ASCENSION (MIRAJ)

QUR’AN

*SuraIsra/1:*

**

All-Glorified is He Who took His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque the environs of which We have blessed, so that We might show him some of Our signs (of the truths concerning Our Divinity and Lordship). Surely He is the One Who hears and sees. (1)

*SuraNecm/1-18:*

**1**. By the star when it goes down, **2**. Your Companion (the Messenger) has neither gone astray, nor adopted a wrong way (in belief and action).**3**. He does not speak on his own, out of his own desire;**4**. That (which he conveys to you) is but a Revelation that is revealed to him. **5**. One of forceful might (Gabriel) has taught it; **6**. One firm, with the ability to penetrate and perfect in spirit, rose with all his splendor **7**. When he was in the highest part of the horizon. **8**. Then, he drew near and came close, **9**. So he was (so near that there was left only the distance between) the strings of two bows (put adjacent to each other), or even nearer (than that). **10**. And He revealed to His servant what He revealed **11**. The heart did not contradict what he saw (with his eyes). **12**. Will you then dispute with him concerning what he saw? **13**. Assuredly, he saw him during a second descent, **14**. By the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary; **15**. Near it is the Garden of Refuge and Dwelling. **16**. Meanwhile, that was covering the Lote-tree which was covering it. **17**. The sight (of the Messenger) did not swerve (so that he looked elsewhere and saw something different), nor did it go wrong (so that he might have seen an illusion). **18**. Indeed, he saw one among the greatest signs of His Lord. (2)

(1) 17:1/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal

(2) 53:1-18/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal

HADITH

Narrated Malik bin Sasaa: The Prophet said, "While I was at the House in a state midway between sleep and wakefulness, (an angel recognized me) as the man lying between two men. A golden tray full of wisdom and belief was brought to me and my body was cut open from the throat to the lower part of the abdomen and then my abdomen was washed with Zam-zam water and (my heart was) filled with wisdom and belief. Al-Buraq, a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me and I set out with Gabriel. When I reached the nearest heaven. Gabriel said to the heaven gate-keeper, 'Open the gate.' The gatekeeper asked, 'Who is it?' He said, 'Gabriel.' The gate-keeper asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel said, 'Muhammad.' The gate-keeper said, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel said, 'Yes.' Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!' Then I met Adam and greeted him and he said, 'You are welcomed O son and a Prophet.' Then we ascended to the second heaven. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel said, 'Gabriel.' It was said, 'Who is with you?' He said, 'Muhammad' It was asked, 'Has he been sent for?' He said, 'Yes.' It was said, 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!" Then I met Jesus and Yahya (John) who said, 'You are welcomed, O brother and a Prophet.' Then we ascended to the third heaven. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel said, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is with you? Gabriel said, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been sent for?' 'Yes,' said Gabriel. 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!' - (The Prophet added:). -There I met Joseph and greeted him, and he replied, 'You are welcomed, O brother and a Prophet!' Then we ascended to the 4th heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met Idris and greeted him. He said, 'You are welcomed O brother and Prophet.' Then we ascended to the 5th heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in previous heavens. There I met and greeted Aaron who said, 'You are welcomed O brother and a Prophet". Then we ascended to the 6th heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met and greeted Moses who said, 'You are welcomed O brother and a Prophet.' When I proceeded on, he started weeping and on being asked why he was weeping, he said, 'O Lord! Followers of this youth who was sent after me will enter Paradise in greater number than my followers.' Then we ascended to the seventh heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met and greeted Abraham who said, 'You are welcomed O son and a Prophet.' Then I was shown Al-Bait-al-Ma'mur (i.e. Allah's House). I asked Gabriel about it and he said, This is Al Bait-ul-Ma'mur where 70,000 angels perform prayers daily and when they leave they never return to it (but always a fresh batch comes into it daily).' Then I was shown Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (i.e. a tree in the seventh heaven) and I saw its Nabk fruits which resembled the clay jugs of Hajr (i.e. a town in Arabia), and its leaves were like the ears of elephants, and four rivers originated at its root, two of them were apparent and two were hidden. I asked Gabriel about those rivers and he said, 'The two hidden rivers are in Paradise, and the apparent ones are the Nile and the Euphrates.' Then fifty prayers were enjoined on me. I descended till I met Moses who asked me, 'What have you done?' I said, 'Fifty prayers have been enjoined on me.' He said, 'I know the people better than you, because I had the hardest experience to bring Bani Israel to obedience. Your followers cannot put up with such obligation. So, return to your Lord and request Him (to reduce the number of prayers.' I returned and requested Allah (for reduction) and He made it forty. I returned and (met Moses) and had a similar discussion, and then returned again to Allah for reduction and He made it thirty, then twenty, then ten, and then I came to Moses who repeated the same advice. Ultimately Allah reduced it to five. When I came to Moses again, he said, 'What have you done?' I said, 'Allah has made it five only.' He repeated the same advice but I said that I surrendered (to Allah's Final Order)' " Allah's Apostle was addressed by Allah, "I have decreed My obligation and have reduced the burden on My slaves, and I shall reward a single good deed as if it were ten good deeds." - Sahih Al-Bukhari 4:429 (3)

(3) Sahih Al-Bukhari 4:429

**The reason for the Ascension’s necessity? (4)**

It is said, for example, that Almighty God is closer to him than his jugular vein.3 He is closer to everything than anything else. He is free of and beyond corporeality and space. However, all the saints are able to converse with Him in their hearts, so why was the Saint, Muhammad (PBUH), successful in holding an inward conversation with God that any saint may do in his heart, only after and as a result of a long journey like the Ascension?

The Answer: We shall make this profound mystery easier to understand by means of two comparisons. Consider these two comparisons from the Twelfth Word, which are about the mystery of the Qur’an’s miraculousness and the mystery of the Ascension.

First Comparison:

A king has two sorts of interviewing, conversation, and discussion at his disposal, and two modes of address and favour. The first is to converse with a common subject about a particular matter and special need by means of a private telephone. The second, under the title of august sovereignty, in the name of supreme kingship, with the dignity of universal rule, and with the aim of publishing and promulgating his commands, is to converse and speak through an envoy connected to those matters or by means of a high official related to those commands. It is also to speak through an illustrious edict that proclaims his majesty.

Thus, And God’s is the highest similitude,4 like this comparison, the Creator of the universe, the Lord of all things with their apparent and inner faces, the Sovereign of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, has two modes of conversing, speaking, and favouring. The first is particular and private, the other universal and general. The Ascension, therefore, was a manifestation of the sainthood of Muhammad (PBUH) in the form of a universality and exaltedness superior to all other sainthood. It was being honoured by God Almighty’s conversation and address through His Name of Sustainer of All the Universe and title of Creator of All Beings.

**What was the reality of the Ascension? (5)**

The Answer:

It consisted of the journeying of the person of Muhammad (PBUH) through the degrees of perfection. That is, through the various Names and titles He makes manifest in the disposition of creatures, and by showing that special servant of His all the works of His dominicality which He displays in the spheres, creation, and regulation within the sovereignty of His dominicality, and in the levels of the heavens within those spheres -each of which is the means to a seat of dominicality and centre for the disposal of power- God Almighty made that servant both embrace all human perfections, and display all the Divine manifestations, and view all the levels of the universe, and the herald of the sovereignty of dominicality and the proclaimer of those things pleasing to God, and the solver of the talisman of the universe. And so that he could do this, He mounted him on Buraq, caused him to flash through the heavens like lightning traversing all its levels, observe Divine dominicality from mansion to mansion like the moon, and from sphere to sphere, and showing him each of the prophets, his brothers, whose abodes are in the heavens of those spheres, He raised him to the station of a distance of two bow-lengthsand displayed to him His oneness and His Word and the vision of Himself.

This exalted truth may be examined through the telescope of two comparisons.

First Comparison:

As is explained in the Twenty-Fourth Word, a king has different titles in the different spheres and offices of his government, different qualities and attributes in the classes of his subjects, and different names and marks in the degrees of his sovereignty. For example, he is Wise Judge in the judiciary, Sovereign in the civil service, Commander-in-Chief in the army, Caliph in the learned establishment, and so on; it is the same with the rest of his names and titles. In each sphere he has a seat or chair which has the meaning of a throne. The single king may be able to have a thousand names and titles in those spheres of sovereignty and levels of government; he may have a thousand thrones of sovereignty one within the other. It is as if the ruler is present and knowing in every sphere through his corporate personality and through his telephone; and sees and is seen in every class through his law, regulation, and representatives; and administers and observes from behind the veil in every level through his command, knowledge, and power; and has a different centre and headquarters in every sphere. His decrees are all different from one another, and his levels are all different from one another.

Thus, a king such as this may allow a person of his choosing to visit all his different spheres and offices and may show him the imperial dominion and sovereign commands special to each. He may cause him to travel from sphere to sphere and from level to level until he brings him to his presence. There he will entrust him with certain universal and general commands concerning all those spheres and will send him back.

Similarly to this comparison, the Sustainer of All the Worlds, Who is the Sovereign of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, has functions and attributes in the levels of His dominicality which are all different but that look to one another; and Names and signatures in the spheres of His Divinity which are all different but which appear one within the other; and manifestations and revelations in the performance of His splendid deeds which are all different but which resemble each other; and titles in the disposal of His power which are all different, but which hint of one another; and sacred appearances in the manifestation of His attributes which are all different but which all point to each other; and acts of disposal in the manifestation of His actions which are all different but complete one another; and He has a majestic dominicality in His multicoloured art and creatures whose aspects are all different but which gaze on one another.

As a consequence of this vast mystery, He ordered the universe and arranged it in an amazing and wonderful fashion with different formations one over the other from particles, which are the tiniest level of creatures, to the heavens, and from the first level of the heavens to the Sublime Throne. Each heaven is like the roof of a different world, a throne for dominicality, acentre for Divine disposal.

For sure, with regard to Divine oneness, all the Divine Names may be found in those spheres and levels; they are manifested together with the titles. But just as in the Ministry of Justice the title of Wise Judge was fundamental and dominant and there the rest of the king’s titles looked to its command and were dependent on it, so in each level of creatures, in each heaven, one Name, one Divine title, is dominant, and the other titles look to it.

For example, in whichever sphere of the heavens the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) met with Jesus (Peace be upon him), who manifested the Name of All-Powerful, in that sphere God Almighty Himself was manifested with title of All-Powerful. And, for example, the most predominant in the sphere of the heavens which is Moses’ (Peace be upon him) seat is the title of Speaker, which he manifested. And so on.

Thus, since the person of Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) manifested the Greatest Name, and all the Divine Names, and since his prophethood was universal, he was surely connected with all the spheres of dominicality. And to meet with the prophets whose seats are in those spheres and to pass through all those levels, surely necessitates the fact of the Ascension.

(4) The Risale-iNur collection, The Words, The Thirty First Word

(5)The Risale-iNur collection, The Words, The Thirty First Word

Indeed, he saw (one or some among) the supreme signs of His Lord. (An-Najm 53:18) (6)

This verse is in the sūrah that describes our master Prophet Muhammad’s Ascension, and it relates to the Ascension. In addition to its particular relation to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, it contains many other truths.

It is a favor and result of the Prophet’s Ascension that he saw the signs and proofs of God’s existence and Unity and of all other truths of faith in the universe and in humanity and observed and perceived them in his heart and spirit. Since that most illustrious person had a universal vision and observation, he saw and observed those signs and proofs, which the verse under discussion calls the “supreme signs.” He saw or observed Divine manifestations explicitly without any veils. Other people cannot say any-thing in opposition to the sayings and description of one who had such uni-versal vision and observation. Even the vision and observation of those who observe the heavens from the earth and those of the people who cannot detect even what is before them will be utterly different.

The verse has a structure which can give rise to two meanings. The preposition “min” may either be used in the meaning of “from among,” or it functions as an explanatory word. In the first case the meaning is, “Indeed, he saw (one or some among) the supreme signs of His Lord.” In the second case, the meaning is, “Indeed, he saw the supreme signs of His Lord.” No mat-ter which meaning is preferable, the truth in either case is that during his Ascension or travel through and beyond time and place, that matchless person with a universal vision and hearing saw such supreme signs, proofs, and miracles of God Almighty’s Lordship and such marvels of creation that it is not possible to express or describe the Divine manifestations he saw in the realms through which he traveled. Only he saw, heard, and felt the mysteries and lights in the horizons that he traveled, and it is not possible for anyone else to be able to achieve such a universal vision and observation. For one who is not as great as that person, namely Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, cannot see or observe the “supreme signs,” for this observation is exclusive to his matchless rank.

What is meant by the “supreme sign” is not the Divine Being, the Unique and Eternally Besought One. Therefore our Prophet did not see the Divine Himself, but he saw His supreme signs—the most comprehensive and universal signs and proofs of His existence and Unity and other truths of faith. He observed the whole creation in its physical and metaphysical dimensions and its dimension of time and place. Even though it is abso-lutely impossible to comprehend the Divine Being, as it is stated in, “The eyes cannot comprehend and perceive Him” (Al-An‘ām 6:103), in one respect it is possible to “see” God with the eye of the heart or have vision of God. However, what our Prophet saw or observed during his Ascension was not Him but His supreme or the greatest or most comprehensive signs.

The vision and observation of God’s Messenger can also be viewed as his reading of his own truth as if a book or observation of the roots, trunk, branches, blossoms, leaves, and fruit of his universally developed nature. For his nature or truth is the ink in which the book of the universe has been written, and his Light is the seed of creation. This miraculous travel continued as far as the point beyond time and space where he heard the sounds given by the Pen of Destiny, passing through the shadow of the Divine Supreme Throne. At its final point the blessed traveler, upon him be peace and blessings, was crowned with God’s eternal good pleasure with and approval of him.

*O God! Show us the truth as being true and enable us to follow it; and show us falsehood as being false and enable us to refrain from it.*

*(6) by FethullahGülenTuesday, 05 February 2013 06:44*