

BACKGROUND TO **RISALAH**

KEY FACTS ABOUT A NABI (PROPHET), A RASUL (MESSENGER) A NADIR (WARNER) AND RISALAH (THE MESSAGE) IN ISLAM

Many argue that a human being is not capable of working out the meaning of life without divine assistance:

“ intellect alone cannot discern the purpose of creation, the nature of thereator, the path he should tread and the way he should tread it ”

Colin Turner.

In order for God to communicate His revealed will to humanity, intermediary vessels are required. Although God cannot communicate directly to humanity He can send an angel to communicate a message, or revelation (wahy), via a messenger (rasul) chosen by God because of the messenger's specific qualities. These messengers are often referred to as a prophet (nabi) or a warner (nadir).

Islamic teaching distinguishes between the nabi (prophet) and a rasul (messenger). Traditionally the two terms are interchangeable and can refer to all prophets in Islam. However, there is a perceived difference that is sometimes made. Technically a rasul is a prophet that actually brings with him a written message with a particular mission. In this understanding all nabi are not rasul, but all rasul are nabi.

Muslims believe that the prophets bring God's message and accept the twenty-five that are named in Quran. Every nation has been sent a prophet. Muslims believe prophets to be sinless from being chosen by God. Muhammad was the Seal of Prophets and had been given the final message. There were to be no other prophets to follow Muhammad.

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“ Muhammad is the central figure in Islam. Chosen by God to receive the revelation of the Qur’an, he has been taken by all Muslims to be the ideal man, the perfect embodiment of what it means to be a Muslim. ”

Rippin

The beliefs in Islam surrounding the prophets before Muhammad are that they are very important figures. In particular, Isa (Jesus) is considered only second to Muhammad.

Of the twenty-five prophets named in the Qur’an there are five that brought the most important scriptures to humanity, and in the traditional understanding of risalah (belief in the message) they are classed as rasul.

Each rasul was given Allah’s message but these messages were often forgotten, distorted or ignored. In the case of the Sahifa (scrolls) it has been lost to humanity forever.

Apart from Muhammad who brought the final revelation, the four other previous rasul mentioned in the Qur’an are:

- Ibrahim (Abraham) - who brought the Sahifa or scrolls
- Musa (Moses) - who brought the Torah
- Dawud (David) - who brought the Psalms, and,
- Isa (Jesus) - who brought the Gospel.