

Miracles of the Prophets

Description: What is a miracle and what was its place in the lives of the prophets?

By Aisha Stacey (© 2015 NewMuslims.com)

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Objectives:

- To understand the definition of a miracle.
- To understand the connection between prophets and miracles.
- To encourage the reader to read more about the miracles of the prophets.

Arabic Terms:

- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Hadith* - (plural " *ahadith* ") is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Jinn* " A creation of Allah that was created before humankind from smokeless flame. They are referred to at times as spirit beings, banshees, poltergeists, phantoms and so forth.
- *Surah* " chapter of the Quran.
- *Masjid* - the Arabic term for mosque.
- *Mu'jizah* " miracle.
- *Karamah* - (plural: *karamat*) an extraordinary matter or event that is brought about at the hands of a believer who obeys God. A *karamah* usually only benefits the one to whom it is given.

Dictionary.com defines a miracle as an effect or extraordinary event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is ascribed to a supernatural cause. Islam however attributes these extraordinary events to the power of Allah. A miracle is an astonishing act that can only come about due to direct intervention from Allah Himself. They are events brought about by, connected to, or performed by prophets. Miracles are not magic, nor are they events bought about by righteous people. Magic is by definition a trick or an illusion; whereas, the sometimes unexplained events brought about by learned righteous people are called *karamat*.



God sent prophets primarily to guide humankind. They were humans of outstanding character that the people could emulate and look to for direction. They were not gods, demi-gods or saints; they were human beings charged with a difficult task. They at times possessed exceptional characteristics and qualities because they had to face unanticipated trials and tribulations in order to spread their message to worship Allah Alone.

In order to support His prophets Allah sometimes gave them extraordinary power. The Arabic word for miracle is *mu'jizah* meaning something unique that cannot be resisted. The miracles granted to the prophets were not only unique, they were also pertinent and understandable to the people to whom they were sent. When they saw a miracle they knew that it could not have been performed by an ordinary man.

In the time of Prophet Moses magic and sorcery were very common in the land of Egypt therefore Moses' miracles, such as the staff turning into a serpent and his hand glowing, appealed to the people he was sent to guide. Prophet Moses' encounter with the magicians at Pharaoh's court explains the difference between magic and miracles. When the magicians whose serpents were a result of trickery and illusion (magic) saw Moses produce a real serpent they knew at once that it was a miracle. That is why they fell down and prostrated to Allah despite knowing that Pharaoh would have them put to death.

At the time of Jesus, the Israelites were very knowledgeable in the field of medicine thus Prophet Jesus' miracles included returning sight to the blind, healing lepers and raising the dead.

oeAnd you heal those born blind and the lepers by My leave. And behold! You bring forth the dead by My leave.” (Quran 5:10)

A miracle performed by Allah at the request of Prophet Jesus explains why Islam says that there are two types of miracles. Jesus asked Allah to provide him and his disciples with a table of food. This event is discussed in *Surah* 5 of the Quran entitled Al-Maidah (The Table Spread). It is an example of a miracle performed at the request, or suggestion of the people, in order to test the truth of the message.

oeJesus, son of Mary! Can your Lord send down to us a table

spread (with food) from heaven?” (Quran 5:112)

The disciples wanted to spread the message of Jesus by proclaiming the miracles they witnessed with their own eyes. Another example of this type of miracle is when Prophet Saleh’s people requested he bring out from behind the mountain a she-camel and her offspring.

oeWe sent the she-camel to Thamud as a clear sign, but they did her wrong.” (Quran 17:59)

The second type of miracle occurs without suggestion. It includes anything similar to what happened when the tree trunk cried and longed for Prophet Muhammad. The *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad contains many other miracles such as water flowing from his (Prophet Muhammad’s) fingers and trees deliberating shading him. Prophet (King) Solomon’s life was also filled with miracles and wonder. His kingdom and his abilities were beyond the capabilities of a human thus clearly showing that God provided him with miracles that made him stand out among others and confirmed his nobility and prophethood. His army consisted of battalions of men, *jinn* and birds. He was able to communicate with both birds and ants.

Prophet Muhammad was the recipient of one of the most amazing miracles we have the privilege to know about. After a very difficult year in which he lost both his uncle and his beloved first wife Khadijah, Prophet Muhammad was granted a major blessing and miracle that has become known as the Night Journey and Ascension. It was a physical journey by night from the Holy *Masjid* in Mecca to the Al-Aqsa *masjid* in Jerusalem. It culminated in his ascension from the heavens into the presence of God.

oeGlorified be He Who took His slave on a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Haram to Masjid-al-Aqsa, the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him of Our signs. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.” (Quran 17:1)

In the 6th century, the Arabs, although primarily unlettered, were masters of the spoken word. Their poetry and prose was eloquent and a model of literary excellence. Even those who did not believe in Muhammad’s message knew the Quran was literature beyond compare. Thus the Quran itself is considered to be a miracle. Prophet Muhammad said, in an authentic *hadith*, oeEvery Prophet was given miracles on account of which their people believed; but, I have been given divine revelation which Allah has revealed to me, and I am hopeful that my followers will outnumber the followers of other prophets on Resurrection Day.”[\[1\]](#)

When Prophet Muhammad said this he was implying that the Quran should be considered a miracle. One who reads the Quran finds that its contents, including scientific, prophetic and historical information, all contribute to Quran’s status as a miracle. All prophets had miraculous aspects to their lives but because of his status as the last prophet, Prophet Muhammad’s dominant miracle, the Quran, is considered a living miracle. The Quran’s challenge to produce a chapter (the shortest being just 3 lines) similar to it still stands today.

Endnotes:

[1] Saheeh Al-Bukhari

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