

Worksheet: Prophets

In Islamic lore there are prophets (sing., *nabi*) and messengers (sing., *rasul*). A prophet is basically a spokesman for God, a person chosen by God to speak to people on God's behalf and convey a message or teaching. A messenger is also a prophet, only he brings a revealed scripture. Muhammad and Moses, for instance, were both prophets and messengers (www: Prophets).

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is revered as "the Seal of the Prophets"—the last and greatest of the messengers of God. . . Traditionally, five prophets are recognized by Islam as having been sent by God: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad (Adapted from www: Role).

God created the world for the benefit of his creatures. He has sent messengers to them in the past to guide them in the way of living most befitting to them and to Him; this is illustrated by the stories of the prophets of the past (Calder 2003: 4).

- "I am what Abraham my father prayed for and the good news of [my brother] Jesus. . .while I was with a brother of mine behind our tents shepherding the lambs, two men wearing white clothing came to me with a gold basin full of snow. They seized me and opened up my belly, extracted my heart and split it; then they extracted a black drop from it and threw it away; then they washed my heart and my belly with that snow until they had thoroughly cleansed them. (Adapted from Ibn Ishaq, 8th century; *Biography of Muhammad*; www: Selections).
- O Prophet, We have sent thee as a witness, and good tidings to bear and warning, calling unto God by His leave, and as a light-giving lamp (Qur'an 33: 40).
- And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them (Qur'an 35: 24).
- But how many were the prophets We sent amongst the peoples of old? And never came there a prophet to them but they mocked him (Qur'an 43: 6-7).
- As to those who deny the Signs of Allah and in defiance of right, slay the prophets, and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind, announce to them a grievous penalty (Qur'an 43: 21).
- People, no prophet or messenger will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand my words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah,¹ and if you follow these you will never go astray ("The Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon"; www: The Prophet).

Questions:

1. How would you describe the role of a prophet?
2. How did Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad fulfill the role of a prophet?
3. What does the passage from the biography of Muhammad mean?
4. Define "warners."
5. Are there any modern prophets? Is there a need for prophets today?

¹ Muslim way of life based on the actions and words of Muhammad and the teachings of the Qur'an.