

Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj: Everlasting Lessons

Al-Israa' was a land-to-land journey that Allah Almighty caused His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to make from Makkah to Jerusalem, that is, from Almighty Allah's Sacred House to [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#).

Al-Mi`raj was a land-to-heaven journey from Jerusalem to the heavens. It was a journey to a place that no human being other than the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) had ever reached [or has reached since]. It was a journey to the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary, whose place only Almighty Allah knows.

Such two journeys were a turning point in the Prophet's life and in the course of his call in Makkah, especially after all the suffering he (peace and blessings be upon him) had faced at the hands of the Quraysh.

Allah Almighty wanted [Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj](#) be an alleviation and relief to His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). He Almighty wanted to tell His Prophet that if the people of the earth had let him down, the people of heaven were there to support him; if the people of the earth had rejected his call, Allah Almighty would receive him and His Prophets (peace and blessings be upon them) would follow him and he would be their imam.

That journey was an honor and compensation to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) from Almighty Allah. It was also a preparation for him to the following stage of his call. A few years later, he (peace and blessings be upon him) would migrate to Madinah, where he (peace and blessings be upon him) would lead a life of strife and jihad and confront the Arab tribes and other parties that would stand as one man against his international call.

In fact, it is not known exactly when the Night Journey and Ascension took place, but it was certainly before the [Hijrah](#) (emigration from Makkah) to Madinah. It was said to have happened either three years or 18 months before the Hijrah.

Anyway, there are two important points that we are to concentrate on in discussing Al-Israa' and Al-Mi'raj. The first thing is to contemplate how Allah Almighty linked His Sacred House and Al-Aqsa Mosque, and why He Almighty wanted to inform us that Al-Aqsa Mosque was a main destination of the Night Journey.

We should meditate why the Night Journey was from Allah's Sacred House to Al-Aqsa Mosque, from which the Ascension to heaven was made, why Ascension did not take place from Allah's Mosque to heaven directly.

This indicates that Al-Aqsa Mosque, that sacred place which Allah Almighty has blessed, was a main destination of the Night Journey.

Prophet Muhammad's being received by other Prophets of Allah Almighty in Al-Aqsa Mosque and his leading them in Salah (ritual Prayer) there is also significant. It indicates that leadership was moved to a new nation and to a new Prophethood.

It is significant that Prophet Muhammad's mission was not like the missions of the previous prophets. Each of all the other prophets (peace and blessings be upon them all) was sent to his own people, while Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was sent to all mankind [and jinn]. He (peace and blessings be upon him) was sent as a mercy to the worlds at all times. This was a sign of the eternity and internationality of His message (peace and blessings be upon him).

Thus, his going to Al-Aqsa Mosque, the land of Prophets, from which came Prophets Abraham, Isaac, Moses, and Jesus, was an indication that leadership of the world had moved to the new international message, Islam. Allah Almighty wanted Muslims to realize and deeply appreciate the relation between His Sacred House and Al-Aqsa Mosque. It was from His Sacred House that the Night Journey began and to Al-Aqsa Mosque that it reached.

Allah Almighty has blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and its neighborhood. He Almighty says in that regard: [Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship the neighborhood whereof We have blessed...] (Al-‘Israa’ 17:1) [The Inviolable Place of Worship mentioned in this verse refers to Allah’s Sacred House and the Far Distant Place of Worship refers to Al-Aqsa Mosque.]

Mind that Allah Almighty had blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and its neighborhood and referred to it even before even the Prophet’s Mosque was built, as the Prophet’s Mosque was established after his immigration to Madinah.

Mind also that when Prayer was ordained on the Muslims, Al-Aqsa Mosque was the qiblah to which they were to turn during Prayer. They would turn their faces in Prayer towards it for three years in Makkah, and for 16 months in Madinah before the qiblah was changed to Allah’s Sacred House.

Besides, Al-Aqsa Mosque is one of the three mosques to which Muslims are required to dedicate time for visiting; the other two mosques are the Sacred Mosque and the Prophet’s Mosque. This shows that Jerusalem is the third sacred place after Makkah and Madinah in Islam.

Allah Almighty wanted to establish and emphasize the significance and sacredness of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Muslims’ hearts so that they do not cede it for anything. They are to hold it as sacred as both Allah’s Sacred House and His Prophet’s Mosque.

That was why the Muslims [when they were strong] were zealous to keep Al-Aqsa Mosque under their rule and protection.

Hence, Muslims must realize the importance of Jerusalem in their history and the significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque in their religion and life.

Allah Almighty wills that we remember the importance of Al-Aqsa Mosque when we celebrate the anniversary of Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj.

This is to remind us of the gravity of the circumstances in which Al-Aqsa Mosque is in this age. We must not give up our responsibility in defending Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem. This is a sacred issue to fight for. We should not, under any circumstances, give up our role in that regard.

The Jews dreamed of establishing a state (in the land of Palestine) and managed to achieve that dream. That being so, we at least must not give up hope that one day we will again have Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem under our control. We should not lose hope of that at all, even if we see surrender embodied everywhere in our status quo.

We must believe that Allah Almighty is with us and that He Almighty will grant us victory and make Islam prevail, as He, Most High, always supports the true believers.

Imams Ahmad and At-Tabarani reported on the authority of Abu Imama Al-Bahilai (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said, "A group of my nation will keep being in the side of right and victorious over its enemy; no party of their enemy can cause them harm; the only harm that may afflict them is (physical) exhaustion. They would be like so until the Day of Judgment." The Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) asked, "Where would they be, Allah's Messenger?" He (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "In Jerusalem and its surrounding vicinity."

The second most important lesson that we are to learn from Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj is concerning Prayer. It is known that Prayer was ordained on that great night.

It is because of the great importance of Prayer that Allah Almighty ordained it in heaven. He Almighty sent for His Messenger to mankind (peace and blessings be upon him) and caused him to go on a night journey and ascend to heaven and the Lote Tree to inform him (peace and blessings be upon him) of the ordinance of Prayer.

Mind that all other ordinances were decreed on the earth. This indicates how important Prayer is in Islam. It symbolizes ascension to heaven; it is the Muslim's spiritual ascension to heaven.

Thus, Prayer is the gift that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) brought with him from that journey to all Muslims so that they can worship Allah Almighty through it.

Prayer had to do with Al-Aqsa Mosque. Al-Aqsa Mosque was the first qiblah in Islam. If it is true that Al-Israa' and Al-Mi`raj took place in the tenth year of the Prophet's mission, this would mean that the Muslims' qiblah in Prayer was towards Al-Aqsa Mosque for three years before the Hijrah to Madinah and 16 months after it.

Then Almighty Allah decreed that the qiblah be changed towards the Sacred Mosque. Allah Almighty says: [So turn thy face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship, and ye (O Muslims), wheresoever ye may be, turn your faces when ye pray) toward it.] ([Al-Baqarah 2:143](#))

When the qiblah was changed, the Jews raised doubts about that. Allah Almighty says, [The foolish of the people will say: What hath turned them from the qiblah which they formerly observed?] ([Al-Baqarah 2:142](#))

The Jews spread rumors that the Muslims' Prayer [to the first qiblah] was invalid and so would not be rewarded. Allah Almighty refuted their claims as He, most High, says:[And We appointed the qiblah which ye formerly observed only that We might know him who followeth the Messenger from him who turneth on his heels. In truth it was a hard (test) save for those whom Allah guided. But it was not Allah's purpose that your faith should be in vain, for Allah is full of pity, Merciful toward mankind.] (Al-Baqarah: 143) According to this verse, "your faith" refers to Prayer, as Prayer is a symbol of one's faith.

To sum up, Prayer is the spiritual means through which Muslims can ascend to their Lord. If the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) ascended to heaven (once), we, brothers and sisters, could spiritually ascend to there as much as we can through Prayer. Allah Almighty says in a the qudsi hadith: "I have divided the Prayer into two halves between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks. When the servant says, 'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the universe,' Allah the Most High says, 'My servant has praised Me.' And when he (the servant) says, 'The Most Compassionate, the Merciful,' Allah the Most High says, 'My servant has lauded Me.' And when he (the servant) says, 'Master of the Day of judgment,' He Almighty remarks, 'My servant has glorified Me.' And when he (the worshiper) says, 'Thee do we worship and of Thee do we ask help,' He Almighty says, 'This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for.' Then, when he (the worshiper) says, 'Guide us to the straight path, the path of those to whom Thou hast been Gracious not of those who have incurred Thy displeasure, nor of those who have gone astray,' He (Allah Almighty) says, 'This is for My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for.'"

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