

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Al Isra wal Meraj

Reference Books: 1. Tafseer Ibn Katheer | 2. Saheeh al-Bukharee | 3. Saheeh Muslim | 4. Sunan Abu Dawood | 5. Raheeq al-Makhtoom | 6. Lectures on Meraaj by Allama Ehsaan Ilaahi Zaheer

“Glorified be He (Allah), Who took His slave Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) for a journey by night from al-Masjid al-Haraam (in Makkah) to the farthest mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighborhood whereof We have blessed in order that We might show him of Our Aayat. Verily, He is all-Hearer All- Seer.”
[Soorah al-Israa (17): 1]

INTRODUCTION

Allah narrates His Dignity, Greatness and Power that He is All-Able to do anything He Wills. He Alone is the true deity worthy of worship and He Alone is the Rabb (Creator, Provider, Sustainer). He took his slave Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) from Makkah to the farthest Mosque in Jerusalem in one part of the night. [Adapted from Tafseer Ibn Katheer]

The Miracles of Allah’s Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) -

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was granted various miracles by Allah, the Exalted. His greatest miracle is the Noble Qur'aan, which was revealed 1400 years ago and nobody has been able to change a single letter or produce its imitation. Allah says: **“Verily, We: It is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur’aan) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption).”** [Soorah al-Hijr (15): 9]

This verse is a challenge to mankind. Although the disbelievers tried to make variation in the Qur'aan but they failed miserably. All the other Divine books the Torah, the Injeel were corrupted by their people in the form of additions and subtractions or alteration to the original text. Allah said: **“We will guard it (Qur'aan)”** and indeed, He has guarded the Qur'aan.

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“Before me, every Prophet was given a miracle and they practiced it during their lifetime: e.g. Eesa (alaihis-salaam) used to cure the sick and make the dead alive. Moosa (alaihis-salaam) was given the stick etc. and I have been given the permanent miracle of the Qur'aan untill the Hour is established, so I hope that my followers will be more in number than all the other Messengers as my miracle will last till the Day of Resurrection, and it is the Glorious Book. When anyone reads it, even if he is a pagan, he is convinced that it is produced by none but by the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee and Saheeh Muslim]

Splitting of the moon: Another miracle of Allah's Messenger was the splitting of the moon. Narrated Anas (radiyallahu anhu) that the Makkans requested Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to show them a miracle, so he showed them the splitting of the moon. [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 4, no: 831]

The Flowing of water from amongst the fingers of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). Narrated Jabir Ibn Abdullah (radiyallahu anhu): ‘I was with the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and the time for the Asr prayer became due. We had no water with us except a little which was put in a vessel and was brought to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). He put his hand into it and spread out his fingers and then said: **“Come along! Hurry up! All those who want to perform ablution. The blessing is from Allah.”** I saw the water gushing out from his fingers. So the people performed the ablution and drank, and I tried to drink more of that water (beyond my thirst and capacity), for I knew it was blessing. The sub-narrator said: ‘I asked Jabir: “How many persons were you then?” He replied: “We were one thousand four hundred men.” [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 7, no: 543 and Saheeh al-Muslim vol: 4, no: 779]

Speaking of the wolf: Abi Saeed al-Khudri (radiyallahu anhu) narrated that while a shepherd was amongst his sheep suddenly a wolf attacked a sheep and took it away. The shepherd chased the wolf and took back his sheep. The wolf sat on its tail and addressed the shepherd saying: “Be afraid of Allah. You have taken the provision from me which Allah gave me.” The shepherd said: “What an amazing thing! A wolf sitting on its tail and speaks to me in the language of human beings.” The wolf said: “Shall I tell you something more amazing than this? There is Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) in Yathrib (Madinah) informing the people about the news of the past.” Then the shepherd proceeded (towards al-Madinah) driving his sheep till he entered al-Madinah, cornered his sheep to one side and came to Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and informed the whole story. Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) ordered for the proclamation of a congregational prayer, then he came out and asked the shepherd to inform the people (about his story) and he informed them.

Then Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“He (the shepherd) has spoken the truth. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, the Day of Resurrection will not be established until the beasts of prey speak to the human beings, and the stick lash and the shoe-laces of a person speak to him and his thigh informs him about the family as to what happened to them after him.”** [Musnad Ahmad vol: 3, page: 83. Musnad Abi Sa'eed al-Khudr]

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was granted many other miracles. The Prophet's meal used to glorify him [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 4, no: 779], and the stones used to greet him, when he passed through the lanes of Makkah. Another magnificent miracle is that of '**Isra wal-Miraaj**' or '**The Night Journey**'. This article is an attempt to comprehend the Virtuous, Benefits and lessons of this great miracle.

The event of Isra wal-Miraaj has in itself immense wisdom, advices and lessons. It teaches that one should not despair from the Mercy of Allah and keep constant relations with Allaah, especially in the times of stress and troubles. The slave should have full Faith in Allah, because when Allah bestows His Mercy and Bounties on His slaves, the problems depart as if they never existed

The Year of Grief – The event of Israa wal-Meraaj took place in the “Year of the Grief”. This year was called so because of the following reasons:

The Death of Abu Talib - Abu Talib, who was an uncle of Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) died. Abu Talib was a protection for the Muslims in Makkah against the aggressions of the Kuffar. While the Makkans burst into outrage and disapproval on the call of Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), Abu Talib was committed to protect and help his nephew. He said: “We love to help, accept your advice and believe in your words. These are your kinspeople whom you have collected and I am one of them, but I am fastest to do what you like. Do what you have been ordered. I shall protect and defend you, but I cannot quit my religion.” Abu Lahab exclaimed: “I swear by Allah that this is a bad thing. You must stop him before the others do.” He (Abu Talib) declared: “I swear by Allah to protect him as long as I am alive.” [Al-Raheeq al-Makhtoom]

Narrated al-Abbas bin Abdul Mutallib (radiyallahu anhu) that he said to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam): ‘You have not been of any avail to your uncle (Abu Talib) (though) by Allah, he used to protect you and used to become angry on your behalf.’ The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“He is in a shallow fire, and had it not been for me, he would have been in the bottom of the (Hell) Fire.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 5, no: 222]

Thus, Abu Talib even though being a Kafir, supported his nephew with money and strength from the ill deliberations of the Kuffar. As long as he was alive, the Pagans could not harm the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). However, the death of Abu Talib rendered the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) weak and gave the polytheist an opportunity to oppress the Muslims. Their harsh behavior made it difficult for the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to live in Makkah. The confession of Faith and accepting Islam was made impossible for

the Companions of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), they were subjected to unbearable tortures and oppressions. Anybody who accepted Islaam was given a choice to either leave his faith, or leave his country or that his soul leaves his body; the Kuffar did not agree to any other alternative. But the companions of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) even in these times of trial and tortures stood firm on their religion and advanced with the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). Islaam spread, and more and more people accepted the Faith. The spread of Islaam made the Kuffar more aggressive and they tried all possible means to obstruct and cease the spread of Islaam. The Dawah of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was made difficult... even staying in Makkah became hard.

Khadijah (radhi allahu anha) passes away - Only two months after the death of Abu Talib, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) experienced another great personal loss. His wife and the mother of the believers, 'Khadijah (radhi allahu anha)' passed away. Khadijah was a blessing from Allah to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). She shared the toils and trials of life with him, for twenty-five years. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) deeply mourned over her death, and once said: **"She believed in me when none else did. She embraced Islam when people disbelieved me. And she helped and comforted me in her person and wealth when there was none else to lend me a helping hand. I had children from her only."** [Musnad Ahmad (6/118)]

These two painful events took place within a short period of time. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) lost all hopes in guiding the Arabs and turned to al-Taif (a city) seeking support. However, there too he was disappointed and faced agony which increased his grief and sufferings. Rapid succession of misfortune led the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to call that period "the Year of Grief"

Allah took His slave for Isra - In the midst of all these sorrows, Allah took His Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) through the great miracle of 'Isra and Miraaj' to show him His Signs and provide him support. Allah says: **"...in order that We might show him (Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)) of Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, signs etc.)."** [Soorah al-Isra (17): 1]

With the miracle of Isra and Miraaj, Allah established that even if the Kuffar had closed the doors for His Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), Allah is his Supporter and Protector, and the doors of Heavens are open for him. No strength can stop or harm the one who is under the Protection of Allah. Isra wal-Miraaj confirmed the success of the Prophet's (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) Dawah and victory over his enemies, after all the sorrows and grief.

When did it take place? - The exact date of Isra and Miraaj is controversial. Ibn Katheer (rahimahullah) quoted a number of different scholarly views in al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah (3/108) concerning the exact date of Isra wal-Miraaj. Majority of the scholars support a date between 12-16 months before the migration to Madinah, they not only disagree about a particular day, but the month as well.

Before the Journey

Angel Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) opened the Prophet's (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) breast, extracted his heart and washed it with the water of Zam-Zam. Narrated Anas bin Malik (radiyallahu anhu): "The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"The night, Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was taken for a journey from the sacred mosque (of Mecca) Al-Ka'ba. Three persons came to him (in a dream) while he was sleeping in the Sacred Mosque before the Divine Inspiration was revealed to him. One of them said: "Which of them is he?" The middle (second) Angel said: "He is the best of them." The last (third) angle said: "Take the best of them." Only this happened on that night. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) did not see them till they came on another night, i.e. after the Divine Inspiration was revealed to him (Fateh al-Baree p: 258, Vol. 17), and he saw them, his eyes were asleep but his heart was not and so is the case with (all) the Prophets (alaihis-salaam); their eyes sleep while their hearts are awake. Therefore, those angels did not talk to him until they carried him and placed him beside the well of Zam-Zam. From among them, Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) took charge of him. He cut open (the part of his body) between his throat and the middle of his chest (heart), took all the material out of his chest and abdomen and then washed it with the water of Zam-Zam with his own hands till he cleansed the inside of his body, and then a gold tray containing a gold bowl full of belief and wisdom was brought. Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) then stuffed his chest and throat, blood vessels with it and then closed it (the chest)."** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 9, no: 608, v: 1, no: 345, v: 5, no: 227]

Israa means the Prophet's (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) journey in body and soul from al-Kaaba in Makkah to the 'Masjid al-Aqsa' in Jerusalem by an amazing beast called al-Buraq and his return back to Makkah.

Al-Buraq – The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was carried from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem on a beast called 'al-Buraq' in the company of Angel Jibreel (alaihis-salaam). The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) described al-Buraq saying: **"I was brought the Buraq, a long white beast, slightly bigger than a donkey but smaller than a mule which when trotting (ride), would place its next step as far as its eyesight could see. I mounted it until I reached al-Quds, Jerusalem. There I tied it up to the same ring used by the Prophets."** [Saheeh Muslim and Saheeh al-Bukharee]

Narrated Anas ibn Malik (radiyallahu anhu): "On the night when the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was taken up to Heaven, al-Buraq was brought to him, bridled and saddled, but it proved refractory (stubbornness), so Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) said to it: "Is it to Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) you are doing this? No one more honorable in Allah's Sight has mounted you than he." It then poured with sweat." [at-Tirmidhee no: 5920 and Musnad Ahmad]

The meaning of al-Buraq in the Arabic language is 'Beam, send out light.

Today, science tells us that light is the fastest traveling entity in the world. It travels at the speed of 700 million miles an hour. Fourteen hundred years ago, when no scientist

had even imagined the swiftness of the light or its reality, Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) called this fast traveling beast 'al-Buraq' on the basis of its fast pace. This is a proof for the truthfulness of the religion of Islaam and the Prophet-hood of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). Today, if science testifies to some fact then it is the truthfulness of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), as Allah says: **“we will show them our signs in the Universe and in their own-selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this (the Qur'aan) is the truth.”** [Soorah al-Fussilat (41): 53]

Formerly, people objected: 'where did such a creature appear, which took the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) from one part of the world to the other and through the spheres of the Heavens in one single night?' Today, we see man-made rockets and missiles traveling miles in minutes. When man, who is a creature of Allah can create such fast traveling machines, then why cannot Allah, the Creator of mankind create a beast, which could travel millions of miles.

The First Site of the Journey – Masjid al-Aqsa - The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“Then, I entered the Masjid, offered two raka'hs of prayer.”** [Saheeh Muslim] It is related in other narrations that Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) led the other prophets in the prayer. Masjid al-Aqsa has been the center of all Prophet (alaihis-salaam), since the period of Khalil Ibraheem (alaihis-salaam) therefore all the Prophets (alaihis-salaam) gathered in the Mosque and Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) lead them in prayers. This proves the high position of the last Messenger, Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) amongst the previous Prophets and Messengers (alaihis-salaam). [Tafseer Ibn Katheer]

In the Qur'aan, Allah, the Exalted mentioned the story of Isra wal-Miraaj [Soorah al-Isra (17): 1], soon in the next verse is a quick shift to uncover the shameful deeds and crimes of the Jews, followed by the admonitions of the Qur'aan. This arrangement is not merely a co-incidence, Jerusalem was the first scene of the Night Journey, and here lies the message directed to the Jews which explicitly suggested that they are discharged from the office of leadership of humanity due to the crimes they perpetuated (committed and continued). The message explicitly proves that the office of leadership is re-instituted by the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to hold both the headquarters of the Abrahamic Faith, Holy Sanctuary in Makkah and the Farthest Mosque in Jerusalem. Thus, the authority was granted to the nation blessed with piety, and obedience to Allah, with a Messenger who enjoys the privilege of the Qur'aan that guides people to the Truth. [Adapted from al-Raheeq al-Makhtoom]

Choosing the Fitrah - Two vessels of gold were brought to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), one full with milk and the other with wine. Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) asked the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to choose either of them. He selected the vessel containing milk and drank it. Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) said: **“You have been guided on al-Fitrah and you have attained al-Fitrah. Had you**

selected the wine, your nation would have been misled.” [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 6, no: 232]

[Note: Fitrah is the pure instinct inborn in every child, which recognizes Allah; if this instinct is not corrupted it leads to the belief in Allah's Oneness]

Imaam an-Nawawi (rahimahullah) said that the reply of Jibreel (alaihis-salaam): “You chose al-Fitrah” meant that he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) chose the religion of Islaam, i.e. “You have chosen the emblem of Islaam and Istiqamah (being steadfast on the Straight Path). The milk was a sign because it is easy to drink, good and tasty, while wine is “the mother of all evil” and a cause for cruel acts.”

It is a symbolic way to saying that good and evil were brought before the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and he instinctively made a choice for the good. Today, in the world when man is turning away from the Fitrah in search of life other than the Way prescribed by Allah, we see him wandering astray and involved in all sorts of evil. It is essential for him to stick to the Way commanded by Allah because **“whosoever turns away from My Reminder (Qur’aan) verily, for him is a life of hardships and We shall raise him up blind.”** [Soorah Ta-Ha (20): 24]

“And whosoever is blind in this world (i.e. does not see Allah’s Signs and believes not in Him), will be blind in the Hereafter, and is more astray from the Path.” [Soorah al-Israa (17): 72]

Miraaj is the ascension of Allah’s Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) from Masjid al-Aqsa to the Heavens and his meeting with Allah.

Angel Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) ascended with the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to the Heavens. Ibn Katheer (rahimahullah) writes in his book al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah: “Ascension did not take place on al-Buraq, for al-Buraq was tied to the door of Bayt al-Maqdis, so that he could ride back to Makkah.”

After the visit to Masjid al-Aqsa, Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) and the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) set out to the first heaven. Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) asked the guardians of the Heaven to open the gates, he was asked: “Who is it?” he replied: “Jibreel”. It was again asked: “Who is accompanying you?” He said: “Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)” It was said: “Has he been sent for?” Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) replied: “He has indeed been sent for.” The Angels said: “(Marhaba) He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!” The gates were opened and they saw Adam (alaihis-salaam). Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) said to the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam): “This is your father, Adam (alaihis-salaam). Pay him your greetings.” The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) greeted him and Adam (alaihis-salaam) returned the greetings and said: “You are welcome, O pious son and pious Prophet.” and prayed for his well being.

Then they ascended to the second Heaven and similar as before, Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) asked the guardians to open the gates of the Heaven and they inquired about him and his company. This dialogue took place at the entrance of all seven Heavens. Eventually the gates were opened and they were welcomed with the greeting: “(Marhaba) He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!”

On the second Heaven, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw Eesa Ibn Maryam (alaihis-salaam) and Yahya Ibn Zakariyyah (alaihis-salaam) cousins from the maternal side. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) further said: "I met Jesus (alaihis-salaam). He was one of moderate height and was red-faced as if he had just come out of a bathroom..." [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 4, no: 647] Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) said: "These are Yahya Ibn Zakariyyah and Jesus (alaihis-salaam); pay them your greetings." The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) greeted them, both returned the greeting and said: "You are welcome, O pious brother and pious Prophet" and prayed for his well-being.

They ascended to the third Heaven and saw Yusuf (alaihis-salaam), who had been given half of the (world's) beauty. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) greeted him and he returned the greetings and welcomed him and ascended with them to the fourth Heaven. The gates were opened and Idris (alaihis-salaam) was there. Allah says about him: **"We evaluated him to the exalted position."** [Soorah (19): 57] Idris (alaihis-salaam) welcomed the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and they greeted each other. Then Idris (alaihis-salaam) ascended with them to the fifth Heaven and there was Haroon (alaihis-salaam), he welcomed them, returned the greetings and prayed for the well being of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam).

Then the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was taken to the sixth Heaven and there he saw Moosa (alaihis-salaam), he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"I met Moses on the night of my Ascension to Heaven. He was a tall person with lank hair as if he belonged to the people of the tribe of Shanu's...."** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 4, no: 647] Moosa (alaihis-salaam) welcomed the Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), they greeted each other and Moosa (alaihis-salaam) prayed for the well being of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). When they left, Moosa (alaihis-salaam) wept. Someone asked him: "What makes you cry?" Moosa (alaihis-salaam) said: "I weep because after me there has been sent (as Prophet) a young man whose followers will enter Paradise in greater number than my followers."

They ascended to the seventh Heaven and found Ibraheem (alaihis-salaam) reclining against Baitul Ma'mur (the much-frequented House), into which seventy thousand angels (who will never visit again) enter every day..." He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"I saw Ibraheem (radiyallahu anhu), whom I resembled more than any of his children did."** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 4, no: 647] Ibraheem (alaihis-salaam) welcomed the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and they greeted each other and Ibraheem (alaihis-salaam) prayed for the well being of Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)." [Refer to the narrations of Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 5, no: 227 and Saheeh Muslim]

Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (radiyallahu anhu): "The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"On the night of my Ascension (Miraaj) I met Ibraheem (radiyallahu anhu) and he said to me: "Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), Convey my salaam to your people and tell them that Paradise is a vast plain of pure soil and sweet water and its trees cry: 'Holy is Allah, all praise is due to Allah, there is none worthy of worship save Allah, and Allah is Great."**" [at-Tirmidhee no: 1445]

The Utmost Boundary: Sidhrat al-Muntaha – Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (radiyallahu anhu) “When the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was taken for the Night Journey, he was taken to Sidrat al-Muntaha, where terminates everything that ascends from the Earth and is held there, and where terminates everything that descends from above it and is held there...” [Saheeh Muslim no: 329]

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“Then I was taken to Sidhrat al-Muntaha, whose leaves were like the ears of an elephant and its fruit like big earthen vessels. And when it was covered by the Command of Allah, it underwent such a change that none amongst the creation has the power to praise its beauty.”** [Saheeh Muslim]

In another narration: **“Then I was made to ascend to Sidhrat al-Muntaha. Behold it’s fruits were like the jars of Hajr (place near Madinah) and its leaves were as big as the ears of an elephant. Jibreel said: “This is the lote tree of the farthest limit.” Behold there ran four rivers, two were hidden and two were visible. I asked: “What are these two kinds of rivers, Jibreel (alaihis-salaam)?” He replied: “As for the hidden rivers, the are two rivers in Paradise and the two visible are the Nile and Euphrates.”**

This Hadeeth does not mean that these two rivers well up from the Paradise, but it symbolically describe the areas, where the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) will settle, and the people whereof will always remain adherent bearers of Islam, which will be passed on to generations. [ar-Raheeq al-Makhtoom]

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) also said: **“...Then Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) took me until we reached Sidhrat al-Muntaha (lote tree of the utmost boundary), which was shrouded in colors, indescribable. Then I was admitted into Paradise where I found small (tents) or walls (made) of pearls and its earth was of musk.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 1, no: 345] **“While I was walking in Paradise (on the night of Miraaj), I saw a river, on the two banks of which there were tents made of hollow pearls. I asked, 'What is this, O Jibreel?' He said, 'That is the Kauthar, which Your Lord has given to you.’ Behold! Its scent or its mud was sharp smelling musk!”** (The sub-narrator, Hudba is in doubt as to the correct expression.) [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 8, no: 583] **“On the night of my Ascent to the Heaven... I also saw Malik, the gate-keeper of the (Hell) Fire and Ad-Dajjal amongst the Signs which Allah showed me.”** [The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) then recited]: **“So be not you in doubt of meeting him when you met Moosa during the night of Miraaj over the Heavens.”** [(32): 23] [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 4, no: 462]

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik (radiyallahu anhu): **“The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: “When I was taken up to heaven I passed by people who had nails of copper and were scratching their faces and their breasts. I said: Who are these people, Jibreel? He replied: They are those who used to backbite and who slander people's honor.”** [Sunan of Abu-Dawood no: 4860]

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (radiyallahu anhu): **“The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: “On the night when I was taken up to Heaven I came upon people whose bellies were like houses and contained snakes which could be seen**

from outside their bellies. I asked Jibreel who they were and he told me that they were people who had practiced usury (dealing with interest).” [Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Majah and at-Tirmidhee 2828]

Narrated Anas ibn Malik (radiyallahu anhu): “The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“On the night when I was taken up to Heaven, I passed by people whose lips were being cut by scissors of fire. I asked Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) who they were and he told me they were the preachers among my people, who said what they did not do.”** [at-Tirmidhee (gharib) no: 4801]

Buraydah ibn al-Hasib (radiyallahu anhu) narrated, how one morning Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) called Bilal and said: **“What did you do to get to Paradise before me? I have never entered Paradise without hearing the rustling of your garments in front of me.”** He (radiyallahu anhu) replied: "O Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)! I have never called the Adhaan without praying two raka'hs, and no impurity has ever happened to me without my performing ablution on the spot and thinking that I owed Allah two raka'hs." Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"It is because of them."** [at-Tirmidhee , no: 326]

Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah (radiyallahu anhu): The Prophet said: **“I saw myself entering Paradise, and behold! I saw Ar-Rumaisa, Abu Talha's wife. I heard footsteps. I asked: “Who is it?” Somebody said: “It is Bilal” Then I saw a palace and a lady sitting in its courtyard. I asked: “For whom is this palace?” Somebody replied: “It is for 'Umar.” I intended to enter it and see it, but I thought of your (Umar's) Gheerah (and gave up the attempt).”** Umar said: “Let my parents be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)! How dare I think of my Gheerah (self-respect) being offended by you? [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 5, no: 28]

Here we see the great character of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam); he did not only teach manners but also set forth a practical example by his actions. He taught: **“If anyone peeps into the house of a people without their permission and he (the owner of the house) knocks out his eye, no responsibility is incurred for his eye.”** [Sunan of Abu-Dawood no: 5153] because one who peeps into people's house has committed theft by harming the privacy of the recipient and therefore Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) has prescribed very harsh punishment for the thieves: The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“The hand of a thief should be cut off for (even) stealing a quarter of a Deenar.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 8, no: 781]

Meeting with Allah - Did the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) see His Lord?

“While he was in the highest part of the horizon. Then he (alaihis-salaam) approached and came closer, and was at a distance of two bows length or (even) nearer. So, did Allah convey the Inspiration to His slave. The (Prophet's) heart lied not (in seeing) what he (Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw (Ruya). Will you then dispute with him (Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) about what he saw. And indeed he (Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw him at

a second descent. Near Sidhrat al-Muntaha. Near it is the Paradise of Abode. When that covered the lote-tree which did cover it! The sight (of Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) turned not aside, not it transgressed beyond (the) limit (ordained for it). Indeed, he (Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) did see, of the Greatest Signs of his Lord (Allah).” [Soorah an-Najm (53): 8-18] [Refer to Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 9, no: 608]

The pious predecessors (Salaf as-Saalih) disagree whether the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) see his Lord with his physical eye or not.

Umm al-Mumineen, Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha), Abu Hurayrah (radiyallahu anhu) and Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallahu anhu) reject that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw Allah with his physical eyes. It is reported in Ibn Abi Hatim that Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallahu anhu) explained the above mentioned verse [(53): 8-18] saying: “The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) twice in his real form, once with his wish Angel Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) appeared in his real form in front of the Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and all the horizons were covered by his body. The second time was when Angel Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) took the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) to the Heavens.” And this is the meaning of the saying: “While he was in the highest part of the horizon...” [Tafseer Ibn Katheer] Thus, this verse signifies that Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) approached and came closer to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). [Fateh al-Baree Page 263, 264, Vol. 17]

Narrated Masruq (radiyallahu anhu): “I asked Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha): “O Mother! Did Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) see his Lord?” Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha) said: “What you have said makes my hair stand on end! Know that if somebody tells you one of the following three things, he is a liar: ‘Whoever tells you that Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw his Lord, is a liar.’” Then Aa'ishah recited the Verse: “**No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Courteous Well-Acquainted with all things.**” [(6): 103] “**It is not fitting for a human being that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration or from behind a veil.**” [(42): 51] Aa'ishah further said: “And whoever tells you that the Prophet knows what is going to happen tomorrow, is a liar.” She then recited: “**No soul can know what it will earn tomorrow.**” [(31): 34] She added: “And whoever tells you that he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) concealed (some of Allah's orders), is a liar.” Then she recited: “**O Messenger! Proclaim (the Message) which has been sent down to you from your Lord...**” [(5): 67] Aa'ishah added: “But the Prophet saw Jibraeel in his true form twice.” [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 6, no: 378]

On the other hand, Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) affirmed the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) seeing His Lord, he (radiyallahu anhu) said that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw his Lord twice. [Tafseer Ibn Katheer]

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr (rahimahullah) said: “The narrations from Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) have come unrestricted (i.e. he does not mention whether the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) see His Lord with his physical eye or not) and the others are restricted (i.e. they indicate that the Messenger of Allah

(sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) did not see His Lord with his physical eyes)... It is possible to reconcile between the affirmation of Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) and the denial of Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha) in that the denial can be taken to be the denial of the vision of the (physical) eyes and its affirmation to be the affirmation of the heart..." [Fath al-Baaree (8/608)]

Secondly, it can also reconcile between the two sayings of Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) and Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha) in another way and that is that Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) speaks about the affirmation of the vision for the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) basing this upon the possibility that he saw his Lord in his sleep, and this is also a true vision. And it is not that he saw him in the Night of Ascent and Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha) denied the Prophet's vision of his Lord on the Night of Ascent only, not the seeing of his Lord while he was awake and that she does not deny that he saw Allah in his sleep. Rather, she just negates that he saw Allah while he was awake.

Those who claim that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw his Lord with his physical eyes bring forth a Daef Hadeeth, no authentic (Saheeh) traditions are found in accordance to their claim. They bring forth the tradition of at-Tirmidhee where Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw his Lord. Ikrima asked him: "Then what about the verse in which Allah says: 'No vision can grasp Him' he replied it is when Allah is surrounded with His Noor (light), otherwise Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) saw His Lord twice. "This Hadeeth is Daef."

Thus, according to this, there remains no contradiction and Allah knows best. [Sharah Usool al-Itiqaad of al-Lailaka'ee, 93/512 as-Sunnah, 1/181 and Sifaat al-Maqdisee pp. 109-111]

The Gift of Miraaj

Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (radiyallahu anhu) said: **"...The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was given three (things): he was given five prayers, he was given the concluding verses of Soorah al-Baqarah, and the remission of serious sins for those among his Ummah who associate not anything with Allah."** [Saheeh Muslim no: 329]

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"Allah revealed to me a revelation and He made obligatory for me fifty Salaah every day and night. Then I went down to Moosa (alaihis-salaam) who asked: "What has your Lord enjoined upon your Ummah?" I said: "Fifty salaahs." He said: "Return to your Lord and beg for reduction (in the number of Salaah), for your community shall not be able to bear this burden. As I had been put to test by the children of Israel and tried them (and found them too weak to bear such a heavy burden)." So, the Prophet turned to Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) as if he wanted to consult him about that issue. Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) informed him of his opinion saying: "Yes, if you wish." So, Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) ascended with him to the Allah. [Saheeh al-Bukharee v:9, no: 608]**

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“I went back to my Lord and said: ‘My Lord make things lighter for my Ummah.’ (Allah) reduced the number by five (salaahs) for me. I went down to Moosa and said: ‘(The Lord) reduced it by five (salaahs) for me.’ He said: ‘Verily, your Ummah shall not be able to bear this burden; return to your Lord and ask Him to make things lighter. O Muhammad! By Allah, I tried to persuade my nation, Bani Israel to do less than this, but they could not do it and gave it up. However, your followers are weaker in body, heart, sight and hearing, so return to your Lord so that He may lighten your burden.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v:9, no: 608] **“I then kept going back and forth between My Lord, Blessed and Exalted and Moosa (alaihi-salaam) until He (Allah) said: ‘There are five salaahs every day and night, O Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). Each being credited as ten, so that makes fifty salaahs. He who intends to do a good deed and does not do it will have a good recorded for him; and if he does it, it will be recorded for him as ten. Whereas he who intends to do an evil deed and doesn’t (do it), it will not be recorded for him; and if he does it, only one evil deed will be recorded. I then came down and when I came to Moosa (alaihi-salaam) and informed him, he said: ‘Go back to your Lord and ask Him to make things lighter’”. Upon this the Messenger of Allah remarked: ‘I returned to my Lord until I felt ashamed before Him.”** [Saheeh Muslim] On this Jibreel (alaihi-salaam) said: **“Descend in Allah's Name.”** The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) then woke while he was in the Sacred Mosque (at Mecca). [Saheeh al-Bukharee v:9, no: 608] And the narration of Saheeh al-Bukharee there is an addition of words: **“... When I left, I heard a voice saying: ‘I have My Order and reduced the burden of My Worshippers.”**

Allah has glorified Salaah and granted it a very high position by revealing its obligation on the night of Miraaj. All the command of Allah were conveyed by the Angel Jibreel (alaihi-salaam) on the Earth to the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), whereas Salaat was prescribed by calling the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) above the seven Heavens and without any intercessor. Many Verses of the Qur’aan and numerous Ahadeeth are witness to the great importance and obligation of the Prayer.

Ibn Hajar (rahimahullah) writes in his commentary of Saheeh al-Bukharee (1/460) **“The wisdom of prescribing the Salaah during the Miraaj is that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was hallowed internally and externally. He was washed with Zam-Zam water and was showered with Eemaan and wisdom. Since, Salaah is preceded by ablution, it was thus appropriate that Salaah was prescribed in that state; i.e. after the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was purified...”**

Allah says: **“And if you count the blessings of Allah, never will you be able to count them.”** [Soorah (14): 34] The lessening of the Salaah is a blessing from Allah, but as Allah said: **“But few of My slaves are grateful.”** [Soorah (34): 13] And: **“Verily, man is ungrateful to His Lord.”** [Soorah (100): 6] What can be a greater blessing than reducing the number of Salaah from fifty to five and then rewarding each as ten which sums up to fifty?

Ibn Hibban (rahimahumullah) said in his Saheeh (1/133): **“Then he (the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)) was obliged with fifty salaahs; the order was a trial, one that Allah wanted to test His beloved (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), with. When He**

prescribed fifty Salaats for him, Allah previously knew that He would only prescribe five salaahs for the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), but the order to pray fifty prayers was a test. This is similar to our saying that Allah might order something while willing that the ordered individual obey His orders and not necessarily carry out the order literally. An example of this was when Allah ordered His beloved Ibraheem to slaughter his son. Allah's Will behind this order was to have His Order obeyed and submitted to: when they had both submitted themselves (to the Will of Allah), and Ibraheem (alaihis-salaam) had laid his son (for slaughtering), Allah ransomed him with a great sacrifice. Had Allah willed the literal fulfillment of His Order, he (Ibraheem (alaihis-salaam)) would have found his son really slaughtered. Similarly, prescribing fifty salaahs was meant to have His Order obeyed and submitted to, without having it literally carried out."

Anybody who neglects the prayer has not only denied a pillar of Islam but also rejected the gift of Allah. Salaah is the first act of worship ordained for the Muslim and it will be the first worship, which the slave will be accounted for on the Day of Judgement, and it was the last command which the Prophet kept repeating. When he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was on his death-bed, he said: **"(Preserve) the prayer, the prayer, and what your right hands possess (slaves)."** [Authenticated by Sheikh al-Albanee, Ibn Majah and Musnad Ahmad] When a person dies, he only speaks those words which he regards as very important and desires the people to adhere to his advice. Thus, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) commanded us with those words which he regarded very important, i.e. Preserve the prayer.

Abdullah ibn Qart (radiyallahu anhu) related that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"The first act which the slave will be accountable for on the Day of Judgement will be the prayer. If it is good, then the rest of his acts will be good. And if it is evil, then the rest of his acts will be evil."** [Related by at-Tabaraneer]

Narrated Buraydah ibn al-Hasib (radiyallahu anhu): "The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **"which distinguishes us from the disbelievers and hypocrites is our commitment to the Prayer. He who gives it up, falls into disbelief."** [al-Tirmidhee no: 1083]

Allah relates that when the people of the Fire will be thrown in the Hell, they will be asked: **"What has caused you to enter the Hell-Fire?" they will reply: "We were not of those who used to offer Salaat."** [Soorah (74): 42-43] Thus, the first thing, which they will confess, will be abandoning of Salaat.

The importance of Salaah is also demonstrated from Masjid al-Quba. It was built when the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) migrated from Makkah to Medina. In between he stayed in Quba for four days. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) did not plan to stay in Quba, he did not built any place to stay or rest, but the first thing he did was to build the Mosque of Quba. This act of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) shows the great importance and significance of Mosques in Islaam. Thus, when the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) sent a group of Sahabah (radiyallahu anhu) to fight in the cause of Allah, he ordered them to postpone their attack and wait until they heard the Adhaan. If the Adhaan was not pronounced then they should attack. Anas bin Malik

(radiyallahu anhu) said: “Whenever the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) went out with us to fight (in Allah's cause) against any nation, he never allowed us to attack till morning and he would wait and see if he heard Adhaan; he would postpone the attack and if he did not hear Adhaan he would attack them....” [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol: 1, no: 584]

The importance of Salaah is so great that one is ordered to observe Salaah in all circumstances, whether one is sick or traveling or even on the battlefield. Allah says: **“Guard strictly (five obligatory) as-Salawaat (the prayers) especially the middle Salaah (i.e. the best prayer – ‘Asr’) and stand before Allah with obedience. And if your fear (an enemy), perform Salaat on foot or riding. And when you are in safety, offer the Salaah in the manner, He has taught you, which you knew not (before).”** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 238-9]

Salaah is not excused from anyone, except the sleeping, the insane or the women who is in her menstrual or post-natal period. Salaat is the only obligatory worship which every individual has to perform for himself. The other pillars of Islaam like Fast, Hajj and Zakaah are excused on certain circumstances like:

Fasts: One who is ill or traveling is allowed to postpone his fasts and make it afterwards. If the illness is not curable then he is allowed to invite people and feed them the number of days he missed. Also a breast-feeding mother is allowed to postpone her fasts, but not Salaah.

Hajj: Hajj is not obligatory on him who does not possess money. If he has money but has no strength then he can ask someone to perform Hajj for him, or even if he does not do so he is under no obligation, But Salaah is prescribed in all circumstances.

Zakaah: If one has money he should give charity, if he does not hold any, he is excused. But the Salaah is not excused even in the times of battle, the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) and his companions used to pray in the battlefield.

Aa'ishah (radhi allahu anha) said: **“The Messenger of Allah used to talk to us and we used to talk to him. But when the time for prayer started, he would act as if we did not know him or if he did not know us.”**

Yet, many people are unaware of as-Salaah and neglect it. Many people who claim to be the followers of Allah's Messenger never enter the Masjids. After the Shahadah the first symbol or the sign of a Muslim is Salaah. In the Qur'aan, Allah did not just say - "pray salaah (sallu)", he said 'Aqemus salaah' 'establish the prayer'. Establishing the prayer means to perform prayer with punctuality and on prescribed time. Once the time of Salaah becomes due then everything can be delayed but the Salaat. Therefore, Allah says: **“Hafizu ala-as-salawaat”** meaning: **“Guard your prayer strictly.”** Not Performing prayers on time is similar to rejection: **“So, woe unto those performers of Salaah, those who delay their Salaah.”** [Soorah (107): 4-5] **“Then, there has succeeded them a posterity who have given up Salaah and have followed lusts. So they will be thrown in Hell.”** [Soorah (19): 59]

Salaah will be the last pillar of Islam which will be given up: **“The pillars of Islam will be given up on after the another and every time a pillar is given, people will**

adhere to the next one; the first being government and the last being the prayer.”
[Authenticated by Sheikh al-Albanee, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Hibban and al-Haakim]

The hearts of the Muslims are attached to the mosques, and thus the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“Allah will give shade to seven, on the Day when there will be not shade but His... (amongst them)... a man whose heart is attached to the mosque (to pray the compulsory prayers in the mosque in congregation). From the time he departs from it until he comes back.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee and Saheeh Muslim]

And he (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) once asked his companions: **“Should I direct you to (righteous) acts because of which Allah erases sins and elevates grades?”** They said: ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam)!’ He said: **“Performing perfect ablution in unfavorable conditions (such as extreme cold), the many steps one often takes to the mosque and awaiting the prayer after the prayer (in the mosque); verily, this is ar-Ribat (Muslim outposts to protect Muslim lands from enemy lands).”**

Thus: **“Successful indeed are the believers who offer their Salaah with all solemnly and full submissiveness... These are indeed the inheritors, who shall inherit the Firdaus (Paradise). They shall dwell therein forever.”** [Soorah al-Muminoon (23): 1-11]

The disbeliever’s jeer at the Muslims

The Night Journey raised a good deal of stir among the people and the disbelievers harassed the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) with all sorts of questions. They found it a suitable opportunity to jeer at the Muslims and their creed. They asked the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) with questions about the description of the Mosque in Jerusalem, where he had never gone before and the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) rightfully responded to their queries. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: **“When the Quraysh disbelieved in me (concerning my journey), I stood up in Al-Hijr (the unfooted portion of the Ka’ba) and Allah displayed Bait al-Maqdis before me, and I started to inform them (Quraysh) about its signs while looking at it.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 6, no: 233]

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (radiyallahu anhu): **“The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said: “I found myself in Hijr and the Quraysh were asking me about my night journey. I was asked about things pertaining to Bayt al-Maqdis, which I could not preserve (in my mind). I was very much vexed, so vexed as I had never been before. Then Allah raised it (Bayt al-Maqdis) before my eyes. I looked towards it, and I gave them the information about whatever they questioned me. I also saw myself among the group of apostles. I saw Moses saying a prayer and found him to be a well-built man as if he were a man of the tribe of Shanu'ah. I saw Jesus, son of Mary, (peace be upon him) offering prayer; of all men he had the closest resemblance to Urwah ibn Mas'ud ath-Thaqafi. I saw Ibrahim offering prayer; he had the closest resemblance to your companion (the Prophet himself) amongst people. When the time of prayer came I led them. When I completed the prayer, someone said: Here is Malik, the**

keeper of the Hell; give him salutation. I turned to him, but he preceded me in salutation.” [Saheeh Muslim no: 328]

The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) gave the various proofs of his journey, which they too verified. He (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) told them that he saw the camels of Makkan merchants to and fro. He also guided them to some of their animals that went astray. He informed them that he had drank some of their water while they were fast asleep and left the container covered. He supplied them with all the news about the caravans and the routes of their camels. However, all this only increased their arrogance, and they accepted nothing but disbelief.

Israa wal-Mirraaj – A test of Eemaan

“And We made not the vision which we showed you (O Muhammad (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) but a trial for mankind...” [Soorah al-Isra (17): 60]

Eemaan is belief and action. People differ in the ranks on the extent of their belief in Allah and actions in accordance to the teachings of Islaam. Allah described the believers saying: **“who believe in the revelation sent to you, and sent before your time, and (in their hearts) have assurance for the Hereafter. They are on (true guidance), from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 4-5]

Isra wal-Mirraaj was a test of Eemaan for the Companions of Allah’s Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam). Allah, the All-Mighty Who is Powerful enough to create the Heavens and the Earth by an act of His Will, is surely Powerful to take His Messenger beyond the Heavens and show him His signs. How could they not believe when they knew for certain that the informer is either Allah, the Exalted: **“And whose word can be truer than Allah”** [Soorah an-Nisa (4): 122] or His Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam): **“Nor does he speak from his desire, it is only a revelation sent down to him.”** [Soorah (53): 3-4]

The disbelievers on their part went towards Abu Bakr (radiyallahu anhu) with an attempt to weaken his faith. But this great companion of Allah’s Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) readily agreed saying: “Yes, I do verify it.” It was on this occasion that he earned the title of As-Siddeq (the verifier of truth), because he immediately and unconditionally believed in what the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) said about his journey. He was the man who believed in the Messenger (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam), when he said that Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) comes to me from above the seven Heavens several times a day. If Allah can send Jibreel (alaihis-salaam) several times a day, then why cannot Allah take His Messenger for a journey through the Heavens?

Isra wal-Mirraaj was a physical Journey

Isra wal-Mirraaj was a physical journey by body and soul and not a spiritual vision or a dream. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was carried in his body to the farthest mosque in Jerusalem and eventually to the Seven Heavens and to his Lord. He eye-witnessed everything which he saw, as Allah made it clear in the Qur’aan: **“And We made not the vision which we showed you (O Muhammad (sallallahu**

alaihe wa-sallam) as an actual eye-witness and not as a dream on the night of Isra) but a trial for mankind...” [Soorah al-Isra (17): 60]

Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhu) said regarding this verse: “The signs, which the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) was shown on the Night Journey when he was taken to Bait al-Maqdis were actual sights (not dreams)...” [Saheeh al-Bukharee v: 5, no: 228]

Imaam Ibn Hajr writes in his commentary of Saheeh al-Bukharee (1/460) that no one should dispute the fact that al-Isra took place while the Prophet was awake. This is what the Qur’aan clearly said about it, and also because the people of Quraysh disbelieved in it.”

Had Isra wal-Miraaj been only a dream, the Quraysh would not have found it necessary to reject it, for people can dream anything. However, since the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) claimed to have physically visited Jerusalem in a single night, (which in those days generally took almost three months of traveling) they denied and refused to believe his visit to Jerusalem, let alone the issue of visiting the Heavens and meeting with Allah. Even some who claimed to be Muslims rejected this great physical miracle of Isra and Miraaj.

Also, Imaam an-Nawawi (rahimahullah) writes in his commentary of Saheeh Muslim (2/209) that: “The truth cherished by the majority of people in general, and the Salaf (pious predecessors) in particular, the scholars of Fiqh, and scholars of Hadeeth is that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) went in the journey of Isra physically i.e. with his body.”

Is the Night of Isra wal-Miraaj a night of Worship?

The incident of Isra wal-Miraaj represents a great event in the history of Islam. However, it is not an occasion of worship. Firstly, by the wisdom of Allah, the date of Isra wal-Miraaj is unknown to us because the night of Isra wal-Miraaj does not carry any significance and is not worth remembering. The Sahabah (radhi allahu anhum) did not find it least important to preserve its date, month or year. In fact, the lofty and exalted gift of Miraaj occupies the maximum importance, which is also the second pillar of Islam. Salaah implied great importance to the Sahabah (radhi allahu anhum) therefore we find every detail of the Salaah utterly recorded in the books of Ahaadeeth and in the form Aathar (sayings) of the Sahabah.

Thus, if this event is unidentified and Islam confers no guidelines for its observance, then it is unreasonable to commemorate it as an occasion of worship, especially when worship is the combination of Ikhlas and submission to the Commands of Allah.

Those who favor the celebration of Isra wal-Miraaj usually compare it to the Night of al-Qadr. They explain the Night of Miraaj as better and more virtuous than the Night of al-Qadr, and eventually deduce the meaning that people should perform more Salaah and Supplication as compared to the worship performed in the Night of al-Qadr.

Some favor the celebration of Miraaj because the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihe wa-sallam) encountered events on this night which he never experienced before. Honoring the event of Miraaj is correct but acts of worship are defined by the Sunnah and not by emotions. Such methods of understanding Islaam are baseless; no Salaf ever proposed such an approach. Specifying particular events for worship need strong proofs from the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

Thus, the event of Isra wal-Miraaj is not associated with any form of worship. But indeed, it carries a number of lessons, which the Muslim Ummah should understand, contemplate and benefit from.

Lastly, we ask Allah to make this article beneficial to the readers and serve as a guide
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Reference Books:

1. Tafseer Ibn Katheer | 2. Saheeh al-Bukharee | 3. Saheeh Muslim | 4. Sunan Abu Dawood | 5. Raheeq al-Makhtoom | 6. Lectures on Meraaj by Allama Ehsaan Ilaahi Zaheer