



THE PROPHETS ARE HUMAN *HOWEVER ...*

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A PREVIEW OF NOTIONS THAT MUST BE CORRECTED

Some people think that the Prophets – may peace and blessings of Allah be upon them – are just like other humans in all of their states and ways. This is a clear mistake and exposed ignorance that is refuted by sound evidence in the Book and the Sunna.

Even if they share with the rest of the children of Ādam in the reality of their nature – that being humanity, as attested to by His (Allah's) statement, exalted by His mention: ﴿Say: I am only a man like yourselves.﴾ (al-Kahf: 110) – still, they are different from them in many attributes and contingent qualities. If that was not the case, then what is their distinction? How can the fruit of their distinction and selection be manifested over others? In this area of research, we shall mention a portion of their attributes in the life of this world, as well as their unique qualities in the Isthmus life (*barzakh*) that have been affirmed for them in texts of the Book and the Sunna.

The Prophets Are the Masters of Mankind: The Prophets are the specially selected and chosen ones among the servants of Allah. Allah honoured them with Prophethood, gave them wisdom, and provided them with intellectual prowess, sound opinion, and chose them to be the intermediaries between Him and His creation. The Prophets convey to mankind the commands of Allah ﷻ and warn them from His anger and chastisement. The Prophets guide their people to that which leads to their felicity in this life and the next. It was from the wisdom of Allah that the Prophets were humans in order for the people to gather with them, take from them, and follow them in their manners and spiritual practices. Their humanity is the sum of their miraculous nature because they are human, yet at the same time, they are distinguished from the rest of humanity with qualities that no others can share with them. This is why, seeing their normal humanity stripped of these other qualities is a view of the time of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) and idolatry.

An example of this, is the statement of the people of Nūḥ concerning him that Allah mentioned about them when He said: ﴿The chiefs of the disbelievers among his people said: “We see you but a man like ourselves...”﴾ (Hūd: 27)

From that also is the statement of the people of Mūsā and Hārūn: ﴿They said: “Shall we believe in two men like ourselves, and their people are obedient to us with humility (and we use them to serve us as we like)?”﴾ (al-Mu’minūn: 47) From that also is the statement of the people of Thamūd: ﴿You are but a human being like us. Then bring us a sign if you are of the truthful.﴾ (al-Shu‘arā’: 154)

From that also is the statement of the people of Ayka to their Prophet Shu‘ayb: ﴿They said: “You are only one of those bewitched! You are but a human being like us and verily, we think that you are one of the liars!”﴾ (al-Shu‘arā’: 185-186) From that also is the statement of the idolaters to our Master Muḥammad ﷺ, those who saw him in the light of mere humanity, free (from his special qualities): ﴿And they say: “Why does this Messenger eat food, and walk about in the markets (like ourselves)?”﴾ (al-Furqān: 7)

The Attributes of the Prophets: The Prophets – may Allah send upon them peace and blessings – are humans in that they eat, drink, feel healthy, get sick, marry women, walk about in the market place, and are exposed to the common human conditions such as weakness, old age, and death. Despite all of this, they are distinguished with special characteristics and described with tremendous and noble qualities. With respect to them, these qualities are inseparable from them and are necessary traits. These qualities are summarized as follows:

1. Truthfulness
2. Conveyance
3. Fulfilling the trust
4. Intelligence
5. Being free of loathsome defects
6. Infallibility

This is not the place to go into detail regarding these qualities. They have been covered in detail within the books of *tawhīd*. Here, we shall mention some of the qualities by which the Master of the Messengers ﷺ is distinguished from the rest of mankind.

He ﷺ Sees from Behind just as He Sees from the Front: The two Shaykhs (al-Bukhārī and Muslim) narrated from Abū Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Do you see my *qibla* here? By Allah, your bowing and prostration is not hidden to me. Indeed, I see you from behind me.” Muslim narrated from Anas that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “O people, indeed I am your Imām, so do not precede me with either bowing or prostration, for indeed I see you from the front of me and from behind me.” ‘Abd al-Razzāq in his *Jāmi‘*, al-Ḥākim, and Abū Nu‘aym narrated from Abū Hurayra that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Indeed I can look behind me just as I look in front of me.” Abū Nu‘aym narrated from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī who said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Indeed I see from behind me.”

He ﷺ Sees what We don’t See and he Hears what We don’t Hear:

Abū Dhar said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Indeed I see what you do not see and I hear what you do not hear. The heavens creak and it has every right to creak. By the One in whose Hand rests my soul, there is not a place in the heavens that is the width of four fingers except that there is an Angel placing its forelock there lying prostrate to Allah. By Allah, if you knew what I know, you would laugh less and cry more, and would not take pleasure with women in your beds, and would go out to open areas and seek protection from Allah.” Abū Dhar said after mentioning this narration: “Would that I could be a bush that is chewed up.”¹

His ﷺ Noble Armpits: The two Shaykhs (al-Bukhārī and Muslim) narrated from Anas who said: “I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ raising his hands in supplication until I saw the whiteness of his armpits.” Ibn Sa‘d narrated from Jābir who said: “When the Prophet ﷺ would prostrate, the whiteness of his armpits could be seen.”

There are numerous Ḥadīth from the companions mentioning the whiteness of his armpits ﷺ. Al-Muḥib al-Ṭabarī said: “From his unique characteristics is that the armpits of people are of a different colour than the rest of their body whereas his were the same.” Al-Qurṭubī said similar to this and added that along with this, there was no hair upon his armpits.

He ﷺ Never Yawned: Al-Bukhārī in his book of history, Ibn Abī Shayba in his *Muṣannaf*, and Ibn Sa‘d, all narrated from Yazīd b. Asamm who said: “The Prophet ﷺ never yawned.” Ibn Abī Shayba narrated from Muslima b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān who said: “No Prophet ever yawned.”

His ﷺ Noble Sweat: Muslim narrated from Anas ﷺ who said: “The Prophet ﷺ came to us and then took a nap at our place. During this time, he began to sweat, whereupon, my mother came with a small bottle and collected his sweat inside of it. After this, the Prophet ﷺ woke up and said: ‘O Umm Sulaym!’

¹ Narrated by Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah

‘What are you doing?’ She replied: ‘We place the sweat in our perfume and it is the sweetest of our scents.’ ”

Muslim also narrated a similar wording from Anas ؓ who said: “The Prophet ﷺ used to come to Umm Sulaym and take his naps at her house and she would lay out a mat for him to sleep on. He used to sweat a great deal, so she would gather his sweat and place it in perfume and bottles. He once said: ‘O Umm Sulaym! What are you doing?’ She replied: ‘I add your sweat to my perfume.’ ”

His ؓ Height: Ibn Khaythama in his book of history, al-Bayhaqī, and Ibn ‘Asākir, all narrated from ‘Ā’isha who said: “The Prophet ﷺ was neither exceedingly tall nor short. If he walked alone, he would be considered of average height, yet, there was never a time that he walked with a group of tall people, except that he would seem taller than the rest. Perhaps he would be around two tall people yet he would seem taller, and when he would walk away, he would seem of average height.” Ibn Sab‘a mentioned this in his collection of unique qualities and added to it that when he ﷺ would sit, his shoulders would be higher than the rest of those sitting.

His ؓ Shadow: Al-Ḥākim al-Tirmidhī narrated from Dhakwān that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not cast a shadow from either the sun or the moon. Ibn Sab‘a said: “From his unique qualities is that he did not cast a shadow on the ground. He was light when he walked out in the sun or the moon and he had no shadow.” Some of them said: “This is strengthened by the Ḥadīth wherein he ﷺ said: ‘And make me a light...’ ”

Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ mentioned in his *Shifā’*, and al-‘Azfī mentioned in his *Mawlid* book, that among his unique qualities ؓ, is that flies would never descend upon him, Ibn Sab‘a mentioned in his collection: “Flies never descended upon his clothes.” He also mentioned that among his qualities is that lice never infested him.

His ﷺ Blood: Al-Bazzār, Abū Ya‘lā, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī, all narrated that ‘Abdullāh b. Zubayr came to the Prophet ﷺ while he was getting a *ḥijāma*² performed. When he was finished, he said: “O ‘Abdullāh! Take this excess blood and dispose of it in a place where no one will see you.” ‘Abdullāh then took it and drank it. When he returned, he ﷺ said to him: “O ‘Abdullāh! What did you do?” ‘Abdullāh replied: “I disposed of it in the most concealed place that I know of. It is hidden from the people.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “Did you drink it?” He replied: “Yes!” The Prophet ﷺ then said: “Woe to the people from you and woe to you from the people.” Afterwards, the people would see that he had extra strength due to the blood he drank.

His ﷺ Sleep: The two Shaykhs (al-Bukhārī and Muslim) reported from ‘Ā’isha who said: “O Messenger of Allāh! Are you going to sleep before you pray the *witr* prayer?” He replied: “O ‘Ā’isha! My eyes sleep whereas my heart sleeps not.” The two Shaykhs reported from Anas b. Mālik ؓ who said: “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘My eyes sleep, whereas my heart sleeps not.’” He ﷺ said: “The eyes of the Prophets sleep, whereas their hearts sleep not.”

His ﷺ Sexual Prowess: Al-Bukhārī reported from the route of Qatāda from Anas who said: “The Prophet ﷺ used to take turns in visiting his wives (for conjugal relations), one after the other in one day, and they were eleven in number.” Qatāda said: “I asked Anas: Was he capable of such a thing? Anas replied: “We used to say that he was given the strength of thirty men.”

The Prophet ﷺ was Protected From Having Wet Dreams: Al-Ṭabarānī reported from the route of ‘Ikrima from Anas and Ibn ‘Abbās, and al-Daynūrī in his work *al-Mujālasa*, reported from the route of Mujāhid from Ibn ‘Abbās who said: “No Prophet ever had a wet dream and indeed, it is only from Satan.”

² I.e. Bloodletting/Cupping

His Blessed Urine ﷺ: Ḥasan b. Sufyān in his *Musnad*, Abū Ya‘lā, al-Ḥākim, al-Dāraqūṭnī, and Abū Nu‘aym all narrated from Umm Ayman who said: “The Prophet got up one night and urinated in a bowl. During that night, I rose in the state of thirst so I drank whatever was in the bowl. In the morning I told Him what I had done, after which he smiled and said: ‘Surely you will never have pain in your stomach.’”

‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates from Ibn Jurayj who said: “I was told that the Prophet used to have a wooden bowl in which he used to urinate and it was placed under His bed. Once, he searched for it and found that it was empty. He then asked a woman named Baraka, who was the servant of Umm Ḥabība who came with her when she returned from Abyssinia. He asked: ‘Where is the urine that was in the bowl?’ She replied, ‘I drank it.’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then said: ‘O Umm Yusuf! You will most certainly be healthy!’ This (Umm Yūsuf) was her nickname. She never became ill after that day save the sickness that immediately preceded her death.” Ibn Daḥīyya said: “This story is different from the story of Umm Ayman, and this Baraka Umm Yūsuf is different from Baraka Umm Ayman.

A Beneficial Conclusion: Some have composed lines of poetry wherein they summarized the unique physical characteristics of the Prophet that distinguished him from everyone else:

*Our Prophet was chosen with ten special qualities
Never did he have a wet dream and no shadow did he have
What is expelled from him the Earth does indeed swallow
Just as the flies keep away from him
His eyes sleep whereas his heart sleeps not
He sees from behind just as he sees from the front
Never once did he yawn and this is the seventh quality
And he was born circumcised
The beasts know him when he embarks upon them
Quickly they approach him and they flee not
He towers over those around him when sitting in gatherings
May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him
both night and morning*

In section two of our research concerning the Prophetic qualities, we mentioned some of the unique Prophetic qualities and our basic view concerning them; that these unique qualities are quite numerous. Some of them have authentic chains, some of them have weak chains, and some are differed over among the scholars – with some holding the view that they are authentic, and others holding the view that they are weak – therefore, these are issues of disagreement.

In the times of old, the words of the scholars concerning these reports centred around what is deemed as either correct or incorrect, or what is authentic or false. Never did their words centre around faith and disbelief. We have mentioned a sample of such unique qualities; some of which are authentic, some of which are not authentic. Some of them are acceptable, and some are not.

We mentioned these reports so they serve as examples showing the leniency of some Imāms in citation without checking or criticism. (Our) intent behind this was not to go into discussion regarding their authenticity or weakness, so understand this.