

Al-Israa' & Al-Mi'raj

The Inspiring Journey



Second Edition

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2nd Edition

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■ Introduction

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Like all the events and occasions related to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), the Night Journey (Al-Israa' wa Al-Mi`raj) is a rich source of inspiration and lessons.

The details of the Prophet's miraculous visit to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, the scenes that he witnessed in his ascension to the heavens and his people's response to the news of the incident are all worthy of reflection.

In many ways they are still relevant to our daily life.

In view of the challenges that Muslims face today, what are the lessons that we need to remember and take from the blessed occasion?

How does the Prophet's Journey relate to and affect our daily life?



What are the indications of choosing Al-aqsa Mosque as the destination for Al-Israa' and what duties does this selection impose on the Muslim *Ummah*?

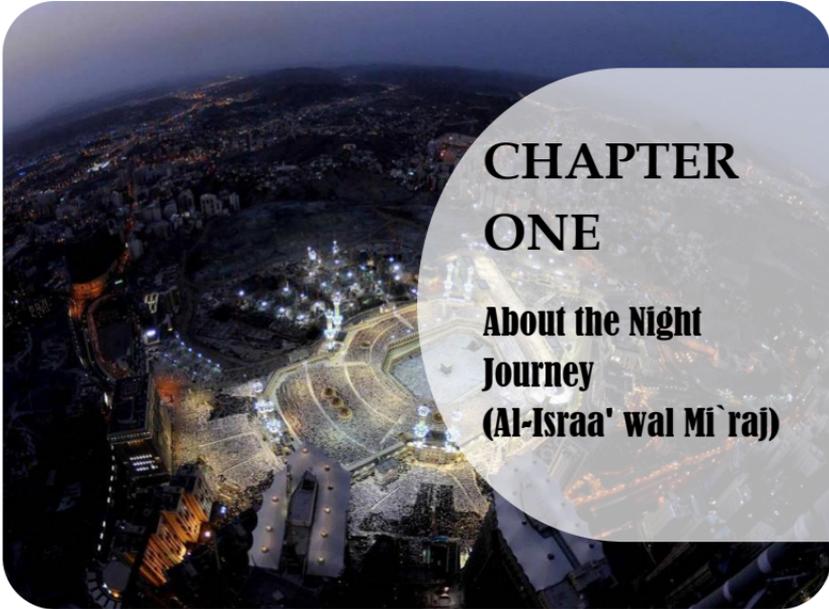
This second edition of the book starts with a recount of the story of the blessed Night Journey, followed with an explanation of the opening of the *Surah* named after the journey, *Surat Al-Israa'*. Finally, the aspect of belief in the Unseen is discussed in the last article of the chapter.

Chapter 2 offers a collection of scholars' reflections on this great event featuring Dr. Salah Sultan, Sheikh al-Mubarkpuri, Dr. Khaled At-Tarawali and and Dr. Sano Koutoub Moustapha.

The last chapter provides answers for common questions about celebrating the occasion of Al-Israa', fasting on the 27th of Rajab, the Hereafter sights during the journey, etc.

May Allah help every Muslim practice Islam and be blessed with the Islamic guidance. Ameen!

OnIslam Shari`ah Team



CHAPTER ONE

About the Night Journey (Al-Israa' wal Mi`raj)

- *The Story of the Night Journey*
- *A Unique Journey: Reflections on the Opening of Surat Al-Israa'*
- *Al-Israa': It Is All About the Unseen*



■ The Story of the Night Journey

By Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarkpuri

The last days of the Makkah phase in the Prophet's life were noted for alternate fortunes. However, glimpses of propitious lights were looming on the distant horizon, ultimately materialized



in the event of the Prophet's Night Journey (*Al-Israa'*) to Jerusalem and then Ascension (*Al-Mi`raj*) through the spheres of the heavens. The exact date of this great event is still controversial:

- Some scholars, including Imam At-Tabari, are of the opinion that the Night Journey occurred in the same year the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) received the first revelation.



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- Imams An-Nawawi and Al-Qurtubi prefer the opinion that it occurred five years after the Prophet's mission.
- Another opinion sets Rajab 27, 10 years after the Prophet embarked on his great mission as the exact date of the event.
- Still, other scholars are in favor of dates ranging between 12 to 16 months prior to the Prophet's migration to Madinah.

The first three opinions were rejected by some scholars on the basis that it is established that the obligatory Prayer was instituted on the night of *Al-Israa'* and that such institution had not occurred during the lifetime of Khadijah, the Prophet's wife, who passed away in Ramadan, 10 years after the Prophet had started his noble mission.

As for the other opinion, I [al-Mubarkpuri] did not find any proof to strengthen it. However, the context of Surat *Al-Israa'* implies that it was revealed in a late time during the Makkah phase.



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The scholars of *Hadith* reported the details of the Night of *Al-Israa'*. Here I give a summary of the Night's events:

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was carried in body from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on a mount called Al-Buraq in the company of Angel Gabriel. There Prophet Muhammad led all the other prophets in prayer.

After that Gabriel took him to the heavens. When they reached the first heaven Gabriel asked the guardian angel to open the first heaven's door. It was opened and Prophet Muhammad saw Adam, the progenitor of humankind. The Prophet saluted him. Adam welcomed him and expressed his faith in Muhammad's prophethood.

The Prophet saw on the right side of Adam the souls of those who will be happy in the hereafter and saw the souls of the doomed ones on his left.

Gabriel then ascended with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to the second heaven and asked for opening the gate. There the Prophet saw and saluted Prophets Yahya (John) and `Isa (Jesus). They returned the



salutation, welcomed him, and expressed their faith in his Prophethood.

The same happened in each heaven: In the third heaven, the Prophet saw Prophet Yusuf (Joseph); in the fourth, Prophet Idris (Enoch); in the fifth, Prophet Harun (Aaron); in the sixth, Prophet Musa (Moses); and in the seventh, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) (peace and blessings be upon them all).

When Prophet Muhammad left Prophet Musa (peace and blessings be upon both of them) in the sixth heaven, Prophet Musa began to weep. Asked about the reason, he answered that though Muhammad was sent after him as a messenger, those who will enter Paradise from Muhammad's nation are greater in number than those from Musa's nation.

The Prophet then was carried to *Sidrat Al-Muntaha* (Arabic for "the remotest Lote-tree") and was shown *Al-Bait Al-Ma'mur* (Arabic for "the much-frequented house") which is attended daily by 70,000 angels; the angels who attend it never leave it until the Day of Resurrection.



He was then presented to the Divine Presence getting at the closest possible nearness. There Almighty Allah ordained 50 daily prayers for him.

On his way back, he told Prophet Musa that his followers had been enjoined to pray 50 times a day. Prophet Musa advised him to ask Allah to reduce the number because the Muslim *Ummah* would not bear performing such a number of prayers.

The Prophet turned to Gabriel as if asking his counsel. Gabriel nodded, "Yes, if you desire," and ascended with him to Almighty Allah. Then Almighty Allah made a reduction of 10 prayers. The Prophet then descended and reported that to Musa, who again urged him to request a further reduction.

The Prophet once more begged Allah to reduce the number further. He went again and again to Almighty Allah at the suggestion of Musa till the prayers were reduced to five only. Again, Musa asked him to implore for more reduction, but the Prophet said,



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"I feel embarrassed (of repeatedly asking my Lord to reduce the number of daily prayers.) I accept and resign to His Will."

When the Prophet went farther, a caller was heard saying:

"I have imposed My (Allah's) ordinance and alleviated the burden of My servants."

The Night Journey raised a good deal of stir among people, and the skeptical audience plied Muhammad with all sorts of questions.

The disbelievers found it a suitable opportunity to jeer at the Muslims and their creed. They pestered the Prophet with questions as to the description of the Mosque at Jerusalem, where he had never gone before, and to their astonishment, the Prophet's replies furnished the most accurate information about it. However, this increased in them nothing but flight from Islam, and they accepted nothing but disbelief.

For true Muslims, however, there was nothing unusual about the Night Journey. Almighty Allah, Who is powerful enough to have created the heavens and the earth, is surely powerful enough to take His Messenger beyond the

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heavens and show him firsthand those signs of His that are inaccessible to people otherwise.

This believing attitude was epitomized by Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) whom the disbelievers challenged on account of this event to believe what the Prophet said, and he readily said, "Yes, I do verify it." It is reported that this answer is what earned him the famous title of As-Siddiq (Arabic for "the verifier of the truth").

** Abridged and adapted from the author's The Sealed Nectar.*



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■ A Unique Journey

Reflections on the Opening of Surat .Al-Israa'

By Sayed Qutb

{Limitless in His glory is He Who transported His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah] to Al-Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem]—the environs of which We have blessed—so that We might show him some of Our signs. Indeed He alone is the One Who hears all and sees all.} (Al-Israa' 17:1)



Surat Al-Israa' begins with glorifying God, the most fitting action to confirm the bond between God and His servants in the atmosphere of compassion and friendliness imparted by the mention of the night journey.

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The surah emphasizes the position of the Prophet as God's servant: {**He Who transported His servant by night**}. The emphasis here is needed in the context of the Prophet's ascension to heaven where no human being had gone before. It is important in this context that the status of the Prophet's servitude to God should always be remembered.

There must be no confusion of status similar to that which happened in the case of Jesus on account of his birth, his being raised to heaven at the end of his life on earth, and the powers that were given to him during life. All these caused some people to confuse his status and to claim that he had a divine nature. In its simplicity and purity, Islam insists that no similarity could ever exist between God and any creature.

The Arabic text of this opening verse uses the verb *asra*, which denotes "traveling during the night." It is sufficient then to use this verb to denote the time of the action. Yet the verse adds the phrase *laylan* or "by night" to give an added sense of the still night and the ease of travel.

The journey from the Sacred Mosque to Al-Aqsa Mosque was one chosen by God, the Compassionate Who knows everything. It provided a link between all monotheistic



faiths from the time of Abraham and Ishmael to the time of the last Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon them all).

It also established a link between the holy places in all these religions. It seems that this unusual journey served as an announcement that the last Messenger was the heir to the heritage of all former messengers. His message staked a claim to all these holy places. Thus it becomes a journey that goes beyond the scope of time and place.

The opening verse describes Al-Aqsa Mosque as one with blessed environs. This description shows the blessings surrounding the mosque and flowing in abundance. This impression could not have been given with a direct description such as “the mosque which We have blessed.” This is another example of the refined use of language characteristic of the Qur’an.

The Prophet’s night journey was a telling sign, and it was accompanied by others, as the opening verse says in stating its purpose: **{so that We might show him some of Our signs}**.

Covering the distance between the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in a very short

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period that did not allow the Prophet's bed to become cold is a sign of God's power, whatever the means used to accomplish it.

It opens our minds to new horizons in the universe and reveals latent potentials within mankind. It shows that those human beings chosen by God to be the bearers of His message have the latent ability to receive whatever greater powers God wishes to give them. It is God Who has honored man, giving him a favored position among His creation, and endowed him with such potentials.

{He alone is the One Who hears all and sees all.} He indeed hears and sees all that is beyond the reach of our hearing and seeing faculties.

It is especially impressive that the opening verse of this surah starts with glorifying God: **{Limitless in His glory is He Who transported His servant by night}**. After defining the purpose of this journey, the surah finishes with highlighting two of God's attributes, perfect hearing and seeing that encompass all things.

This quick movement across purposes reflects the finest points of the expression used. The glorification is

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addressed to God Himself, and the statement about the purpose of the night journey comes from Him, while the description of God's powers is made in the form of an indisputable statement. All these forms are combined in one verse so as to give their different imports.

** This article is taken with some modifications from the English translation of the author's work Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an (In the Shade of the Qur'an), Volume XI, Trans. and ed. by Adil Salahi, published by The Islamic Foundation and IslamOnline.net.*





■ It Is All About the Unseen

By Mohsen Hareedy

Belief in the Unseen is an essential part of a Muslim's creed. Every Muslim must believe in whatever Allah told us about in the Qur'an and in whatever the Prophet told us about in his Sunnah. The Qur'an makes it clear that such belief is the first characteristics of the righteous: **{This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah; Who believe in the Unseen}** (Al-Baqarah 2:2-3).

However, this does not mean that such belief is a pretext for not working hard or a justification for defeatism. Belief in the Unseen is a test for the believers that ascertains their faith. Believing in something unseen is a challenge that not everybody can take. It is those who believe strongly in the omnipotence of Allah, Who has the upper hand in every affair in this world and the world to come.

The story of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj is an example of that test to which Muslims were put after the Prophet ended his night journey and ascension. For the whole story is all about belief in the Unseen.

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The wisdom of Al-Israa' is summed up in the very words of Allah: that **{We might show him of Our tokens!}** (Al-Israa' 17:1). Also the wisdom of Al-Mi`raj is clearly stated in the Qur'an: **{Verily he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord}** (An-Najm 53:18).

The word *subhana* (sublime, exalted) mentioned in the beginning of Surat Al-Israa' gives the impression that this journey was something unusual. It should not be subject to the normal laws of the earth nor to the laws of time and place. It is the Divine Law that arranged for that journey. Part of the world of the Unseen has become visible for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). This is implied in the word *li-nuriyahu* **{that We might show him}**.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) returned to Makkah, he told the people about what happened to him the previous night. Their reactions followed one of two courses: Some utterly rejected his story while others gave it their utmost belief.

The people of the Quraish did not believe him and mocked him, "It takes us a month to go to there and back and you claim that you went there and back in one night?"



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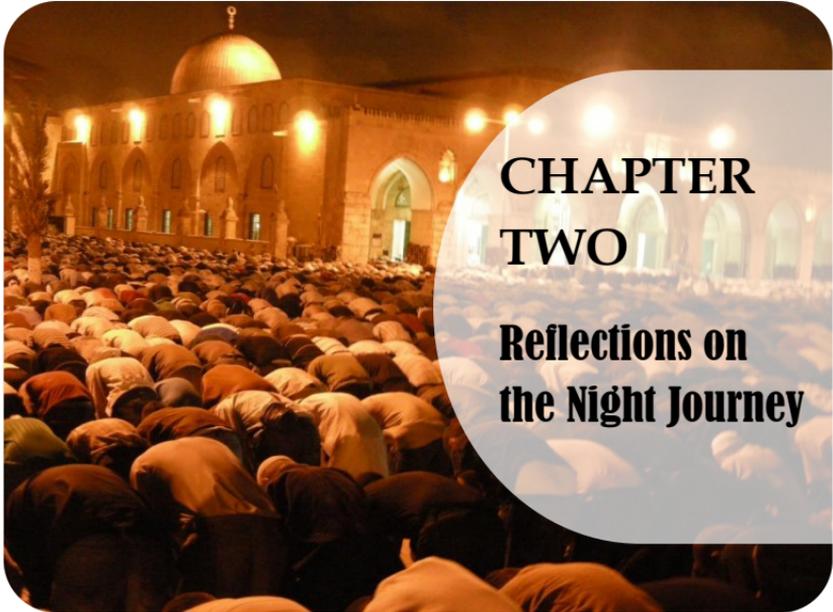
On the other hand, when Abu Bakr was told what had happened to the Prophet, he said his oft-repeated words: "If he said that, then he is truthful. I believe him concerning the news of the heavens. How could I not believe that he went to Jerusalem and came back in a short period of time when these are on earth?" From that moment Abu Bakr was given the name As-Siddiq, the Verifier of the Truth.

It is unfortunate that in the 21st century there are many people who doubt the authenticity of the event of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj. One finds little difference between this stance and that of the Quraish. In fact, this rejection in modern times is worse than that made by the Quraish. At least, the means of transportation in the Prophet's time made it difficult for the people to understand this overnight journey to a place hundreds of miles away. Such speed is easy to conceive with today's technology. And, after all, we should remember that it is Allah, the Creator of the heaven and earth, Who arranged for this journey, and He Almighty is the One Who speaks about it in the Qur'an. This leaves no room for doubt or question.



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CHAPTER TWO

Reflections on the Night Journey

- *Al-Israa': Reward for Patience*
- *Reward for Tolerance and Forgiveness*
- *Ascension to Civilization: Night Journey for the Nation*
- *The Night Journey: Shift in Spiritual Authority*
- *Lessons of Al-Israa'*

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Al-Israa': Reward for Patience

By Dr. Salah Sultan

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) suffered very much in his efforts to guide his people to their happiness in this world and in the hereafter.



He met their opposition and resistance when he was calling to Islam in secrecy and later on when he proclaimed it in public. He still could not perform a proper prayer around the Sacred House while there were 360 idols around it and while any polytheist could come and circumambulate the Sacred House, bow and prostrate himself to his idol without having any trouble or interference.

At the time when men and women used to circumambulate the Sacred House naked, Abu Bakr was



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beaten when he recited verses from the Qur'an around it. `Utbah ibn Rabi`ah even slapped his face with his shoes.

At that time, Sumayah bint Khiyat and her husband Yasir were beaten to death, while Ibn Mas`ud, Abu Dhar, Khubab, Fatimah bint Al-Khattab, and Zunayrah were beaten unconscious.

An economic and social boycott was imposed on the Muslims, prohibiting anyone to sell them food or drink, to marry from them, or to visit them, to the point that they had to eat tree leaves.

At the same time, the Quraish presented to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) offers such as these:

1. A very generous bribe that would make him the richest man in the whole peninsula
2. Authority and kingdom so that he would be the first to be obeyed by his people
3. Medical treatment of his disease if he was ill or psychologically disturbed



4. An agreement that he would pray to their gods one day and in return they would pray to his God the other day, which would be against his faith
5. A request that he set places for meeting with the slaves away from the meeting places of the rich, in a compromise based on racial discrimination, which would be against his moral values.

All this would be offered him if he left altogether what he was calling for, or if he left out whatever did not please his people, especially those who had authority and wealth.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) refused but to hold onto the truth and to continue his path. He was exposed to their mockery, insults, and beating despite his esteem and honor among his people.

Consequently, he left to another place where he might find refuge and where his call to Islam might be accepted. He went to At-Ta'if, whose people were even more harmful to him than his own people. They neither treated him with the hospitality so famous of the Arabs, nor did they treat him properly as a messenger who had the right to inform

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them of the word of Allah while they had the right to accept or reject it.

They refused to listen and they denied him the right to present his idea in a peaceful way. They set the children and the wicked adults to throw him out like a fugitive who owns nothing but his faith in his God and his determination to continue his call to Islam without giving up any part of it.

Going back to Makkah, his original town, the homeland of his family and his kin and the residence of his wife and children, he was not allowed to enter. He had to take refuge with Al-Mut`am ibn `Adi. Muhammad turned his face to the sky. He humbly, piously supplicated to Allah with the best supplication:

"O Allah! to You I complain of my weakness, little resource, and lowliness before man.

O Most Merciful! You are the Lord of the weak, and You are my Lord. To whom would You confide me? To one afar who will treat me harshly or to an enemy to whom You have given dominance over me?



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If You are not angry with me I do not care. Both your favor of well-being on me is a more expansive relief for me.

I take refuge in the light of Your countenance by which the darkness is illuminated, and the affairs of this world and the next are rightly ordered, lest Your anger descend upon me or Your wrath come down on me. "

So Allah rewarded him as follows:

1. A slave called `Addas responded to his call to Islam. It is known that to lead one person to the way of Allah is better than having all the treasures of this world.
2. Allah sent to him a number of jinn who listened to his preaching and returned to their folks to warn them.
3. Six people from Yathrib responded to him and formed a group of pioneers for the call to Islam in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah, thereby establishing the foundation for Islam in this land. These six were As`ad ibn Zurarah, `Awf ibn Al-Harith, Rafi` ibn Malik, Qutbah ibn `Aamir, `Uqbah ibn `Amir, and Jabir ibn `Abdullah. This happened at a time



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when all the tribes refused him, including Banu Kalb, Banu Hanifah, Banu `Amir ibn Sa`sa`ah, Fizarah,

4. A number of the highly esteemed members of their tribes accepted his call. Among them were the poet Suwaid ibn As-Samit, Iyas ibn Mu`adh, Abu Dhar Al-Ghifari, At-Tufayl ibn `Amr Ad-Dawsy, the head of the tribe of Daws.

5. The Night Journey (*Al-Israa'*) to Jerusalem and the Ascension (*Mi`raj*) to the Exalted Assembly.

{Then he approached and came closer, and was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or even nearer.} (An-Najm 53: 8-9)



Reward for Tolerance and Forgiveness

By Dr. Salah Sultan

The sacred journey of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi'raj was a reward for Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) for tolerating and forgiving those who were unjust to him and those harmed him and his Companions as well.

`Amr Ibn Az-Zubayr narrated that `A'isha

(may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): "Have you encountered a day harder than the day (of the Battle) of Uhud?" The Prophet replied:





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Your tribes have troubled me a lot but the hardest day was on the day of Al-`Aqabah when I presented myself (as a Prophet) to Ibn `Abd-Yalail Ibn `Abd-Kulal but he did not respond to me.

So, I departed excessively grieved, and did not relax till I reached Qarn Ath-Tha`alib, (a place near Makkah). I lifted my head towards the sky and saw a cloud unexpectedly shading me.

I looked up and saw Gabriel therein. He called me saying:

“Allah has heard your people's saying to you, and what they have replied back to you. He has sent the Angel of mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.”

The Angel of mountains called and greeted me, and then said:

“O Muhammad! Order what you wish. If you like, I will let the two mountains, *Al-Akhshabayn*, fall on them.”



The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

“No, but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who worship Him Alone, and will none besides Him.”(Al- Bukhari)

Mercy and Tolerance

This is how our beloved Prophet was like. With one word he could have had the Angel of mountains destroyed everything in Makkah, so that no polytheist would remain alive.

He could have done that with only one word, but he would not do it because he was sent as a mercy for all mankind. He had a heart full of love for all people, wishing them to embrace the true religion or, at least, some of their offspring would pray to Allah.

This is the way *Du`ah* (Islamic preachers) should be. They should preach with love for the benefit of people. They should not respond to the offense with the like, but treat people kindly. They replace evil with goodness, separation

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with strengthening relations, and maltreatment with love and guidance.

The Divine Reward

Therefore, Allah has rewarded the merciful Prophet with the greatest journey that has never taken place in the whole universe, to Jerusalem and then to the highest levels in the sky, where Allah brought the Prophet close to Him.

Allah assisted him to succeed in guiding many people to the truth. Allah accepted his Supplication, and therefore, among the offspring of those polytheists came the best reformers and *Du`ah*. Among those reformers were:

1- Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, the son of Al-Walid Ibn Al-Mughirah, the one who was meant by the verses in Surat Al-Muddaththir:

**{Leave Me with the one I created alone,
to whom I granted extensive wealth,
and children present [with him],**



and spread [everything] before him, easing [his life].

Then he desires that I should add more.

No! Indeed, he has been toward Our verses obstinate.

I will cover him with arduous torment.} (Al-Muddaththir 74: 11-17)

3- `Ikrimah Ibn Abi Jahl, the son of `Amr Ibn Hisham, the leader of the polytheists.

4- Um Habibah Bint Abi Sufyan, the wife of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and whose father was a polytheist at that time.

5- `Abdullah Ibn `Abbas who accepted Islam together with his mother Um Al-Fadl at a time when Al-`Abbas Ibn `Abdil-Muttalib was still a disbeliever.

In this way we see how patience and kindness with people lead them smoothly to the right path. In this way, those who call to Islam shall be close to Allah, reach higher status and get the best reward from Allah the Almighty.

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■ The Night Journey: Shift in Spiritual Authority

By Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarkpuri

There are simple facts that have their roots in the blessed journey of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj. These facts flow along the flowery garden of the biography of the Prophet. As we see in the Noble Qur'an, the story of the Night Journey is epitomized in the first verse of Surat Al-Israa':



{Glory be to Him Who took His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our signs; surely, He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer [of all things].} (Al-Israa' 17:1)



Then there is a quick shift that uncovers the shameful deeds and crimes of the Jews:

{We gave Moses the Book and made it a guidance to the Children of Israel, commanding, "Take no guardian beside Me." [They were] the offspring of those whom We bore with Noah; surely he was a grateful servant. And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Book, "Verily you will work corruption in the earth twice and you will behave insolently with great insolence.} (Al-Israa' 17:2-4)

This is followed by an admonition that the Qur'an guides to that which is most just and right:

{Surely this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright and gives glad tidings to the believers who do good that they shall have a great reward.} (Al-Israa' 17:9)

In fact, this arrangement of the verses is not a mere coincidence. Jerusalem was the first stop in the Night Journey which sends a message to the Jews. It explicitly suggested that they would be discharged of the office of leadership of humankind because of the crimes they had



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perpetrated, which no longer justified their occupation of that office.

The message was also explicit in suggesting that the office of leadership would be reinstated by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). He would hold in his hand the headquarters of the Faith of Abraham, the Holy Sanctuary in Makkah, and the Farthest Mosque in Jerusalem.

It was high time for the spiritual authority to be transferred from a nation whose history got tarnished with treachery, breach of covenants, and aggression to a nation blessed with piety and dutifulness toward Allah. This nation has a Messenger who enjoys the privilege of the Qur'anic revelation, which leads to that which is best and right.

However, there remains a crucial question that awaits an answer: How could this foreseen transition of authority be effected while the champion himself (Muhammad) was left deserted and forsaken in the hillocks of Makkah?

This question per se uncovered the secrets of another issue that referred to a new phase of the Islamic call. It referred

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to the appearance of another role that the Islamic call was about to take up – a role pursuing a different course and adopting noble approaches.

The forerunners of that new task took the shape of Qur'anic verses smacking of direct and unequivocal warning accompanied by a severe ultimatum directed to the polytheists and their agents:

{And when We would destroy a township, We send commandment to its folk who live at ease and afterward they commit abomination therein, and so the word (of doom) has effect for it and we annihilate it with complete annihilation. How many generations have We destroyed after Noah! And Allah suffices as Knower and Beholder of the sins of His slaves.} (Al-Israa' 17:16-17)

Together with these verses, others were revealed to show the Muslims the rules and items of the civilization upon which they could erect their Muslim community. These verses foretold their ownership of a piece of land where they would exercise full freedom and establish a coherent society around whose axis the whole humanity would rotate:

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{Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me. 'If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked.} (An-Nur 24:55)

In reality, these verses implied better prospects for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). They comprised a secure shelter for him to settle and acted as safe headquarters. All this empowered and emboldened him in his endeavor to communicate the message of Islam to the world at large. That was in fact the inner secret of that blessed journey.

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■ Ascension to Civilization

Night Journey for the Nation

By Dr. Khaled At-Tarawali

Many are the sad events and bitter memories that Muslims experience nowadays, and so many are those experienced by them in the past years. Those events have



shocked their reality and posed new challenges and many questions whose answers are surrounded by much frustration, defeatism, and blackness.

But, as the present gets darker, some bright flashes tend to dash here and there from the depths of the past. From time to time, these flashes remind Muslims that they are the descendants of great builders of civilization and that darkness – no matter how long – will surely be followed by daylight.



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As we celebrate the anniversary of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj (the Night Journey and Ascension of Prophet Muhammad), Muslims in many places of the world suffer afflictions and wars, bloodshed and terrorism, chaos and backwardness, bewilderment and confusion.

There are questions about the end, about persecution of religion and betrayal of its adherents, about mass suicide and the doom of a glorious nation that is supposed to exist till the end of time, if Allah wills.

Such deviation has reached an unprecedented level. Meanwhile, the nation's decline continues, in spite of the glimpses of light that try to illuminate the path away from clamor and storms.

Horizontal Connection, Vertical One

Established by the Night Journey, the horizontal connection between different places on earth stresses the principle of symbolic extension of a message that promotes benevolence, peace, and mutual respect.

In his Night Journey, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) did not go to Jerusalem to subdue it, shed the blood of its inhabitants, or bring it under the



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sovereignty of Muslims by force. In fact, the Night Journey was a gathering of all Prophets in the presence of the last one of them. It was a meeting of the leaders of one religion and a symbolic reference to a meeting of different nations, races, and cultures.

Having taken place at the beginning of laying the foundations of Islam, the Night Journey was a clear indication that this religion is a religion of peace – a religion that encourages its followers to get to know others and build healthy relationships with them.

Also, this blessed journey pointed out the fact that Islam is a continuation of the same spring of good, from which past nations drank when they adopted the message of their Prophets and reformers.

Islam did not carry to this good, virtuous land of Jerusalem a message of aggression, oppression, or appropriation. It neither said, "We have brought a nation without a land to a land without a nation" nor said, "We have come with a Prophet to a land without prophets." On the contrary, Islam respected what preceded it and regarded itself as part and parcel of a whole fabric that had



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been formed throughout the history and geography of preceding nations.

On the other hand, the journey of ascension established a vertical connection between the earth and heaven. It underlined the fact that there is a close relationship between this nation and its Lord. This relationship is manifested by the five daily Prayers.

The five Prayers stand as a constant reminder that the deliverance of humans on earth depends on their good relation with their Creator. Without the guidance and benevolence of Him, the existence of humans on earth would be one of troubles and falls.

In this way, the journey of ascension established a new pillar for any worldly success. In more modern terms, one can say that no civilizational precedence of the *Ummah* can ever be sound, sustainable, renewable, or creative without taking the spiritual and moral aspects into consideration in all spheres of life. Indeed, the way that the *Ummah* takes toward progress and prosperity is a way that leads to Almighty Allah.

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✚ Spirituals: Core of Civilization

The spirituals and principles of morals along with that close relationship between heaven and earth lay the foundations of human life, with its psychological, cultural, political, social, and economic aspects. A structure that overlooks the spiritual and moral aspects of civilization is definitely lame in theorization, in thought, and in vision. Such a lame structure will lead to lameness in application, even if such lameness was hidden from the very beginning.

Unfortunately, we lost our morals in politics and severed the spiritual ties between heaven and earth. We forgot or pretended to have forgotten a whole Qur'anic *surah* named *Ash-Shura* (Mutual Consultation).

Afraid of power, weak hearted scholars turned the principle of *shura* into a mere piece of information about the history of Islam, rather than a binding principle. In turn, the rulers grew even more tyrannical. They deluded their peoples, imposing upon them immoral and unspiritual interpretations of the principle of *shura*. They bequeathed the rule just as the houses and other possessions are bequeathed.



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At the beginning, the subjects yielded and refused to stand up to injustice, either out of fear or out of greed. Afterward, the people became even unable to straighten their backs and stop bowing, as if they had never stood up straight before. As a result, generations from this nation were born bowing. They grew old and remained bowing, and they entered their graves still bowing. Sadly, they never had the chance to see the sky! Furthermore, morals disappeared and the earnest appeals addressed to people's conscience came to a standstill.

The ascension toward civilization will never be a success without the existence of these spiritual and moral aspects in all our actions and in every path toward progress, liberation, and – above all – toward Allah.

Neither we nor our offspring will ever gain the least benefit from an alleged civilization as long as murder, terrorism, horribleness, and damage are rocking our homes, without knowledge or clear-sightedness, without rights or morals, and without any reasonable argument!

In fact, we shall never understand the civilizational message of the journey of ascension unless we first understand that building a civilization is neither

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accomplished in disorder and clamor nor achieved with hands stained with falsehood, tyranny, and aggression.

In conclusion, civilization is a journey (or *Israa'*) that turns a lost, helpless person into a righteous one who aims at reform. It is also an ascension (or *Mi`raj*) of such a person to spirituality, morality, justice, and freedom. This is one of many messages of the Night Journey and Ascension for both the individual and the community, however the conditions may be.



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■ Lessons of Al-Israa'

By Dr. Sano Koutoub Moustapha

Undoubtedly the occasion of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj is a unique and very important occasion. Every year, when its time draws near we need to be reminded about it. Not only that, but we also need to keep in touch with our important historical events so as to derive fruitful lessons from them while moving forward.



From Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj we should learn about the brotherhood that exists among the prophets and the wonderful role and advice given by Prophet Musa to our



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beloved Prophet on the night of Al-Mi`raj. Prophet Musa advised Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) to seek a review and the mercy of Allah in reducing the number of obligatory Prayers which was, at the beginning, 50 Prayers per day and then it was reduced to five daily Prayers with the reward of 50 Prayers.

It is hoped that Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj become an occasion to remind Muslims all over the world about the oppression and injustice that is going on against our beloved brothers and sisters in Palestine and elsewhere throughout the world.

Furthermore, it should be taken as an occasion to remind all Muslims about the real condition of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa which is now under unjust occupation and is about to be demolished, may Allah forbid! This journey shall teach us the necessity of doing our best to assist our fellow Muslims who are living under occupation and destruction and daily mass murder and humiliation.

The Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa issue is not a Palestinian issue nor is it an Arab issue but it is an Islamic issue and so all Muslims have equal rights in determining its fate. The occasion of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj should be utilized to



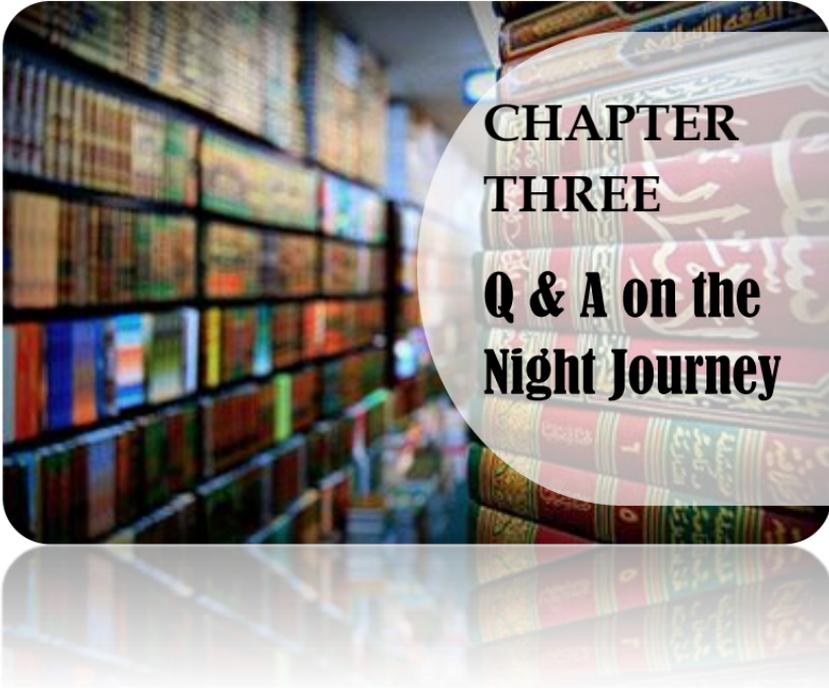
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remind us to exert all possible efforts to liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque and to end occupation and injustice against helpless Palestinians.

As Muslims, we should take this opportunity to pray for our fellow Muslims around the globe who are suffering from atrocities and pain. All Muslims should remember that the liberation of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa is not an obligation upon the Palestinians alone but upon every single able-bodied Muslim. Each of us must do his or her best at least through our Prayers and supplications.

Furthermore, the importance of cooperation and communication among the followers of different faiths should be strengthened. There is no doubt that Jerusalem was the bastion of the messages of Allah, and the message of the Prophet was outside the sacred land in terms of physical presence but not in terms of the spirit and content of the message.



CHAPTER THREE

Q & A on the Night Journey

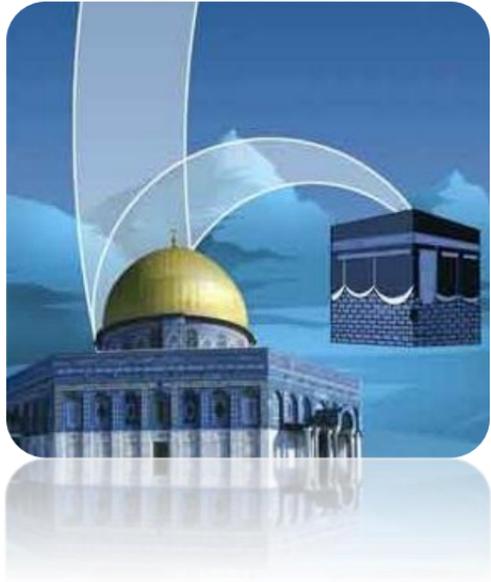
- *Is Celebrating Al-Israa' & Al-Mi'raj Bid'ah?*
- *Sights of the Hereafter in Al-Israa': How?*
- *Fasting the 27th of Rajab?*
- *Prophet's Prayer on His Way During His Night Journey*
- *Al-Israa': Universality of the Islamic Message*

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■ Is Celebrating Al-Israa' & Al-Mi`raj Bid`ah?

Q. *My question is, there's still a handful of Muslims around the world who regard celebrating the occasion of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj as an act of innovation (bid`ah). Of course, we didn't hear the Prophet celebrate his own birthday or the blessed Journey (Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj). What's your comment on this?*



Mufti: Dr. Sano Koutoub Moustapha



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A. Dear brother, thank you for your question.

I do believe that celebrating historical events and occasions such as the *Mawlid* (Prophet's birthday) and Al-Israa' should not be considered as a totally forbidden innovation. It is true that these celebrations are innovations but not all innovations are considered prohibited or forbidden.

Thus, there are so many innovations which took place after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) such as compilation of the Qur'an, and the second call for Prayer on Friday.

Furthermore, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said: **"Whoever innovates something good he will be rewarded for it and the rewards of whoever follows him in that innovation.**

And whoever innovates something bad, he will be sinful of it and the sin of whoever follows him in that matter."

Accordingly, one shouldn't take the general statement in other hadith which says all innovations are acts of straying but we should restrict that general statement to the specific



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statement in this hadith—meaning that innovations are considered prohibited when they are sinful, not when they are good.

In light of this aspect of understanding the divine texts from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, I shall conclude that the legal ruling of celebrating any auspicious Islamic occasion such as the *Mawlid* and Al-Israa' has been done in the context of its relevance to the *maslahah* or interest of Islam.

In other words, if the celebration is found in a place and time leading to bringing a clear interest to Islam, it should be then considered as a good innovation. For instance, these occasions could be used as means to correct or send a message to the masses or to educate the younger generation and bring them more awareness about the importance of these occasions and the necessity of benefiting from them in the current life.

However, I shall stress that no sins should be committed in the name of the celebration of these occasions. The sins are forbidden before, after, and within these occasions. All in all, I am appealing to those scholars who prohibit all these celebrations without looking at them in the context of *maslahah*. They shouldn't take the prophetic statement



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about the innovation without relating it to other prophetic statements.



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■ Sights of the Hereafter in Al-Israa': How?



Q. *It is reported that during the journey of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saw some people being punished. I would like to know how he could have seen them when the Day of Judgment*

has not come yet. Jazakum Allah khayran.

Muftis: Sheikh Faysal Mawlawi and Sheikh Ahmad Kutty

A. Dear questioner, we would like to thank you for the great confidence you place in us, and we implore Allah Almighty to help us serve His cause and render our work for His Sake.



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The Prophet's miraculous night journey to Jerusalem and the heavens establishes several facts. Among them is the status of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), as he was chosen to lead all the prophets in Prayer, and to go where no one else, not even Jibreel, was allowed.

Responding to your question, **Sheikh Faysal Mawlawi**, Deputy Chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, states:

This is among the Unseen matters that each Muslim has to accept, as it is reported in the authentic sources of Shari`ah. It is not correct to occupy one's mind with the way such matters occurred.

However, in order for our minds to understand this, we say that there are two explanations for it:

First: Almighty Allah collected time—past, present, and future—for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) on the day of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj. He collected for him the past time when He brought all the prophets and made Muhammad lead them in Prayer (peace and blessings be upon them all). He also collected the future time until the



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Day of Judgment and briefed the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) on some examples of what will happen on that Day.

Both matters are miraculous and transcend people's minds and universal phenomena, but Almighty Allah, the Creator of the universe, did this in support of one of His prophets.

Second: The kinds of punishment that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saw were for the previous nations who disbelieved in their prophets, fought against Allah's commands, and did several kinds of grave sins while all prophets forbade such sins.

Having stated the above, I am of the opinion that the first explanation is the most correct one. However, the true nature of its occurrence is known only to Allah, and we Muslims believe in it as reported in the authentic hadiths.

Moreover, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a senior lecturer and an Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states:



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The explanation for this is that the time and space were wrapped up for him in an instant, because the journey of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj is an experience that transcends the barrier of space and time.

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■ Fasting the 27th of Rajab?

Q. *Dear Sheikh! Is there any specific reward or merit pertaining to 27 Rajab? What about fasting on that day? Is it true that Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj (Night Journey and Ascension of the Prophet – peace and blessings be upon him) happened on that night?*



Mufti: Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi

A. Dear questioner! Thank you for this question, which reflects a true desire to gain more knowledge about Islam and its guidance.

It should be noted, first of all, that the exact date of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj is not known. There is no evidence to

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support the saying that it happened on 27th of Rajab. Even if 27th of Rajab is the day of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj, there is no way to say that we have to fast that day, since we cannot innovate fasting on our own without having evidence from the sources of Shari`ah supporting it. However, if a person customarily fasts on Mondays and Thursdays and 27th of Rajab falls on one of those two days, then there is nothing wrong in fasting on that day.

Elaborating on this issue, the eminent Muslim scholar **Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi** states:

Among the prohibited types of fasting is any kind of fasting people initiate on their own without any Shari`ah text or evidence. An example of this is the fasting on the 27th of Rajab thinking that it is the day that followed the night of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj.

Some people would fast on that day as a token of gratitude and thankfulness to Allah for the blessing of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj. It is really important for a Muslim to prove thankful in the remembrance of every event that brought blessings to the Muslim Ummah. These events are many indeed.

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However, this thankfulness does not mean that a Muslim has to fast. Almighty Allah reminds Muslims of so many blessings He has given to them. Allah says:

{O ye who believe! Remember Allah's favor unto you when there came against you hosts, and We sent against them a great wind and hosts ye could not see.} (Al-Ahzab 33: 9)

However, Almighty Allah did not ask them to fast and they never did.

In his brilliant book *Zad Al-Ma`ad*, Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim wrote that Ibn Taymiyah said,

“It is not recorded that any Muslim attributed any merit or privilege to the night of Al-Israa’ and Al-Mi`raj. None of the Companions ever did so. That is why we cannot tell when exactly Al-Israa’ and Al-Mi`raj happened.”

Ibn Al-Qayyim wrote,

"There is no clear evidence of the exact month when it happened, or the exact date of it. There are, in fact, so many reports in this regard and none of

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them is decisive. There is no specific ritual pertaining to it."

It is thus clear that there is no clear evidence that the night of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj is on the 27th of Rajab, despite of the common belief that it happened that day.

Allah Almighty knows best.



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Prophet's Prayer on His Way During His Night Journey

Q. *It is said that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) halted at a land in which he performed Prayer during the Night Journey (Al-Israa'), before reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque. However, it is well known that Prayer was enjoined during the Night Journey after the Prophet had ascended to Heaven, so what was this Prayer? Jazakum Allah khayran.*



Mufti : Sheikh `Atiyyah Saqr

A. Dear questioner, thanks for your interesting question, and we implore Allah earnestly to make our work dedicated for His sake and to guide us all to the best.

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In his response to your question, **Sheikh `Atiyyah Saqr**, former head of Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, states:

Among the miracles the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saw during the Night Journey was that demonstrated in the hadith reported by Al-Bazzar, At-Tabarani and Al-Bayhaqi, and which the latter authenticated in his book *Dala'il An-Nubuwwah*. This hadith, narrated by Shaddad ibn Aws (may Allah be pleased with him), states that during the Prophet's Night Journey, he passed by a land of date palms, whereupon, Jibreel (Angel Gabriel) ordered him to dismount from *Al-Buraq* to perform Prayer.

After he did, Jibreel told him that the place in which he performed prayer was Yathrib or Tibah (that is, Madinah) to which he would immigrate.

Then, Jibreel ordered him to perform Prayer when he passed by Madyan at Moses's tree under which, according to some scholars, Moses had sat after watering the sheep for the two women and before meeting their father.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and Jibreel passed by Mount Sinai, where Allah had spoken to



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Moses, Jibreel ordered the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to perform Prayer. He also prayed when he passed by Bethlehem where Jesus, son of Mary, had been born.

According to Al-Bayhaqi, the above events were reported from authentic chains of narrations. I have not encountered any other authentic hadiths about the Prophet's performance of Prayer during his Night Journey and before ascension in other than the above-mentioned places.

Some of the narrations describing what the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) saw during that night are reported through authentic chains of narrations while others are not.

One of these unauthenticated narrations was reported by At-Tabarani, Al-Bazzar, Al-Bayhaqi, Ibn Jarir and Abu Ya`la. According to this narration, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) passed by a valley in which he found a good smell like that of musk and heard a sound. Jibreel told him that this was the sound of Paradise giving the glad tidings to its dwellers.



Then, according to the same narration, he (peace and blessings be upon him) passed by a valley in which he heard an abominable voice and smelled a rotten odor. Jibreel told him it was the sound of Hellfire. However, this narration was not regarded as authentic, good, or even weak.

In any case, we are not obliged to believe in such narrations, even if they are plausible, as there are no plain exclusive texts to prove them.

The Night Journey is strange in itself, and has its own excellence and honor. It does not need any additions to increase its honor further than the authentic hadiths.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate the gravity of attributing any words to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) which he did not say. He (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

“He who intentionally attributes something false to me, let him take his abode in Hellfire” (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

As for the Prayer the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) performed on that night, it might have been

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composed of two *rak`ahs*, as the Prayer before the Night Journey was two *rak`ahs* at the beginning of the day and two *rak`ahs* at its end, or it might have been voluntary Prayer.





■ Al-Israa': Universality of the Islamic Message

Q. What's the significance of the Prophet's leading other Prophets in prayer during the Night Journey?

Consultant: Adil Salahi

A. Thank you very much for your question and for contacting Ask About Islam.

With regard to the Prophet's leading other prophets in prayer, the Night Journey was of great significance in more ways than one. It is a well-established Islamic concept that the messages of all Prophets were basically the same. They all called on mankind to believe in God, the one and only deity. With Islam, these messages were brought to their full and complete form.



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With Muhammad, the line of prophethood reached its end. For the Prophets to pray together at Jerusalem signifies the continuity of their messages and their unity of rank and purpose. Jerusalem thus occupies a unique position as a sacred place for all followers of the Divine religions.

That unique prayer of the Prophets, led by Muhammad, also signifies that as Islam has crowned all Divine messages and brought them to their final form, Jerusalem, the spot revered by all religions, belongs to the Muslims who follow Muhammad, the recognized leader of all Prophets.

The Night Journey also stresses the universality of the Islamic message. Muhammad is taken to Jerusalem which, at the time, was inhabited by non-Arabs. He is engaged there in the most religious of human activities before he is taken to heaven.

It would have been just as easy for God to raise Muhammad to heaven from his home in Makkah. The fact that He chose to take him to Jerusalem first, to lead his fellow Prophets in prayer, endorses the fact that Islam is a message for mankind, not for the Arabs alone.



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In those congregational prayers of the Prophets one also sees a reference to the fact that all the distortion which crept into earlier messages had been pushed aside. A fuller and more complete version of these messages has been revealed and guaranteed by God to remain intact for the rest of time. That version is Islam.

I hope this answers your question. Please keep in touch.

