

Reasons for the Differences Among the Miracles of the Messengers

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There is a h.a-di-th which is somewhat well-known which backs up our claim of differences in the methods of guidance as seen in the reasons for the differences among the miracles of the various Messengers sent. Although this h.a-di-th is in relation to the various miracles of the Prophets which were of a different nature to coincide with different time periods, however it still backs up our claims (in relation to the methods of guiding the youth). This h.a-di-th is actually the response that Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) received from Ima-m al-Ha-di- (a.s.) - the tenth Divinely appointed religious guide.

Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) is well known among the experts of Arabic grammar. His name is mentioned quite frequently in the books of Arabic syntax and it is stated that he lived around the time of Ima-m Ali-e ibn Muh.ammad al-Ha-di- (a.s.) - thus, it was around the same time as the political leadership of Mutawwakil. Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) was also a follower of the Shi-A faith and was killed at the hands of Mutawwakil. It has been said that the reason why he was killed was because he had a strong love for Ima-m Ali- (a.s.) and his family (a.s.).

One day Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) was in the presence of Mutawwakil when two of the sons of Mutawwakil came into the gathering. Mutawwakil, about whom it has been proverbially stated that he was one who possessed a sword that was always in search of blood turned towards Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) and said to him, "Are my (two) sons better or are the sons of Ali- - meaning al-H.asan and al-H.usai-n - better?" This knowledgeable man (Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) was so surprised at Mutawwakil that he immediately replied to him, "In my opinion, Qambar (r.d.a.), the servant of Ali- was better than your two sons and he (Qambar (r.d.a.)) is even better than your two sons' father." At this point, Mutawwakil gave the order for his Turkish slave to come into the room and cut the tongue of Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) out - and it is in this state that he died.

In any case, this man asked Ima-m al-Ha-di- (a.s.) "O' Son of the Messenger of Alla-h! Why is it that when Prophet Mu-sa- (a.s.) was raised as a Prophet, his signs and the ways and miracles that he employed to invite the people and to bring guidance to them was through his staff being transformed into a serpent, and his hand that radiated with Divine light and other things such as this.

However when Prophet Isa- (a.s.) was raised as a Prophet, we see that his method and the miracles which he used to invite the people was something different. He cured people who

were born blind; he healed the lepers; he brought the dead back to life and other things such as this. However our Prophet (s.w.a.) - when he was appointed as a Messenger, his form of miracle were none of these - meaning his miracle was through expression and words - the Noble Quran."

The Ima-m (a.s.) replied to him that, "This was due to the difference in times when these Prophets were raised. During the time of Prophet Mu-sa- (a.s.), people were amazed by magic and trickery, thus, the miracles of Mu-sa- (a.s.) resembled the things that the others were performing, but the difference was that Prophet Mu-sa- (a.s.) brought a miracle with substance to it, whereas the other people had magic and witchcraft.

As for the time of Prophet Isa- (a.s.), his era was one in which doctors were in abundance and they were able to cure the most serious of sicknesses and this brought amazement and bewilderment to the masses. Thus, Alla-h (s.w.t.) gave Isa- (a.s.) miracles that would be in line with what the people of his time were performing.

As for the time of the seal of the Prophets (s.w.a.), his time was that of speech and verbal communication and the attention that people paid to oratory powers was very high. It is for this reason that the greatest teaching of Isla-m was brought forth through the noble words clothed in the perfect garment of eloquence and expression (the Noble Quran)."

Ibne Sikkiyt (r.d.a.) thoroughly benefited from the answer given to him by the Ima-m (a.s.) and now that he understood this issue, he said to the Ima-m, "O' Son of the Messenger of Alla-h! What is the H.ujjah of Alla-h right now?" The Ima-m (a.s.) replied to him, "Intelligence" and :said to him

هَذَا وَاللَّهِ هُوَ الْجَوَابُ

This, by Alla-h is the answer."

Thus, it is clear that the reason for the difference in miracles of the Prophets was that through each of them, they were able to guide the people in different time periods. If this was not the case, then it is possible that from A-dam (a.s.) till Muh.ammad (s.w.a.) - if Prophet A-dam (a.s.) had any miracles and if he was a Prophet (since there are some people who say that he was not a Prophet) - there would have only been one type of miracle. However we see that this is not the case and that each and every Prophet brought along with him his own specific .miracle that was fit for his time and age

The Method of the Prophets

There is a well-known h.a-di-th of the Prophet (s.w.a.) which has been preserved in the book al-Ka-fi- and in these last few days, through some of our friends who have the books of the Ahlus Sunnah at their disposal and have done research through these books, it is clear that this :h.a-di-th also exists in their books. The Noble Prophet (s.w.a.) has said

إِنَّا مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ

*We, the assembly of Prophets have been commanded to speak to the people according to“
their level of intelligence.”[12]*

Whenever the Prophets wished to speak to people, they spoke to them according to their individual level of intelligence and also took into account the level of their aptitude and spoke to them in the way that best suited the people’s intelligence. We must keep in mind that the intelligence of the Prophets E is much higher than all other people and the people around them have a lower level of understanding. Thus, the Prophets would not speak high nor use grand concepts to the ‘common people’ as this would only make the people more confused. Similarly, the Prophets would not answer the questions of a wise person in the same method which they would answer an old, inerudite person.

Mawlawi- alludes to the concept mentioned in the above h.a-di-th in his poem which states: “They say it is bad to speak to the intelligence of the people. This is a not a shortcoming, rather, it is the job of the Messenger.” The one difference that lies between the method of the Prophets and that of the philosophers is that the philosophers employ one frame of logic and one style of speech at all times. The philosophers only have one type of merchandise ‘for sale’ in their proverbial shop. Those who come to them to ‘buy things’ are only one class of people - and this is the shortcoming of the philosopher as they do not see their aim and purpose in life except to cover themselves with a series of (philosophical) terminologies. Thus, philosophers are forced to only go to one particular segment of the society who are aware of the way that they speak and who understand their words.

It has been mentioned that above the door of the well-known school of Plato - which was actually a garden outside the city of Athens whose name was the “Academy” and which even today, due to the scientific gatherings that took place there, is still known by the name, Academy, that there was a poem written which states, “Whoever has not studied geometry must not enter into this school.”

In the school and methodology that the Prophets used, all types of students would be able to benefit from that which was being said. It is here that all sorts of people could be found - from the highest of the (academically) high whom even the likes of Plato would need to study under, to the lowest of the low such that not even an elderly, simple person would have any use for such a person! It was not written in any of the schools of the Prophets that if anyone wanted to come and make use of their teachings, that they must have studied to such and such a level. Rather, the more that they have studied, the more talented and ready they would have been - thus enabling them to make more use of the teachings of the Prophets. If they were less mentally prepared, then they would only be able to make use of the teachings to their own :capability, as it is stated

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*We, the assembly of Prophets have been commanded to speak to the people according to“
[their level of intelligence.”[13*

The Best Students

From this point, we realize that there is another issue which we are able to understand which is that the best students of the philosophers are the same people who lived at their time and saw them - which is at variance with the best students of the Prophets and the intimate friends of Alla-h (the Awliya-).

The best students of Plato, Aristotle or Abu- Ali- Si-na- were those who were directly in their study circle. The person who best understand the thoughts of Abu- Ali- were people such as Bahmanyar or Abu- Abid Jawzjani.

However, who were the best students of the Noble Prophet (s.w.a.), Ami-rul Momini-n Ali- ibne Abi- T.a-lib (a.s.) or Ima-m Jafar ibne Muh.ammad as-S.a-diq (a.s.)? Are their best students only those people who lived at their time and who lived with them? No, this is not the case! There is a point which the Noble Prophet (s.w.a.) himself had alluded to in one of his speeches. It is possible that those people who lived at the Prophet's (s.w.a.) time did not correctly understand the true meaning of these words (with the exception of people such as Salma-n (r.d.a.), Abu- Dharr (r.d.a.) and Miqda-d (r.d.a.), others may not have completely :understood his words). The Prophet (s.w.a.) had said

نَصَرَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِي فَوَعَاَهَا وَبَلَّغَهَا مَنْ لَمْ يَبْلُغْهُ

May Alla-h assist that servant who hears my words, understands them and then conveys them“ to those who have not been informed of them.”[14] In other narrations, this h.a-di-th has been mentioned as

نَصَرَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِي...

May Alla-h show kindness to that servant who hears my words...”
:The Prophet (s.w.a.) then said

رَبِّ حَامِلٍ فِقْهِهِ غَيْرِ فِقْهِهِ وَ رَبِّ حَامِلٍ فِقْهِهِ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ مِنْهُ

How possible it is that sometimes a person possesses a deep understanding of the religion“ whereas he himself is not a Faqih- (one firmly grounded in the Isla-mic sciences) and how possible it is that sometimes one would transfer his knowledge to another person but that other person is actually more knowledgeable than the one transferring the knowledge.”[15]

in the religion of Isla-m actually refers to the reality (فقه) The lexical meaning of the word Fiqh and the true wisdom of the di-n (religion) which must be achieved through deep study and thought and thus, the meaning in this h.a-di-th is the truth and the words which people hear directly from the Ima-m (a.s.).

This h.a-di-th tells us that there are many people who hear these words and hear the truth of the religion directly from the Ima-m (a.s.) and memorize it, but they are not people of understanding and analysis. There are also many people who take the words and truths of the religion and pass them on to other people, but the people whom they pass this knowledge on to are much more worthy and are much better at understanding and comprehending this knowledge.

:For example, a person heard the words of the Prophet (s.w.a.) when he said

لَا ضَرَرَ وَ لَا ضِرَارَ

Do not do anything that causes harm to yourself or to others.”

However the person who heard these words did not have the ability to understand how deep or profound this sentence was. Nonetheless, he memorized it and then passed it on to the next generation, and the next generation understood it better than he did – and this generation too passed it on to the next generation. It is possible that this will continue on until the twentieth generation and they will understand it better than the first, second and third generation, as this twentieth generation will be better equipped to understand it.

The Quran is the same. We cannot say that the people who were in the past understood the Quran better (than others) – rather, it is the opposite of this. The miracle of the Quran lies in the fact that the Quran is always one step ahead of the commentaries which are written about it – meaning that in each and every time period in which the Quran has been explained, when the knowledge and understanding of the people increases, they will go forth to re-interpret and re-understand the Quran and they will see that the Quran has far surpassed their commentary and is much more advanced than what they had written.

We do not need to go far in this discussion – simply look at the Science of Jurisprudence (#703;Ilmul Usul). Without doubt, the companions of the Noble Prophet (s.w.a.), the companions of Amirul Mominin Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.), the companions of Imam Jafar ibne Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) and even companions such as Zura'rah (r.d.a.) and Hisham ibn al-Hakam (r.d.a.) were people who had learnt the laws of Fiqh either directly from the Prophet (s.w.a.) or from one of the A'immah (a.s.), however they did not understand, analyze and examine the rules of jurisprudence as Muhammad al-Hilli (q.d.s.), Allamah al-Hilli (q.d.s.), Shaykh Murtada (q.d.s.) and Shaykh Ansa'ri (q.d.s.) did.

Therefore, as we mentioned – in the ways of the philosophers, which person is better at understanding the meanings of his teacher? It is that person who goes the furthest back (to his teacher). However in the school of the Prophets and the intimate friends of Allah (s.w.t.), who would be better apt to understanding the meanings and words of these noble personalities? It is those people who come in the future and possess more knowledge and understanding and this is one of the miracles of prophethood.

In a hadith which is found in the section on Tawhid, it is mentioned that since Allah (s.w.t.) knew that in the end of time, people would come forth who would go deep in thought and delve deep in deliberation on a subject, He revealed Suratul Ikhlas and the first few verses of Suratul Hadi-d which include the greatest and most precise issues in relation to Tawhid.

By this we mean that the people at the time of the Prophet (s.w.a.) were not worthy of such

verses. However in the future, such people would surely come who would be worthy of receiving these verses of the Quran. These verses are what will provide spiritual nourishment to the people of the future time. Of course since these verses express the final utmost limits of elucidating on the concept of Tawh.i-d, if a person was to rebel and go against these verses, he would definitely be destroyed. This is the miracle of prophethood and the miracle of the :Quran which is

لَا تَنْقُضِي عَجَائِبُهُ وَلَا تَفْنَى عَرَائِبُهُ

It's (the Quran) points of amazement never cease to end and its amazement will never pass" away. [16]

All that we have stated up until this point was for this purpose that: when we wish to discuss the issue and speak about the guidance of the youth, we should not have someone stand up and say, "Sir! As if there is a difference between the guidance of the youth and the guidance of the older generation?! As if the S.ala-t that the youth perform and the S.ala-t that we the older people perform is different, such that their guidance should also be something different? Just as how in the past we did things, so too we should continue in that same way today. In the past, the way we interacted with our elders and our mothers and fathers and just as we sat together in the Majlis (gathering) and related incidents about the trials and tribulations that faced the Ahlul Bai-t E and the ways in which we recognized Alla-h (s.w.t.) and received guidance - the youth of today too must close their eyes (to the realities) and must go to those "!same places that we went to and learn and be guided just as we were taught and guided

Notes:

[12] al-Ka-fi-, Volume 1, Page 23

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[14] Al-Ama-li- of Shaykh al-Mufi-d, Sitting 23, Page 186

[15] Furu-` al-Ka-fi-, Volume 5, Page 293

[16] Nahjul Bala-gha, Sermon 15