

Prophet's Miraculous Night Journey

Al-Israa Wal-Mai'raaj

Abu Taalib prevented the Quraish from harming the Prophet during his lifetime. In a tribal society like that of the Quraish, individual chieftains were highly respected. As such, the Quraish did not want to lose him or go against him, and so the Prophet was relatively safe from their enmity. As soon as Abu Taalib died, the Quraish began to persecute the Prophet and the Muslims with impunity - even common members of the Quraish joined in their leaders' onslaught against them. As for the Prophet's wife, Khadeejah, everything she said and did consoled and comforted the Prophet throughout all of his difficulties. When she died only a few months after the death of Abu Taalib, the Messenger of Allah lost her comforting presence, too.

The Quraish became viler and harsher in their persecution. The Messenger of Allah went to At-Taaif, hoping for help and support from its people, but received instead a hostile and harsh welcome from them and their leaders. Not only did they reject the Prophet's message, they also sent a messenger to Quraish's leaders, informing them about the Prophet's Da'wah efforts in At-Taaif.

As a result, the only way the Messenger of Allah was able to enter Makkah was under the protection of a disbelieving man. The year in which these sad events occurred became known as the Year of Grief. But then relief came to the Prophet in the most unexpected of forms - *a miraculous night journey to Jerusalem and to the seven heavens*.

There were many purposes behind that night journey. First, Allah wanted to give the Prophet a chance to see some manifestations of His Almighty Power, so that the Prophet's heart could become filled with trust in Him, and the Prophet could increase in strength, strength that he would need to continue in his struggle against the polytheists of Makkah and beyond. For the same purpose, Moosa too was made to see some of Allah's Greater Signs Allah said:

“(Allah) said: “Cast it down, O Moosa (Moses)!” He cast it down, and behold! It was a snake, moving quickly. Allah said: “Grasp it, and fear not, We shall return

it to its former state, - And press your (right) hand to your (left) side, it will come forth white (and shining), without any disease as another sign. That We may show you (some) of Our Greater Signs.” (Qur’an 20: 17-22)

After Moosa’s heart became immersed in the appreciation of those signs, Allah said to him:

“That We may show you (some) of Our Greater Signs.” (Qur’an 20: 23)

In the journey of Israa and Mai’raaj, Allah showed His Messenger those Greater Signs, in preparation for the Prophet's migration and for the great struggles that were to come afterwards. During Israa and Mai'raaj, the Prophet saw much from the unseen world, such as angels, the heavens, Paradise, the Hellfire, and so on.

The Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem is discussed in Soorah Al-Israa, while his consequent ascension to the heavens is discussed in Soorah An-Najm. In Soorah Al-Israa, Allah mentioned the wisdom behind the Prophet's miraculous night journey:

“In order that We might show him (Muhammad) of Our Ayaat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.).” (Qur’an 17: 1)

And in Soorah An-Najm, Allah said:

“Indeed he (Muhammad) did see, of the Greater Signs, of his Lord (Allah).” (Qur’an 53: 18)

Speaking about the lessons and morals we can learn from the Prophet’s miraculous night journey, Abul-Hasan An-Nadawee, may Allah have mercy on him, said,

“Al-Israa (the Prophet's night journey) was not simply a one of a kind incident, during which the Messenger of Allah saw the Greater Signs, and during which the Prophet saw with his own eyes the dominions of the heavens and the earth; beyond these things, the Prophet’s night journey involved many profound meanings and far-reaching wisdoms. Chapters Al-Israa and An-Najm, which were revealed with information about Al-Israa, announced that Muhammad is the Prophet of both Qiblahs (Jerusalem and Makkah), that he is the Imam of the east and the west, that he is the inheritor of the Prophets that came before him, and the Imam of the generations that were to come after him. During the Prophet's

journey, Makkah and Jerusalem were juxtaposed (showing a strong relationship and link between the two), as were the Inviolable House (in Makkah) and Al-Masjid Al-Aqsaa (in Jerusalem). Also, during that journey, all Prophets prayed behind him, a unique occurrence that announced the comprehensibility of his message, his everlasting leadership (and Prophethood), and the truth of his teachings, which are right and applicable for all times and in all places.”

The Story of Al-Israa and Al-Mai’raaj

Anas ibn Maalik reported that the Messenger of Allah said,

“Al-Buraaq was brought to me; it is a white-coloured, tall beast - larger than a donkey and smaller than a mule. It moves its hoof with a single stride to the farthest point that it can see. I rode on it until I reached Jerusalem; once there, I tied it to the very same ring (of Masjid Al-Aqsaa’s door) to which the Prophets would tie (their riding animals). I then entered the Masjid and prayed in it two units; I then left. Next, Jibreel came to me with a vessel of alcohol and a vessel of milk. I chose the milk, and Jibreel said, “You have chosen Al-Fitrah (i.e., Islam, uprightness).”

In another narration, the Prophet spoke to Maalik ibn Sa’sa’ah about his night journey, saying,

“While I was in Al-Hateem lying down (i.e., Al-Hijr, the northern side of the Ka’bah), Jibreel came to me and split me lengthwise.”

Anas said (Qataadah/Anas are narrators of the Hadeeth): “And he split what is between this and this.” Qataadah said, “What does he mean by this?”

He said, “From the lower part of his neck until his pubic hair.”

And I heard him say, “From his upper chest until his pubic hair.”

The Prophet said,

“He then removed my heart, after which a basin made of gold and filled with Eemaan (faith) was brought to me. My heart was washed and then filled (with Eemaan and wisdom). (My chest) was then put (i.e., sown) back together. A white-coloured beast was then brought to me; it was smaller than a mule but bigger than a donkey.”

Al-Jaarood asked Anas, "O Abu Hamzah, it is Al-Buraaq (that the Prophet was referring to)?" Anas said, "Yes."

The Prophet said,

"I was made to ride it, and Jibreel set off with me, until he reached the closest heaven. He asked for it (i.e., the door to the lowest heaven) to be opened. It was said, 'Who is this?' He answered, 'Jibreel.' It was said, 'And who is with you.' Jibreel said, 'Muhammad.' It was said, 'And has he been sent for?' Jibreel said, 'Yes.' It was said, 'Welcome is he! Indeed, a blessed one has come!' He then opened the door."

The Prophet said,

"When I reached (inside), in it (i.e., the lowest heaven) was Adam. He (i.e., Jibreel) said, 'This is your father, Adam, so extend greetings of peace to him.' I extended greetings of peace to him, and he returned the greetings, after which he said, 'Welcome to a virtuous son and a righteous Prophet.'"

Then Jibreel ascended with me until he reached the second heaven. He asked for it (i.e., for its door) to be opened, and it was said, 'Who is this?' He said, 'Jibreel.' 'And who is with you?' it was said. Jibreel said, 'Muhammad.' It was said, 'And has he indeed been sent for? Jibreel said, 'Yes.' It was said, 'Welcome to him. Indeed, a blessed one has arrived.' He (i.e., the doorkeeper) opened (the door to that heaven). When I reached (inside), (I saw) Yahyaa and 'Eesa, and they are the sons of aunts (i.e., the mother of each one of them is the aunt of other; hence their mothers are sisters). Jibreel said, 'These are Yahyah and 'Eesa, so extend greetings of peace to them.' I gave them greetings of peace, and they returned them and then said, 'Welcome to a virtuous brother and a righteous Prophet.'"

The Prophet said,

"Then I was taken above to the third heaven. He asked for it to be opened, and it was said, 'Who is this?' He said, 'Jibreel.' It was then said, 'And who is with you?' He said, 'Muhammad.' 'Has he indeed been sent for?' it was said. 'Yes,' said Jibreel. It was said, 'Welcome to him. Indeed, a blessed one has arrived.' He opened (the door to the third heaven), and when I reached inside, Yousuf was"

there. Jibreel said, 'This is Yousuf, so give him greetings of peace.' I extended to him greetings of peace; first, he responded, and then he said, 'Welcome to a virtuous brother and a righteous Prophet.'

Next, I was taken above until Jibreel reached the fourth heaven. When Jibreel asked for it (i.e., its door) to be opened, it was said, 'Who is this?' He said, 'Jibreel.' 'And who is with you?' it was said. Jibreel said, 'Muhammad.' 'And has he indeed been sent for?' it was said. Jibreel said, 'Yes.' It was said, 'Welcome he is indeed! A blessed one has indeed arrived,' and he (the doorkeeper of the fourth heaven) opened (the door to the fourth heaven).' When I reached inside, Idrees was there, and Jibreel said, 'This is Idrees, so extend greetings of peace to him.' I gave him greetings of peace, and he returned them and then said, 'Welcome to a virtuous brother and a righteous Prophet.'

Then I was taken above until Jibreel reached the fifth heaven. When Jibreel asked for it to be opened, it was said, 'Who is this?' He said, 'Jibreel.' It was said, 'And who is with you?' He said, 'Muhammad.' It was said, 'And has he indeed been sent for?' He said, 'Yes.' It was said, "Welcome he is indeed! Verily, a blessed one has arrived.' He (i.e., the doorkeeper of the fifth heaven) then opened (the door to the fifth heaven). When I reached (inside), Haaron was there, and Jibreel said, 'This is Haaron, so extend greetings of peace to him.' I gave him greetings of peace, and he returned them and then said, 'Welcome to a virtuous brother and a righteous Prophet.'

Then I was taken above until Jibreel reached the sixth heaven. When Jibreel asked for it (i.e., its door) to be opened, it was said, 'Who is this?' he said, 'Jibreel.'" It was said, 'And who is with you?' He said, 'Muhammad.' It was said, 'And has he indeed been sent for?' Jibreel said, 'Yes.' He (i.e., the doorkeeper of the sixth heaven) said, 'Welcome he is indeed! Verily, a blessed one has arrived.' When I reached (inside), Moosa was there, and Jibreel said, 'This is Moosa, so extend greetings of peace to him.' I gave him greetings of peace, and he returned them and then said, 'Welcome to a virtuous brother and a righteous Prophet.' When I left him, he cried, and it was said to him, 'What makes you

cry?’ He said, ‘I cry because a youth that was sent after me will have more people from his nation enter Paradise than will enter it from my nation.’

Next, I was raised to the seventh heaven. When Jibreel asked for it (i.e., the door of the seventh heaven) to be opened, it was said, ‘Who is this?’ He said, ‘Jibreel.’ It was said, ‘And who is with you?’ He said, ‘Muhammad.’ It was said, ‘And has he indeed been sent for?’ Jibreel said, ‘Yes.’ He (i.e., the doorkeeper of the sixth heaven) said, ‘Welcome he is indeed! And a blessed one has indeed come!’ When I reached (inside), Ibraaheem was there, and Jibreel said, ‘This is your father, so extend greetings of peace to him.’ I gave him greetings of peace, and he returned them and then said, ‘Welcome to a virtuous son and a righteous Prophet.’

Then As-Sidratul-Muntahaa (lote-tree of the utmost boundary, beyond which none can pass) was brought near to me. Its fruits were like the large jars of Hajar (because the jars of a place called Hajar are large, they are used proverbially to signify anything that is large; Hajar is a town in Bahrain), and its leaves were like the ears of elephants. Jibreel said, ‘This is Sidratul-Muntahaa.’ And there were four rivers, two internal and two external. I said, ‘O Jibreel, what are these two?’ He said, ‘As for the internal ones, they are two rivers in Paradise. And as for the external ones, they are the Nile and the Euphrates.’

Then Al-Bait Al-Ma’moor (a house of worship for the angels) was brought near to me. Then a vessel of alcohol, a vessel of milk, and a vessel of honey were brought to me. I took the milk, and he (i.e., Jibreel) said, ‘It is the Fitrah (i.e., the religion of Islam, uprightness) that you and your nation are upon.’

Next, made compulsory upon me were fifty prayers for each and every day. I then returned and passed by Moosa, who said, ‘What were you commanded with?’ I said, ‘I was commanded to perform fifty prayers each and every day.’ He said, ‘Verily, your nation is not able to perform fifty prayers every single day. By Allah, I have indeed had experience with people who came before you, and I have had the most difficult of experiences with the Children of Israel. So go back to your Lord and ask Him to decrease (the number of prayers) for your nation.’

And so, I returned, and He (i.e., Allah) reduced it (the number of obligatory prayers) for me by ten. I returned to Moosa, and he said the same thing as he had said before.

And so, I returned (to my Lord), and He reduced it for me by ten. Next, I returned to Moosa, and he said the same thing again.

I returned (to my Lord), and I was ordered to perform ten prayers every single day. I went back (to Moosa), who again said the same thing.

And so, I returned, and this time I was ordered to perform five prayers every single day. When I returned again to Moosa, he said, ‘What were you commanded with?’ I said, ‘I was commanded to perform five prayers every single day.’ He said, ‘Verily, your nation is not able to perform five prayers every single day. I have indeed had experience with people who came before you, and I have had the most difficult of experiences with the Children of Israel. So, return to your Lord, and ask Him to reduce (the number of obligatory prayers) for your nation.’

The Prophet said to Moosa,

‘I asked my Lord until I have become shy; rather, I am pleased, and I do submit.’

When I left, a caller called out, ‘I have finalized My legislated obligatory duty (i.e., people will get 50 rewards for praying five times a day), and I have made lighter (the duty of prayer) for My slaves (i.e., they have to perform 5 prayers in actuality, though they receive for them fifty rewards).’”

In Ash-Shifaa, Al-Qaadee ‘Iyaadh mentioned that Al-Israa Wal-Mai’raaj took place one year before the Prophet’s migration to Al-Madeenah. When the Messenger of Allah returned from his blessed journey, he informed his people about it. In a gathering that consisted, among others, of Al-Mut’im ibn ‘Adee, ‘Amr ibn Hishaam, and Al-Waleed ibn Al-Mugheerah, the Messenger of Allah said, “Verily, last night I prayed Al-Eesha in this Masjid; I also prayed in it in the early morning. Between those two times, I went to Jerusalem, and a group of Prophets were raised for me. Included among them were Ibraaheem, Moosa, and ‘Eesa. I led them in prayer, and I spoke to them.”

In a mocking tone, 'Amr ibn Hishaam said, "Describe them to me."

The Prophet said, "As for 'Eesa, he is above medium height, but less than tall. He has a broad chest, ruddy complexion (literally, the Prophet said, 'his blood is apparent'), and wavy hair. He is hirsute, and is covered by Suhbah (whiteness that is mixed with redness); as if he is 'Urwah ibn Mas'ood Ath-Thaqafee (i.e., 'Eesa resembles him). As for Moosa, he is massive, brown, and tall, as if he is from the men of Shanooah. His teeth overlap one another, his lips are contracted, and his gums protrude outwards.

As for Ibraaheem, then by Allah, both in appearance and in character, he resembles me more than any other person.'

The people that were gathered said, "O Muhammad, describe Jerusalem for us."

The Prophet said, *"I entered it at night, and I left it on the same night,"* explaining to them that he didn't see it well enough or long enough to be able to describe it. But then Jibreel came to him, with a picture of Jerusalem on his wing. Seeing it clearly before him, the Prophet began to say, *"One of its doors is like this, in such and such place. Another of its doors is like this, in such and such place."*

In short, he gave a detailed description of Jerusalem, and those among the Quraish who had visited Jerusalem sat there dumbfounded, not being able to correct or contradict anything he said.

They then asked the Prophet about a caravan of theirs that was heading back towards Makkah from the direction of Jerusalem. If the Prophet had come back from Jerusalem, they explained, he surely should have seen their caravan and knew how far it was from Al-Madeenah. And sure enough, the Prophet had seen and even visited their caravan. The Prophet said to them, *"I came upon the caravan of the children of (such and such person) at Ar-Rauhaa; one of their she-camels had strayed, and they went out to search for it. And so, when I reached their encampment, no one among them (i.e., the people of the caravan) were there. There was a cup of water, and I drank from it. So, ask them about that (when they return)."* They said, *"This, by God, is indeed a sign!"* The Prophet said, *"Then I reached the caravan of the sons of (such and such person). The camels bolted away from me, and among them a red camel knelt down; upon it was a saddlebag that had white stripes on it. I do not know whether the camel had a*

*fracture or not, so ask them about that.” They said, “This, by God, is indeed a sign!” The Prophet continued to say,
“Then I reached the caravan of the children of (such and such person) at At-Tan’eem; at the forefront of the caravan was a camel that was white, though it had some (spots or patches of) blackness in it. And here it is coming to you from Ath-Thaniyyah (a mountain road).”*

Al-Waleed ibn Al-Mugheerah said, ‘A Magician.’ They went and looked, finding that everything about the caravans was in exact agreement with the Prophet's description. And the people of the caravans confirmed everything that the Prophet had said: That, yes, water was missing; that, yes, camels had strayed; and so on. The people of the Quraish had earlier said, ‘This, by God, is indeed a sign,’ indicating that they would believe in him if what he said was true. But once they knew with certainty that what he said was true, they accused him of soothsaying. They said, “Al-Waleed ibn Al-Mugheerah was truthful concerning what he said.”

The Prophet’s miraculous night journey ended up being a difficult test for certain people who had believed in the Prophet’s Da’wah, a test that some of them failed, for they ended up apostatizing. And some people went to Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq and said, “Will you not go to your companion (i.e., the Prophet)? He claims that he made a journey during the night to Jerusalem!” Abu Bakr said, “And did he say that?” They said, “Yes.” Abu Bakr said, “If he said that, then he has spoken the truth.” Amazed by his words, they said, “Do you really believe him when he says that he went during the night to Jerusalem and came back before the morning?” Abu Bakr said, “Yes, I indeed believe him concerning that which is more amazing than that. I believe him about news from the heavens, which comes in the morning or at the end of the day.”

Because of the stance that Abu Bakr took during the trial and test that followed the Prophet’s miraculous night journey, he was named “As-Siddeeq (the Truthful One).”