# The Arch Prophets

There were five prophets who had divine books and independent teachings. They are referred to as Nuh (Noah) (AS), Ibrahim (Abraham) (AS), Musa (Moses) (AS), 'Isa (Jesus) (AS), and Muhammad (SA) in the following verse: "He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and 'Isa that keep to obedience and be not divided therein... (42:13)." These five prophets, who have books and divine religious laws, are called the Ulul'azm Anbiya' (arch-prophets). The messengers of Allah, however, were not limited to these five prophets, rather each ummah (people) had a messenger. Many prophets were sent by Allah to lead the people, of whom only the names of less than twenty have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. The Almighty Allah states: "... There are some of them that We have mentioned to you and there are others whom We have not mentioned to you...(40:78)." He also states: "And every ummah had a messenger...(10:47)." Allah states: "...And (there is) a guide for every people (13:7)." Yes, prophets, who came after each of the Ulul'azm Anbiya' invited people to follow the divine religious laws of the same prophets. Thus, prophetic mission and the call continued until Allah appointed the Prophet Muhammad (SA) ibn Abdillah to bring the previous prophetic missions to perfection and to communicate the latest orders and the most complete divine religious laws. His divine book became the last book and consequently, the religion of Prophet Muhammad (SA) will remain valid until Qiyamah (Resurrection) and his religious laws will remain everlasting.

## PROPHET NUH (AS) (1)

Nuh (AS) (prophet Noah) was the first prophet appointed to prophetic mission and sent towards mankind as bearer of divine religious laws and a divine book by Allah, the Merciful. Nuh (AS) invited the people of those days to monotheism and belief in the Oneness of Allah and asked them to refrain from polytheism and idolatry. As evident from his stories in the Holy Qur'an, Nuh (AS) seriously struggled to settle class distinctions and to eradicate injustice and cruelty. He notified the people of his teachings by way of reasoning which was something new to the people of those days. After a long period of suffering with ignorant, stubborn, and unruly people, Nuh (AS) guided only a small group of people. Thus, by means of Nuh's (AS) Deluge, the Almighty Allah annihilated unbelievers and cleansed the earth of their defiled entity. Nuh (AS) and a group of his followers who were saved laid the cornerstone of a religious society

over again. This Holy Prophet (SA) is the founder of the religious laws of monotheism and the first divine representative who struggled against cruelty, injustice, and rebellion. Owing to his valuable services rendered to the divine religion, he is allotted a praise and greeting by Allah, a praise which will remain alive and perpetual as long as mankind exists. "Peace and salutation ".(to Nuh among the nations (37:79

## PROPHET IBRAHIM (AS) (2)

A long time elapsed after Nuh. (AS). Although many prophets, such as Hud, Salih, and others also led the people towards Allah and righteousness, the polytheism and idolatry flourished day by day and finally became universal. By His sublime wisdom, the Almighty Allah appointed Ibrahim (AS) (prophet Abraham) as a prophet.

Ibrahim (AS) was a perfect example of a man with innate disposition who searched for truth with his pure and immaculate nature. He found out the oneness of Allah and struggled against polytheism and injustice all his life. As revealed by the Holy Qur'an and confirmed by the ahadith of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (Members of the Household of the Prophet Muhammad [SA]), Ibrahim (AS) spent his childhood in a cave away from the clamours of people and the tumultuous urban life. He only saw his mother who carried food and water for him from time to time.

One day he came out of his cave and followed his mother to town and paid a visit to his uncle, Adhar, but everything seemed new and interesting to him. Amidst thousands of bewilderments and wonders and with utmost impatience and calmness, his immaculate nature focussed on the creation of things that he saw, trying to find out the secret of their existence and the cause of their creation. He saw idols which Adhar and others carved and worshipped. Ibrahim (AS) asked about their identity, but the explanation he got about their divinity was not convincing. He saw a group of people who worshipped venus, others who worshipped the moon, and yet another group who worshipped the sun. Their divinity was unbelievable to Ibrahim (AS) because each one of them set after a few hours. After these incidents, Ibrahim (AS), fearlessly, announced his worshipping of the Almighty Allah and his disgust of polytheism and idolatry. He thought of nothing but struggle against idolatry and polytheism. He struggled against id ol-worshippers tirelessly and relentlessly and invited them towards monotheism. Finally, he found a way to the idol-temple and broke the idols. Because of this deed, which people regarded as the greatest crime, Ibrahim (AS) was put to trial. After completion of the formalities, Ibrahim (AS) was thrown into the fire, but Allah saved him and he came out of the fire unharmed. After a while, Ibrahim (AS) emigrated from his original birthplace, Babylon, to Syria and Palestine and continued his invitation of monotheism there.

In the last days of his life, he was blessed with two children: Ishaq (AS) (Prophet Isaac), the father of Isra'il (AS) and Isma'il (AS) (Prophet Ishmael), the father of 'Arab Mudar. By the order of Allah, Isma'il (AS), in infancy, and his mother were taken to Hijaz by Ibrahim (AS). They settled around Mount Tuhamah in an arid and barren land without inhabitants. In this manner, Ibrahim (AS) invited the nomadic Arabs to monotheism. Then he built Ka'bah and described the rites of Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) which remained prevalent among the Arabs until the advent of Islam and the call of Prophet Muhammad (SA).

Ibrahim (AS) was endowed with the innate religion. According to the explicit wording of the Holy Qur'an, he had a divine book. He was the first person to call the divine religion as "Islam" and it's followers as "Muslims". Indeed, the religions of the world advocating monotheism, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam terminate at Ibrahim (AS), because Musa (AS), 'Isa (AS), and Prophet Muhammad (SA), the leaders of the aforementioned three religions, were all the descendants of Ibrahim (AS) and had followed his path of call and invitation to monotheism.

## PROPHET MUSA (AS) (3)

Musa (AS) (Prophet Moses) ibn 'Imran is the third of the Ulul'azm Anbiya' and is bestowed with a book and shari'ah (divine religious laws). He was a descendant of Isra'il (AS) or Y'aqub (AS) (Prophet Jacob). Musa (AS) had a tumultuous life. He was born at a time when the Israelites were living in Egypt among Gipsies in a state of abjectness and servitude and when their sons were beheaded by the order of Fir'awn (Pharaoh*). The mother of Musa (AS), according to the order given to her while asleep, placed Musa (AS), in a wooden box and left him in the Nile River. The water carried the box directly to the castle of Fir'awn.

By the order of Fir'awn, the box was picked up. When they opened it, they found a baby inside. Because of the insistence of the queen, Fir'awn dispensed with killing the child. Since they did not have a son, they adopted him as their own son and put him under the care of a nurse (who was incidentally his own mother)

Up to the early stages of his youth, Musa (AS) lived in the palace of Fir'awn. Then, after an accidental murder, fearing Fir'awn, he ran away from Egypt. He went to Madyan and met Prophet Shu'ayb (Jethro) (AS). He married one of Shu'ayb's daughters and grazed his sheep for a few years. After a few years, he reminisced his birthplace, took his wife with him, and set out for Egypt, carrying his belongings along. On his way, when he reached Mount Sinai at night, he was assigned to prophetic mission by the Almighty Allah. He was chosen by Allah to invite Fir'awn to the religion of Tawhid, to liberate the Israelites from the yoke of the Gipsies, and to designate his brother, Harun (Aaron), as his minister. But after he announced his mission and communicated the divine message, Fir'awn who was an idol-worshipper and who had also

introduced himself to the people of Egypt as one of the gods, did not accept Musa's (AS) prophetic mission and refused to grant freedom to the Israelites. Although for many years Musa (AS) invited people to tawhid and showed many miracles, Fir'awn and his people showed no reaction other than toughness and moroseness. Finally, by the order of Allah, Musa (AS) emigrated the Israelites and went from Egypt to Sinai desert at night. When they reached the Red sea, Fir'awn, too, came to know and chased them with his army.

Through a miracle, Musa (AS) split the water of the sea and crossed it along with his people, but Fir'awn and his army were drowned. After this event, Allah revealed the Tawrat to Musa (AS) and established the Shari'ah of Musa (AS) among the Israelites. * In Egypt, kings were ."called "Pharaohs

## PROPHET 'ISA (AS) (4)

Prophet 'Isa (AS) is the fourth of the Ulul'azm Anbiya' bestowed with a book and shari'ah. The circumstances of his birth were unusual. His mother, Maryam, a pious virgin, was worshipping Allah (in Jerusalem) when Ruhulqudus or Jibril (Gabriel) descended from heavens, gave her the good tidings of 'Isa's (AS) birth; and by Jibril's breathing on her sleeves, Maryam became pregnant with 'Isa (AS). After his birth, 'Isa (AS) began to speak in the cradle in defence of his m other against unfair calumnies attributed to her. He also informed the people about his Nubuwwah and divine book (Injil). Later, in his youth, he proceeded to invite the people and revived the shari'ah of Musa (AS) with minor modifications. He sent missionaries from among his hawaris (disciples) to the surrounding places. After his call was spread among the people, the Jews (his ummah) embarked on killing him, but Allah saved him, and the Jews caught someone else in his place and crucified him. It should be pointed out here that the Almighty Allah, in the Holy Qur'an, confirms a divine book called the "Injil" for 'Isa (AS), which was revealed to him. It is different from the Gospels written after 'Isa (AS) about his life and call. Among them, four Gospels compiled by Luke, Mark, Matthew, and John are formally .recognized by Christians

## PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SA) IBN 'ABDILLAH (5)

The biography of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (SA) ibn Abdillah is clearer than those of all prophets preceding him, because as a result of the lapse of time and historical changes, their books, shari'ahs, and even their personalities have been distorted and their biographies have become ambiguous. In fact, there are no clear documents other than those imparted to us through the divine book of Islam, viz, Qur'an and the speeches and statements of Prophet Muhammad (SA) and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). But there is a clear history on the life of Prophet

Muhammad (SA) which describes the characteristics of his life adequately. The Holy Prophet (SA) of Islam is the last prophet appointed by the Almighty Allah to lead the people of the world. Fourteen centuries ago, mankind lived in such a condition that nothing was left of Tawhid except nominally and when people had completely deviated from Tawhid and theism. Human manners and justice had died away in their society. Holy Ka'bah had turned into an idol-temple and the religion of Ibrahim (AS) had converted into idolatry. Arabs led a tribal life and even a few of their cities in Hijaz and Yemen and elsewhere were governed in the same tribal manner. The Arabs lived in the meanest and most backward conditions. Instead of culture and civilization, they indulged in unchastity, sensuality, alcoholism, and gambling. They buried their daughters alive. Most people subsisted by Way of theft, banditry, murder, and plundering each other's belongings, livestock, and cattle. Cruelty and bloodshed were regarded as the greatest honours. In such an environment, the compassionate Allah appointed Prophet Muhammad (SA) to reform and lead the people of the world. Allah revealed the Holy Qur'an to him, consisting of divine education, theism, the ways of implementation of justice, and beneficial advice. Allah commissioned him to invite people toward humanity and adherence to the truth using that divine authentic Book, Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad (SA) was born in the city of Makkah in 570 AD (53 years before Hijrah) in the noblest and most honourable Arab family. Muhammad's (SA) father died before he was born. He lost h is mother when he was six years old. After two years, his grandfather (Abdul Muttalib), who was his guardian, died. Then the Prophet (SA) was put under the guardianship of his kind uncle, Abu Talib (the father of the Leader of the Faithful, 'Ali [AS]). Abu Talib held him den just like one of his own children. Until a few months before Hijrah, he always did his best for the protection and support of Muhammad (SA) and he was never negligent. The Arabs of Makkah, like other Arabs, indulged in breeding sheep and camels. They sometimes used to trade with neighbouring countries, especially with Syria. They were illiterate people who made no effort to educate their children. Like all his people, the Prophet (SA), too, had not learnt to read and write, but from the beginning of his life, he was privileged by having a series of praiseworthy attributes. He never worshipped idols, lied, and committed theft and treachery. He guarded against evil, disrespectful, and indecent actions and was wise and efficient. Therefore, he gained considerable popularity among the people within a short period and became known as "Muhammad al-Amin" meaning "Muhammad the trustworthy". The Arabs often entrusted him with their belongings and talked about his honesty and efficiency. When he was about twenty years old, a wealthy lady of Makkah, Khadijah al-Kubra, designated him as her representative in commercial trade. As a result of his truthfulness, honesty, wisdom,

and efficiency, she earned a great deal of profit. She was naturally attracted by the personality and magnanimity of the Holy Prophet (SA) more than ever and finally proposed to him for marriage. Afterwards also for years, she continued commercial works with her husband. Being considered as one of the people, the Holy Prophet (SA) had an ordinary association with people until the age of forty. Of course, he differed from them in that he had a praiseworthy and decent behaviour and guarded against indecent deeds and conducts which had spoiled others. He did not possess cruelty, hard-heartedness, and status consciousness, thus had earned the respect and confidence of people. It was such that when the Arabs were reconstructing the House of Ka'bah, a quarrel and dispute arose among the tribes on the erection of Al-Hajar al-Aswad (the Black Stone). The people unanimously chose the Holy Prophet (SA) as an arbitrator. He then ordered the people to spread a cloak to place Al-Hajar al-Aswad within. The nobles of the tribes lifted the sides of the cloak and the Holy Prophet (SA) installed the Al-Hajar al-Aswad in its place, thus bringing the conflict of the people to an end without any massacre and bloodshed.

Before his Al-Bi'that al-Nabawiyyah (appointment for prophethood), although the Holy Prophet (SA) worshipped Allah and refrained from idol-worshipping, the people did not bother about him because he did not explicitly struggle against the superstitious beliefs of idolatry. The same applied to those belonging to other religions such as Jews and christians, who lived respectfully among the Arabs without being bothered by them.