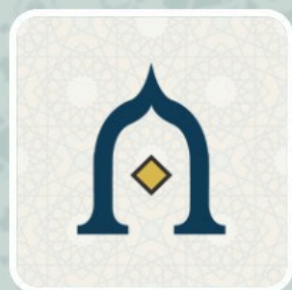


The Immunity of the Prophets and Imams from Physical Deficiencies

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Nihad al-Fayyad

**Translated by
Amir Al-Zabidi**

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Authors(s):

[Nihad al-Fayyad](#) [2]

Translator(s):

[Amir Al-Zabidi](#) [3]

The Immunity of the Prophets and Imams عليهم السلام from Physical Deficiencies

By Shaykh Nihād al-Fayyāḍ

Translation by Amir Al-Zabidi

Question

What is the evidence that prophets or imams, peace be upon them, must be free from physical defects and deformities if such conditions do not affect their intellect or their ability to convey the message to people?

Answer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

To begin with, it is worth noting the necessity of sending prophets to humanity. Allah the Exalted is transcendent above corporeality and bodily limitations, and creation cannot directly perceive Him or receive knowledge from Him without an intermediary. When Allah willed to guide humanity and lead them to the perfection and purpose for which they were created, His wisdom necessitated sending Prophets who would clarify the path for them and guide them to the straight way.

This principle equally applies to the Imams after the prophets, as the reasons for their existence are established and any obstacles to it are absent, as is evident and clear.

Al-Kulaynī (May his soil be pleasant) narrated with his chain of transmission from Hishām ibn al-

akam, from Ab Abdillh (peace be upon him), that he said to the heretic who asked him, “How do we prove the existence of prophets and messengers?” He replied:

إنَّه لما أثبتنا أنَّ لنا خالقاً صانعاً متعالياً عنا وعن جميع ما خلق، وكان ذلك الصانع حكيماً متعالياً لم يجز أن يشاهده خلقه، ولا يلامسوه، فيبأشرهم ويبأشروه، ويحاجُّهم ويحاجُّوه، ثبت أنَّ له سفراء في خلقه، يعبرون عنه إلى خلقه وعباده، ويدلُّونهم على مصالحهم ومنافعهم وما به بقاؤهم وفي تركه فناؤهم، فثبت الآمرون والناهون عن الحكيم العليم في خلقه، والمعيرون عنه (جلَّ وعزَّ)، وهم الأنبياء (عليهم السلام) وصفوته من خلقه، حكماء مؤدِّبين بالحكمة ... مؤيِّدين من عند الحكيم العليم بالحكمة، ثمَّ ثبت ذلك في كلِّ دهرٍ وزمان مما أتت به الرسل والأنبياء من الدلائل والبراهين، لكيلا تخلو أرض الله من حُجة يكون معه علم يدلُّ على صدق مقالته وجواز عدالته

“When we have established that we have a Creator, a Maker exalted above us and above all that He has created, and that this Maker is Wise and transcendent, it would not be permissible for His creation to see Him or touch Him, to interact directly with Him, or to dispute with Him in argument. Therefore, it becomes necessary that He appoints representatives among His creation who convey His message to His servants, guide them to their interests and benefits, and show them that through obedience there is their survival, and through neglect there is their destruction.

Hence, those who command and forbid by the authority of the Wise, All-Knowing, and those who convey His message – Glorified and Exalted is He – are established. They are the prophets (peace be upon them) and the chosen of His creation, wise and disciplined in wisdom, supported by the Wise and All-Knowing in wisdom. This has been proven throughout every era and time by the evidence and proofs brought by the messengers and prophets, so that no land of Allah remains without a proof who possesses knowledge demonstrating the truth of his speech and the legitimacy of his justice.” [1](#)

If this becomes clear, we say:

It is evident that the purpose of sending prophets is to guide humanity and lead them to the intended perfection. This goal cannot be fully achieved if a prophet or an infallible person is afflicted with a defect that causes people to be repelled by them, for this could prevent people from accepting their message and weaken the impact of their call. Such a situation would conflict with the primary objective of the mission, which is to draw hearts toward divine guidance. Therefore, it is necessary that the prophets, as well as the imams, be the most complete and exemplary of people in all respects, so that the fundamental purpose of their sending is accomplished in the best possible manner.

Sheikh al-Suban (may his shadow remain) said:

هناك صفاتٌ أخرى يجب اتصافُ الأنبياء بها تحصيلاً لغرضهم، التي لولاها لما وصلوا إليه، ويجمعها التنزُّه عن كلِّ ما يوجب تنفُّر الناس، والتحلِّي بكلِّ ما يوجب انجذابهم إليه ... ومن العوامل الباعثة على اجتماع الناس حول القائد، سلامته في بدنه من التشوُّه، ومن الأمراض التي يستوحش الناس معها من التعاطي مع المصاب بها، كالجذام والبرص

“There are other qualities that prophets must possess in order to achieve their purpose, without which they would not have attained it. These qualities are summarized in being free from anything that would repel people, and in possessing everything that attracts them. Among the factors that encourage people to gather around a leader is the integrity of his body, free from deformity or diseases that make people hesitant to interact with him, such as leprosy or vitiligo.” [2](#)

Sayyid al-Ridha (May his soil be pleasant) said in response to this question (the text is as follows):

هل يجب أن يكون المعصوم (عليه السلام) كاملاً حتّى من الناحية الشكليّة والجسمانيّة، بحيث يكون أجمل أهل زمانه؟ أم يكفي خلوه من المنقّرات فقط؟

“Must the infallible (peace be upon him) be perfect even in form and bodily appearance, so that he is the most beautiful of his time, or is it sufficient that he is free from repelling features?”

He (May his soil be pleasant) replied:

باسمه جلّت أسماؤه: غاية ما دلّ عليه الدليل العقليّ هو لزوم خلو المعصوم (عليه السلام) عن المنقّرات الجسديّة وغيرها، وأمّا لزوم كونه أجمل البشر في سيمائه وقسماته، فهو وإن لم يقتضه البرهان العقليّ، ولكنّ الأدلّة النقلية لا تخلو عن الإشارة إلى أنّ أهل البيت (عليهم السلام) كان لهم من الهيبة والبهاء والسيما ما ليس لغيرهم من جميع الخلق

“In His Name – Exalted are His Names: The utmost that reason indicates is that the infallible (peace be upon him) must be free from physical and other traits that repel people. As for the necessity of being the most beautiful of all humans in appearance and features, although this is not required by rational proof, the transmitted evidence does not fail to indicate that the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) possessed a dignity, splendour, and noble presence unlike any other of creation.” [3](#)

It has now been established that the prophets, as well as the guardians (peace be upon them), are free from all repelling traits, regardless of their degree, in accordance with the purpose for which they were sent, namely guidance. Indeed, they are the best in every respect, as is derived from the entirety of the religious texts. This does not, however, include illnesses they may suffer or injustices inflicted upon them by enemies and wrongdoers, since these are not repelling traits. Rather, such trials serve to elevate their ranks and are also a means of curbing excessive veneration toward them.

Allamah al-Mazandarani (May his soil be pleasant) has explained the meaning of his (Imam Ja'far al-Ridha peace be upon him) saying:

إنَّ أشدَّ الناس بلاء الأنبياء، ثمَّ الذين يلونهم، ثمَّ الأمثل فالأمثل

“The most severely tested of people are the prophets, then those closest to them, then the next in excellence, and so on.”

He stated:

في هذا الحديث وغيره من الأحاديث المتكثِّرة من طرق الخاصَّة والعامة دلالة واضحة على أنَّ الأنبياء في الأمراض الحسيَّة والبلايا الجسميَّة كغيرهم، بل هم أولى بها من الغير، تعظيماً لأجرهم الذي يُوجب التفاضل في الدرجات، ولا يقدح ذلك في رتبتهِم. بل هو تثبُّت لأمرهم وأنَّهم بشرٌ، إذ لو لم يصيبهم ما أصاب البشر مع ما يظهر من أيديهم من خرق العادة لقليل فيهم ما قالت النصارى في نبيهم

“In this and other numerous hadiths transmitted through various chains from both the general and special followers; there is clear evidence that the prophets experience sensory illnesses and bodily trials like others. Indeed, they are more deserving of such trials than others, as this magnifies the reward that distinguishes their ranks, and it does not diminish their status. Rather, it affirms their humanity, for if they had not undergone what other humans endure, despite the extraordinary acts they perform, people would have said of them what the Christians said of their prophet...” [4](#)

One point remains:

If someone were to say: How can this claim be reconciled with the explicit statement of the Noble Qur’an that the Prophet of Allah, Moses (peace be upon him), was afflicted with a knot in his tongue that prevented him from speaking fluently – something that would appear to be a visible defect?

Likewise, what of the Prophet of Allah, Job (peace be upon him), from whom people recoiled due to the severity of the illness with which he was afflicted?

In response, we say: The verse referred to concerning Moses (peace be upon him) is not explicit in indicating an actual defect in his speech. Rather, this understanding arose from the report of the ember that he allegedly put in his mouth in the presence of Pharaoh. However, we do not accept this narration, as it contradicts the sound doctrine of the absolute impeccability and transcendence of the prophets.

Moreover, it is reported in ʿIlal al-Sharḥ^{ʿi} regarding the statement of Moses (peace be upon him):

وَأَحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِي

“And untie the knot from my tongue” (Qur’an 20:27).

يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

“So that they may understand my speech” (Qur’an 20:28).

It is narrated that he said:

إِنِّي أَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ أَكَلِّمَ بِلِسَانِي الَّذِي كَلَّمْتُكَ بِهِ غَيْرَكَ، فَيَمْنَعُنِي حَيَاتِي مِنْكَ عَنْ مُحَاوَرَةٍ غَيْرِكَ، فَصَارَتْ هَذِهِ الْحَالُ عُقْدَةً عَلَى لِسَانِي، فَأَحْلِلْهَا بِفَضْلِكَ. ﴿وَاجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيْرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِ هَارُونَ أَخِي﴾، معناه: أَنَّهُ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) أَنْ يَأْذَنَ لَهُ فِي أَنْ يُعَيِّرَ عَنْهُ هَارُونَ، فَلَا يَحْتَاجُ أَنْ يَكَلِّمَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِلِسَانِ كَلَّمَ اللَّهَ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) بِهِ

“I feel ashamed to speak to anyone else with the tongue by which I spoke to You. My modesty before You prevents me from conversing with others, and this state has become like a knot upon my tongue – so remove it by Your grace. **‘And appoint for me a minister from my family’ (Qur’an 20:29), ‘Aaron, my brother’ (Qur’an 20:30)**, meaning that he asked Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He, to permit Aaron to speak on his behalf, so that he would not need to address Pharaoh with the same tongue by which he had spoken to Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He.” [5](#)

As for the Prophet of Allah, Job (peace be upon him), the illness with which he was afflicted was not repellent in the manner that has been claimed. Rather, the reason people abandoned and turned away from him was his poverty in their eyes.

Al-ʿAdāq (May his soil be pleasant) narrated through his chain of transmission from Jaʿfar ibn Muʿammad, from his father (peace be upon them), who said:

إِنَّ أَيُّوبَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) أُبْتَلِيَ مِنْ غَيْرِ ذَنْبٍ، وَإِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَا يَذْنُبُونَ، لِأَنَّهُمْ مَعْصُومُونَ مَطْهُرُونَ، لَا يَذْنُبُونَ وَلَا يَزِيغُونَ وَلَا يَرْتَكِبُونَ ذَنْبًا، صَغِيرًا وَلَا كَبِيرًا

“Indeed, Job (peace be upon him) was afflicted without any sin, for the prophets do not commit sin, as they are infallible and purified – they neither sin, nor deviate, nor commit any offense, small or great ...”

Until he (peace be upon him) said:

إِنَّ أَيُّوبَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) مَعَ جَمِيعِ مَا أُبْتَلِيَ بِهِ لَمْ يَنْتَنَ لَهُ رَائِحَةٌ، وَلَا قَبِحَتْ لَهُ صُورَةٌ، وَلَا خَرَجَتْ مِنْهُ مَدَّةٌ مِنْ دَمٍ وَلَا قَيْحٍ، وَلَا اسْتَقْذَرَهُ أَحَدٌ رَأَاهُ، وَلَا اسْتَوْحَشَ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ شَاهَدَهُ، وَلَا يَدُودُ شَيْءٍ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ، وَهَكَذَا يَصْنَعُ اللَّهُ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) بِجَمِيعِ مَنْ يَبْتَلِيهِ مِنْ أَنْبِيَائِهِ وَأَوْلِيَائِهِ الْمَكْرَمِينَ عَلَيْهِ، وَإِنَّمَا اجْتَنَبَهُ النَّاسُ لِفَقْرِهِ وَضَعْفِهِ فِي ظَاهِرِ أَمْرِهِ، لَجَهْلِهِمْ بِمَا لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ تَعَالَى ذَكَرَهُ مِنَ التَّأْيِيدِ وَالْفَرَجِ... إِلَى قَوْلِهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): وَإِنَّمَا ابْتَلَاهُ اللَّهُ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) بِالْبَلَاءِ الْعَظِيمِ الَّذِي يَهُونُ مَعَهُ عَلَى جَمِيعِ النَّاسِ، لَثَلَا يَدْعُوا لَهُ الرِّبَوِيَّةَ

"Despite all that Job (peace be upon him) endured, he did not emit any foul odor, nor did his appearance become disfigured; no blood or pus flowed from him; no one who saw him found him repulsive; no one who encountered him felt aversion toward him; and no part of his body became worm-infested. Thus

does Allah, Mighty and Exalted, deal with all those among His prophets and honored saints whom He tests. Rather, people shunned him because of his poverty and outward weakness, out of ignorance of the divine support and relief he possessed with his Lord, Glorified and Exalted ..."

Until he (peace be upon him) said:

وَأِنَّمَا ابْتَلَاهُ اللَّهُ (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) بِالْبَلَاءِ الْعَظِيمِ الَّذِي يَهُونُ مَعَهُ عَلَى جَمِيعِ النَّاسِ، لئَلَّا يَدْعُوا لَهُ الرِّبَوِيَّةَ

“Allah, Mighty and Exalted, only afflicted him with a tremendous trial – one that would seem overwhelming to people – so that they would not ascribe lordship to him.” [6](#)

The final conclusion from all of this is that the Prophets and the Imams (peace be upon them) must be entirely free from physical defects and deformities, for the reasons we have mentioned.

And all praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Link to the Arabic text: <https://alrasd.net/arabic/5691> [4]

References

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Al-Ilḥiyāt, Vol. 3, p. 209.

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1. Al-Uṣūl al-Kaṭīf, Vol. 1, p. 168.

2. Al-Ilḥiyāt, Vol. 3, p. 209.

3. Ajwibat al-Masʿil, Vol. 1, p. 79.

4. Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kaṭīf, Vol. 9, p. 206.

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6. Al-Khiṣṣ, p. 399.

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