

Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship to the furthest place of worship [Surah Isra 17:1]

DISCLAIMER: This reminder was originally delivered in Arabic on 27 July 2017. Any meanings lost in translation are not to be attributed to the speaker as reminders are translated by volunteers. The mosque has no official translator and volunteers often have no formal qualifications to translate on the day. Please forgive any errors as they are from our human weakness and any right guidance is from God/Allah.

Muslims receive the month of Rajab in parallel with the remembrance of the Isra (night journey) and Miraj (ascension to the heavens) - the night in which the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him (pbuh), made a night journey (Isra) from the Holy Mosque in Mecca to the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and then returned safely to his family again within the same night.

There are many different opinions and narrations regarding this event, the exact night it took place and in which month it happened.

What we can say regarding this event is that: by remembering this event, (which was a Divine miracle, and a kindness that God Almighty), we in turn remember the Prophet (PBUH). It gives us a chance to remember his sufferings, patience and perseverance when calling people to worship one God. This remains a lesson for those who call to what is true and good, and is also a lesson for the youth - to listen and learn from the Prophet (pbuh), from his message, his firmness of faith and his firm hold of the religion.

O Muslims!

On welcoming the event of the Night journey and ascension we will look at three aspects:

1. "God creates ease after hardship"
2. The nature of the Islamic message
3. The gift of prayer which remains with us from the night journey and Ascension

1. "God creates ease after hardship"

The prophet (pbuh) called his people to Islam and faith (Iman). He called them to the oneness of God the One and Only. He presented his people with the light and the correct way, he presented them with a law to bring them out of darkness into the light, from the darkness of ignorance (where one could not recognise what was right and what was wrong) into the light of the religion of noble manners and to the coolness (and tranquillity) that the Shari'ah brings.

In contrast to the good that he presented to his people, in return, the Prophet (PBUH) only received violence, rejection, repulsion, aggression, insults and mockery against him and his religion.

This is the state of those who call people to change their ways for the better, calling them to leave their erroneous ways that have deviated from the straight path.

The Prophet peace be upon him, during these very difficult times, was firm and confident that he was a pioneer of good, a devoted saviour, an honest reporter, a compassionate warner and above all the possessor of an eternal message centred upon bringing good and benefit to people and repelling all evil away from people in this life and the hereafter.

For definite, there is relief after hardship, ease after difficulty, victory after loss and the break of dawn after a long night...

This is what can be described as the miracle of the night journey and Ascension for all those who are losing hope, who are confused, oppressed, weak and distressed and to the persecutors who have caused them to be in such a state.

2. The nature of the Islamic message

While the Prophet (PBUH) was asleep in the Ka'ba, an unknown person came to him and cut open the Prophet's torso between the Prophet's throat and the bottom of his stomach; he then extracted the Prophet's heart and filled it with knowledge and wisdom, to prepare him for his mission. The unknown man then came with a white animal for riding, called Al-Buraq, which was smaller than a mule but bigger than a donkey.

The Prophet (pbuh) then rode Buraq to Jerusalem accompanied by the angel Gabriel. On his arrival, he entered the mosque and prayed two units of prayer. When he left, ((PBUH)), Gabriel offered him two bowls, one of which contained wine and the other contained buttermilk, the Prophet ((PBUH)) chose the one with buttermilk so Gabriel said: you have done what the natural disposition (Fitra) should lead you to.

Therefore, Islam is a religion of sincerity, instincts and natural disposition. It deals with humanity with great sensitivity and caters for their natural needs; therefore Islam has made lawful what maintains life, mental well-being, possessions, offspring and religion. God Himself describes this in the Qur'an:

“Then set your face upright for religion in the right state-- the nature made by God in which He has made humanity; there is no altering of God's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know”
(Surah Al-Rum 30)

Natural dispositions and what maintains its purity is the core of Islam. Therefore God will not accept the one with an ill heart and ill soul as God The Most High is All Good and He only accepts that which is good:

“To Him ascends the good words, and He exalts the righteous works. As for those who scheme evil works, they incur severe retribution; the scheming of such people is destined to fail.” (Al-Fatir: 10)

3. The gift of prayer which remains with us from the Night Journey and Ascension

Whereas everything else revealed descended to the Prophet (PBUH) on earth, for the prayer, the Prophet ((PBUH)) ascended to the skies - he was taken through each and every level of the skies, to the farthest level (to the sidrat- al-Muntaha, the far away lote tree) - and it was there that he was given the command of the five daily prayers. This indicates the great rank and station of this event in this religion of Islam, as prayer is the pillar (the foundation) of this religion and whosoever establishes prayer, establishes the religion.

Prayer is your ascension to your Lord, it separates you from the world of people, the world of heedlessness to a world where you communicate with your Lord, intimately, not from afar. You ask of Him, for He is kind and not miserly. You ask help from Him, for He is the Strong, and not weak.

God Almighty says in a Holy Narration (Hadith Qudsi)

“I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.

When the servant says: Al-hamdu lillahi rabbi l-alam (All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds), God (mighty and sublime be He) says: My servant has praised Me.

And when he says: Ar-rahmani r-rahim (The Gracious, the Merciful), God (mighty and sublime be He) says: My servant has extolled Me,

and when he says: Maliki yawmi d-din (Master of the Day of Judgment), God says: My servant has glorified Me - and on one occasion He said: My servant has submitted to My power.

And when he says: Iyyaka na budu wa iyyaka nasta in (You alone we serve; You alone we ask for help), He says: This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.

And when he says: Ihdina s-sirata l- mustaqim, siratal ladhina an amta alayhim ghayril-maghdubi alayhim wa la d-dallin (Guide us in the right path, the path of those whom You blessed; not of those who have deserved wrath, nor of the strayers), He says: This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.

(Related by Muslim)

How humble is this scene when looked upon, of a connection between God with all his power and authority and his slave who prays to Him!

O Muslims!

Prayer is a gift that remains before us as a legacy of the Night Journey and Ascension. Unfortunately many Muslims today miss prayers and are neglectful of them – and God describes them in the Qur’an:

“Then there came after them an evil generation who neglected Prayer, and followed their evil desires. So they will meet destruction”

(Surah Maryam: 59)

O Muslims!

This is just a little glimpse in what ways a Muslim can benefit from the many different lessons of the miracle of the Night Journey and Ascension. It is recommended to read, think upon, and learn more about this event from sources such as the Seerah, what is written in the Sunnah and in the commentaries of the Qur’an, and to teach this to our children.