to the prophets, on whom be peace.

And as for the fainting fit which would come upon the Prophet, it used to take place at the time of Allah's addressing him by reason whereof he would also feel a heaviness and perspire. But Gabriel, on account of respect for the Prophet, would never enter his presence until he sought permission, and he used to sit before him (the Prophet) in the manner of a slave.

¹. The best general account is by Wensinck, EI, iv. 1091 –1093; see also Macdonald, 335. For details Wensinck, Handbook, s.v. Qur'in, 129. BHA, nos. 152, 153, 168. In the Tawhid, Ibn Babawayhi relates a tradition that the Qur'in is uncreated, p.177, 1. 6. KP, 35, and esp. 69 (where wahy and ilham are distinguished), and 85. al-Fudali gives an account of the revelation, but does not

mention Israfil, Macdonald, 335. Ibnu'l-'Arabi holds that Gabriel was the creation of the Prophet's imagination: it was really his own self, Affifi, 118 – 119. The Western Isma'ilis hold that wahy is what the soul (nafs) of the Prophet receives through his intellect (` aql) by the will (amr) of the Creator, FC, no. 25, also nos. 26–29.

². Here the Urdu translator adds a footnote that according to Sh.Mufid this is not a correct article of faith. The account of Revelation given by al-Qummi is based on rare traditions and the learned among the Shi'a are not agreed upon it; therefore no reliance can be placed upon it. The belief which is sufficient is that Revelation came to the Prophet in two distinct ways. Sometimes Allah would Himself teach the Revelation to the Prophet, in which case the Prophet used to faint. And sometimes Revelation would be brought to him by Gabriel.

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