**Isra and Miraj**



17.1. 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)



17.60. And (recall) when We said to you (by way of a warning) that your Lord encompasses all humankind (with His Knowledge and Power). We did not make the vision that We showed you (during the Ascension) but as a trial for humankind to mend their ways, and (in the same way, We mentioned) in the Qur'ān the Accursed Tree (the tree in Hell absolutely outside the sphere of God's Mercy). And We warn them, exhorting them to be fearful and amend, but it increases them only in great insolence and rebellion.(2)



53.18. Indeed, he saw one among the greatest signs of His Lord.(3)

**HADITH**

The whole incident of *Isra* is mentioned in great detail in the following *hadith* narrated by [Malik ibn Sa'sa'a](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Malik_ibn_Sa%27sa%27a&action=edit&redlink=1):

**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*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buraq), a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me and I set out with [*Jibreel*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jibreel). When I reached the nearest heaven. Jibreel said to the heaven gatekeeper, 'Open the gate.' The gatekeeper asked, 'Who is it?' He said, 'Jibreel.' The gatekeeper asked,' Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel said, 'Muhammad.' The gatekeeper said, 'Has he been called?' Jibreel said, 'Yes.' Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!' Then I met [*Adam*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam) and greeted him and he said, 'You are welcomed O son and Prophet.'

Then we ascended to the second heaven. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Jibreel said, 'Jibreel.' 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 [*Isa*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_in_Islam) (Jesus) and [*Yahya*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahya) (John the Baptist) who said, 'You are welcomed, O brother and a Prophet.'

Then we ascended to the third heaven. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Jibreel said, 'Jibreel.' It was asked, 'Who is with you? Jibreel said, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been sent for?' 'Yes,' said Jibreel. 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!' (The Prophet added:). There I met [*Joseph*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_%28son_of_Jacob%29) 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*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idris_%28prophet%29) 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*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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 [*Ibrahim*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim) 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 Jibreel 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 al-Muntaha*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidrat_al-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 Jibreel 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 servants, and I shall reward a single good deed as if it were ten good deeds. (4)

**Isra and Miraj**

10 years had passed since the meeting in Hira. The calendars were showing the 24th day in the month of Rajab. There had been many efforts during this time, but Mecca had resisted in unimaginable ways. There had only been a handful of people who accepted the call to faith. However, when one considered the amount of energy put into this cause, one would have expected them to come running, which had not been the case. **The Messenger of Allah** was not living for his own sake. He was doing all that was in his power so that even his greatest enemies may have the chance to taste the beauty of submission to faith, knocking on their doors every day, just in case they change their minds.

However these efforts that needed to be applauded were being met by incredible hostility—the attitude of the Meccans after the deaths of Abu Talib and Khadija, what he lived through in Taif and the way people received him on his return with a sour face—all these had troubled the Messenger of Allah deeply and he found consolation only by seeking refuge in Divine grace. Had these breezes of mercy not existed, the suffocation in Mecca would have been unbearable. Then one evening, when the Messenger of Allah was at the house of his cousin Umm Hani, it was as if the roof of the house had opened and the Truthful Gabriel had descended upon them. It was clear that this coming was very different from previous ones. With him he had a mount named Buraq, a mount a little bigger than a donkey but a little smaller than a mule, one that previous Prophets had also used. It seemed there was a Divine invitation and Gabriel had come to escort this most auspicious of guests, the Sultan of Messengers, Glorified Leader, comforter of the afflicted, the commander in the Divine Assembly, **Muhammad**, peace and blessings be upon him, for he was the special invitee of the Truth and he was being called to the heavens to meet his Lord. This was to be a gift from Allah to comfort the sadness that the Messenger had been through. In order that he may observe with his eyes and ears the truths that he felt in his conscience, Allah the Almighty was going to take His servant, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, from Mecca up to His presence.

And who knew what kind of a mysterious journey He would put him on. But before he could set on this journey, there needed to be an operation, similar to the one he had experienced when he was still with his nursing mother Halima as-Sadia. The Truthful Gabriel cleaved his chest and washed its inside with the water of Zamzam; then he filled it with faith and wisdom that he had in a golden bowl and then closed it. Then Gabriel, the truthful guardian of the skies, took the hand of the truthful guardian of the earth, Muhammad Mustafa, peace and blessings be upon him, and they set off together on an indescribable journey beyond.

The Buraq that he was riding was moving very fast, every step he took was at a further point in the horizon and he was moving at the speed of lightening. The minute he mounted the Buraq, space had changed and they had found themselves in the Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. The Messenger of Allah tied the Buraq where previous Prophets had tied it. Then he turned towards the mosque to pray. The chosen servants of Allah who had performed the duty of Messengership till that day had gathered together there as well and were waiting for the Personage who was the seal of this chain to arrive. He was greeted and embraced with greetings and salutations. Then they lined up into a row to fulfill the most important business—to perform two cycles of Prayer. They were waiting for the imam, the leader of the realm of Prophets. So the Abrahamic line would be sealed with Muhammad and he would take on the mission for the rest of time. This was the reason why this place had been chosen rather than another. The issue of representing Truth was now to be taken from this place that had been the home of many Messengers and now faces were going to be turned towards Mecca. The step by step process during the Miraj and the Prophets encountered one by one along the way can also be seen as foreshadowing the union of the Ummah and the positive hopes for the future.

The Sultan of the Prophets walked towards the gathering and took his place at the front of the row. This sequence and order symbolized the fact that when the time came, humanity would go back to the first pure line that Allah had created them in. It was the picture that illustrated that the children of Adam would be united as one again on Adam’s earth, and the consolidation of the leadership of the Personage whose intercession everyone called upon when seeking forgiveness. Since all the other Prophets were praying behind him, it meant that the Ummahs of those Prophets would one day pray behind him as well!

Surprises did not end with what had happened in the Masjid al-Aqsa. Gabriel then invited the beloved of **Allah**, peace and blessings be upon him, to a journey that would take him beyond the skies. All of a sudden space transformed and a journey full of mysteries started. He was rising up above the skies level by level and at each level there was another ritual to be observed. Then, the Beloved of Allah came face to face with the Sidratu’l-Muntaha (Lote-tree of the Uttermost End), a beauty that was impossible to put into words. It was like a parade ground for colors of all hues. This was a sacred place, somewhere between possibility and necessity and now the Truthful Gabriel was no longer by the Messenger of Allah, for the world of possibility had now been left behind. This was the privy chamber, the harem, and there had been no spiritual presence since the creation of mankind that had been blessed by an entry into this chamber. That is to say, the Pride of Humankind and the Pearl of Creation, our noble Prophet, was the one and only, the first and the last guest of this chamber. Just as there had been no one here before him, there would be none after him, for he was the Seal of the Assembly of Prophethood.

The Messenger of Allah was now witnessing the ink of the pen of fate, he could hear the sounds the pen made when writing the taqdir, that which had been ordained to happen. Here was also the manifestation of the mystery of “Qaba kawsayni aw adna.” He had come closer and closer and when he had gone far enough that there was no more space to be covered, he had reached la makan, non-space.

Despite all these, the Messenger of Allah was not diverted from his purpose; there was no change with him. All had become light all of a sudden and he had seen that the Sidra was encompassed with a beauty that could not be perceived with limited sight and put into mere words.

Everything that was mortal had been enveloped in light; the Messenger of Allah who had become a statue of light himself and was watching the Light of Grace. The Beauty of Allah that is promised to the believers in Paradise was observed here and in this horizon where space became non-space, the Messenger of Allah would meet the Gracious Lord without any mediation. The Great Lord who had exalted Abraham with special intimacy and Moses with His word would throne his Beloved, the last golden chain of the constellation of Prophethood with seeing Him; thus showing time and space how **the Messenger of Allah** stood with the Lord.

Leaving all this beauty and splendor behind and going back to the land of difficulty and strife was something that only a merciful Messenger like him could do, for he had seen, and he was coming back to show his Ummah what he had seen; he had heard and he was returning to us to let our souls hear what he had heard and experienced. He had seen the beyond including the horizon of Sight. He was now returning to share with those who followed him, the harmonious beauty he had seen, in order that he may open the doors of such sight to ready and capable souls. He had gone as himself, had seen and heard as himself and he was returning as himself.

Just as his departure had been a clear lesson for all, his return also contained meaningful messages. Furthermore, **the Messenger of Allah** had completed this long journey that he had set on in the middle of the night and had returned having crammed all these events he had experienced in a very short period of time. The first people whom he told of his journey were naturally those closest to him. As soon as he performed his Morning Prayer, he turned to his household and started to recount all the events that had happened to him in one moment of the night.

He told people what he has experienced, however they did not believe him. They asked Abu Bakr what his opinion was. He said: “If he is saying all that, it must be true.” After that day, he had been called Siddiq, the loyal and faithful one.

**The Night Journey** (*Isra*) and Miraj had made the distinction between faith and denial even clearer. While the deniers turned towards their dark worlds and followed their own traps, those who believed renewed their determination to speak the truth to the most stubborn of people, and wanted more than ever to be foot soldiers of the cause to find new faces who might embrace the faith.(5)

**References**

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

**(2) 17:60/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3) 53:18/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(4)** [**Sahih al-Bukhari**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahih_al-Bukhari)**, volume 4, Book 54, Hadith number 429**

**(5) Kesmez, Umit. “The Luminous Life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)” Tughra Books Press. December 2014.**