

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as *Nur*.

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Two Parameters.

Any discussion on the *Nur* of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) must commence with two important statements. These statements or parameters in effect set the boundaries of the debate.

1• Like all prophets and messengers before him, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a *Bashar*, or human.

This is proven by;

a. The Quran. 'I am a man like you.' (18: 110)

b. Common sense; the purpose of messengers is to provide a role model for their subjects. They can only do that if they have some resemblance with their followers. Allah says,

‘And we did not send any Messenger except to be obeyed with the permission of Allah.’ (4: 64)

‘And they say: Why has not an angel been sent down to him? (6: 8)

2•All prophets –despite their human nature- are different to us. They have unique qualities and attributes.

a. Allah says that if the Quran was to be revealed to a mountain, it would tremble to pieces due to the force of the *Wahy*.

‘Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rending asunder by the fear of Allah. Such are the parables which We put forward to mankind that they may reflect.’ (59: 21)

Yet, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was able to receive and digest the revelation given to him by Allah.

b. Isa (peace be upon him) could speak as a child.

‘Then she pointed to him. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?" He said: Verily! I am a slave of Allah, He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet" (19: 29-30)

c. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) could see behind him just as well as he could see in front of him. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith no. 401)

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ‘...By Allah! Your humility and your *Ruku's* are not hidden from me. Verily I can undoubtedly see from behind my back.’

فوالله ما يخفي علي خشوعكم و لا ركوعكم اني لاري من وراء ظهري

In a similar narration recorded by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

اني لانظر ما ورائي كما أنظر الي ما بين يدي

‘Verily I can see whatever is behind me like I can see what is in front of me.’ (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith no. 6901)

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 A.H.) writes the Hadith is interpreted literally, and is one of the unique qualities of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

d. Sulaiman (peace be upon him) could travel at great speed.

‘And to Sulaiman (We subjected) the wind, its morning was a month's (journey), and its afternoon was a month's. And We caused a fount of (molten) brass to flow for him...’ (34: 12)

In other words, in one day he could travel a two months' journey.

e. In fact just on our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 911) wrote an entire book on his unique qualities, called *al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*.

The Prophet as *Nur* from the Holy Qur'an.

•First Verse

‘O Prophet! Verily, We have sent you as witness, and a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner. And as one who invites to Allah by His Leave, and as a lamp, a provider of light.’ (33:45-6)

The verse describes Prophet as;

Siraj (Lamp). Metaphors are used to describe an object with another for its known quality. ‘Zaid is a lion’ denotes his bravery because lions are known primarily for their bravery. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is described as *Siraj* because he primarily provides light just like a lamp does.

Munir (Provider of light). One can only be a provider of light if one possesses it himself. A teacher can only teach if he has knowledge to disperse. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) can only provide light if he possesses it in the first place.

• **Second Verse**

‘There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book.’ (5: 15)

Most Quranic commentators write that the ‘light’ refers to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and ‘a clear book’ refers to the Holy Qur’an. For example;

Tafsīr ibn Jarīr Tabrī, Imam Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabri (d. 311)

Tafsīr Khāzin,

Tafsīr Kabīr,

Tafsīr Mu’ālam Tanzīl,

Tafsīr Ruh al-Bayān,

Tafsīr Ruh al-Ma’ānī, Allama Abu al-Fadhl Sayyid Mahmud Alousi (d. 1270)

Tafsīr Sāwī ‘ala Jalālain.

One opinion is that ‘light’ here refers to the Qur’an too. Grammatically, this is difficult to prove. The *Waw* denotes *Mughayyara*. This means that what precedes the letter and what comes after it are different. If we take ‘light’ in this verse to mean the Qur’an, the verse will translate as ‘There has come to you from Allah the Qur’an and a clear Book.’

This is similar to saying,

‘The Prime Minister and Gordon Brown attended the press conference.’

Grammatically, it is incorrect to use ‘and’ because the Prime Minister and Gordon Brown are the same person. So the *Nur* in the verse must refer to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The Prophet as *Nur* from the Ahadith.

• At the time of his birth, the Prophet’s mother saw a light emit from her by which she could see the palaces of Syria. (*al-Mawahib al-Laduniyya*, 1: 67)

Note that she did not say ‘in the direction of Syria.’ This would not be particularly unique or spectacular.

For instance, if someone said ‘I saw a light in the direction of London’ then this statement does not necessarily mean the light enabled me to actually see London.

But Amina (may Allah be pleased with her) said that the light enabled her to actually *see* Syria, and as proof for this she described *what* she could see there.

- Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘The first thing Allah created was the *Nur* of your Prophet.’

- It is widely reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not possess a shadow. Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti writes,

‘Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi reports from Zakwan that,

‘A shadow could not be seen from the Messenger of Allah in the sun or moon.

And Ibn Siy said ‘from his unique qualities was that his shadow did not fall upon the earth, and that he was *Nur*. Thus when he walked in the sun[light] and

moon[light], a shadow could not be seen. And the Hadith testifies this fact when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed, ‘And make me

Nur.’ (و اجعلني نورا)

(*al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*, (1:164).

There are many other Ahadith which prove that he did. For example,

‘From Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) who mentioned that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) informed them that Jibrail (peace be upon him) came and read each Salah twice with him at different times, except for Maghrib. He came to me and performed Zuhr when my shadow was as short as the length of my sandals. Then he came to me and performed ‘Asr when my shadow was the same length as me.’

But there is nothing to stop us suggesting that at some times, he did have a shadow and at other times he did not.

- The Companions’ descriptions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Most of them referred to him with luminous attributes; like the ‘sun’ or ‘moon.’

-Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

‘I did not see anyone more beautiful than the Messenger of Allah. As if the sun flowed in his face... (*al-Shifa*, p. 43)

-Jabir ibn Samura (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked; Was his face like a (shining) sword? He replied,

‘No, rather it was like the sun and moon.’ (*al-Shifa*, p. 43)

The *Nur* of the Prophet; literal or metaphorical?

Nur has been used in the Qur’an (and often Ahadith) in the metaphoric sense. For example,

Allah is the *Wali* (Protector) of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light. (2: 257)

Most commentators write that this refers to the light of Islam.

Thus, could it be argued that descriptions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as *Nur* are largely metaphoric; that he was a light of guidance rather than a physical, literal light.

Answer

He was both *Nur* literally and metaphorically.

- Tufayl came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and asked for a sign that he could show to his people. The Prophet prayed to Allah and miraculously a light emitted from between his eyes. Tufayl then became worried that people would think he has been disfigured. So the Prophet transferred the light to his whip. He later became known with the name *Zun-Nur*. (*al-Shifa*, p. 203)

- Nu’aim (may Allah be pleased with him) reports...the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said,

‘Verily my Ummah will come on the Day of Judgement shining with light from the effects of ablution.’ (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith no. 133)

Can the Prophet be both *Nur* and *Bashar*?

Deniers claim that it is impossible to ascribe both qualities (*Nur* and *Bashar*) to him simultaneously. He is either one or the other.

Answer

This maxim is not proven.

- Jibrael (peace be upon him) is an angel and thus created from light. But he appeared in the form of a man without anyone knowing (as mentioned in the famous *Hadith Jibrael*).

- Shaitan was created from fire. But he too appeared in the form of a man without Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) knowing. (*Sahih al-Bukhari: Book of Representation (Wikala)*).

Conclusion

-The *Nur* of the Prophet is a disputed issue. One will not lose his Faith if he denies it, though he will lose faith.

-The Night of *Isra* primarily relates to his *Nuraniyya*;

- a. The speed of Buraq.
- b. The ring was still moving when he returned.
- c. Inability of Jibrael (peace be upon him) to move beyond *Sidra*.

-It is no surprise to hear that the same Muslims who deny he is *Nur* are the same Muslims who;

-argue that the *Isra* and *Miraj* was a dream.

-argue that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is dead.

-insult the extent of the Prophet's knowledge.

-deny the legitimacy of using his *Wasila* after his physical life.

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