

Israa and Miraaj

Israa' literally means a journey by night and Miraaj literally means an elevator, i.e., an instrument which lifts something up. But, in Islam, Israa' refers to a miraculous night-journey made by the last Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) from Makkah to Jerusalem, and Miraaj refers to the vehicle which took the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) from Jerusalem, up and out of the universe, through the seven heavens, and into the direct presence of Allaah.

Towards the end of a calm night, one year before the Hijrah, the roof of Prophet Muhammad's (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) house split open and angel Jibreel (Gabriel) descended into the Prophet's (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) room. He went over to the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam), opened his shirt and cut open his chest. He then removed his heart and washed its inside with Zam Zam water. After he had completed washing it, he then brought a gold dish filled with Imaan (faith) and Hikmah (wisdom), emptied it into the Prophet's (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) chest and then closed it all up.[1] Jibreel then nudged the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) until he awoke. When the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) got up, Jibreel took a hold of his hand and lead him outside of his house to the gate of Ka'bah. There the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) found a strange unearthly animal. It was smaller than a mule but larger than a donkey, white in color and having a wing on either of its hind legs. He was informed that its name was "Buraaq", a name taken from the Arabic word Barq which means a flash of lightning. Jibreel helped the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) mount it and they set off to the north. Each stride of the Buraaq took it to the horizon, and, in no time they reached Jerusalem. There the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) dismounted and tied the animal to the same ring on the door of al-Masjid al-Aqsaa used by the prophets. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) entered the Masjid and prayed two Rak'ahs. When he finished he noticed a group of other prophets also making Salaah there. He saw among them Prophet Musa, Prophet 'Isa and Prophet Ibrahim. Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) was then told to lead them all in Salaah. When the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) finished this Salaah, someone said to him, "This is Maalik, the guardian of the Hellfire, so give him Salaams." When he turned around to greet him, the angel gave him Salaams before he had time to do so.[2] Jibreel then brought two vessels and presented them to the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam). One was filled with wine and the other filled with milk. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) chose the vessel filled with milk and drank from it. Jibreel then said, "You have been guided to the Fitrah." [3]

The Ascent (Miraaj)

The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) then left the Masjid and the Miraaj was brought for him. Jibreel helped him get into it, and it shot up into the heavens and out of the solar system. Traveling at a tremendous rate, the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) and Jibreel soon left our galaxy and raced past the other galaxies until they reached the end of the universe. At the end of the universe, they arrived at the boundary of the lowest heaven. Jibreel then requested that its gate be opened for them. Jibreel was then asked who he was and who was with him. When he informed the guardian angel who they were, he was asked if the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) had been sent for. When he said that that was so, the guardian said, "Welcome! His coming is good," and the gate was opened. When they went into the lowest heaven the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) saw a man sitting with a large group of people on his right and a large group on his left. When the man looked at those on his right he laughed, and when he looked at those on his left he wept. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) asked Jibreel who the man was and Jibreel replied, "This is your father Adam, so greet him," When the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) did so, Prophet Adam returned his Salaams and said, "Welcome! Oh good son and good Prophet." Jibreel then said, "These people on his right and left are the souls of his descendents. Those of them on his left are the inhabitants of Hell, so when he looks on his right side he laughs and when he looks on his left he cries." Jibreel then took him up to the second, heaven where he met and greeted Prophets Isa and Yahyaa, up to the third where he met and greeted Prophet Yusuf; up to the fourth where he met and greeted Prophet Idrees, up to the fifth where he met and greeted Prophet Haaron, and up to the sixth where he met Prophet Musa. When he went on past Prophet Musa, Musa wept, and when he was asked why he wept he replied, 'I am crying because more followers of a young man, who was sent as a prophet after my time, will enter paradise than my followers.' He then went on up with Jibreel to the seventh heaven, requested entrance and they came upon Prophet Ibrahim leaning with his back against the house of worship called al-Bayt al-Ma'moor.[4] Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) observed approximately seventy thousand angels, entering this heavenly house of worship without seeing any of them leave. Jibreel then led the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) to the lote-tree of the boundary, which he described as having leaves like the ears of elephants and fruits like large earthen-ware jugs. The lote-tree marked the spot, beyond which even Jibreel could not go, but Allaah permitted Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) to go beyond it and spoke to him directly. Allaah revealed to the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) the last verses of Surah al-Baqarah and promised him that the major sins of his followers would be forgiven if they did not commit Shirk. Allaah also made Salaah compulsory fifty times per day for the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa

sallam) and his followers. On the Prophet's (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) return he passed by Prophet Musa who asked him what worship had been prescribed for him. When the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) informed him, Musa said, "Your people are not capable of doing fifty daily prayers. I swear by Allaah that I have tested men before your time and tried my best with the Israelites, so go back to your Lord and ask Him to make things lighter for your people." The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) did so and Allaah reduced it by ten, but Musa suggested that he return and request a further reduction for the same reason, so he returned. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) continued going back and forth between his Lord and Musa until Allaah said, "They are five prayers everyday, Muhammad, each being rewarded as ten, so that makes fifty times of prayer. He who intends to do a good deed and does not do it will have a good deed 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 does not do it will have nothing recorded against him, and if he does it, only one evil deed will be recorded against him." When he came down and Musa told him to go back, he replied, "I have asked my Lord till I am ashamed to face Him. I am now satisfied and I submit." [5] The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) was then taken into Paradise and he reported that he saw in it domes of pearls and that its soil was made of musk. [6] He was also taken to Hell and Allaah showed him scenes from the future. He saw in the Hellfire people receiving terrible punishments for various sins. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) then took the Miraaj and descended with Jibreel to al-Masjid al-Aqsa. From there he mounted the Buraaq and returned to his home in Makkah where he found his bed still warm.

The Return

The following morning, the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) went to the Quraysh's tribal meeting place, and when Abu Jahl came up to him, he informed him of his journey. Abu Jahl then called all the people to hear the Prophet's (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) story, and when he related it to them, they stared at him in amazement and disbelief. Some Muslim converts whose Imaan was weak left Islam and returned to Kufr, because of the incredible tale which the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) had told. Some of the people ran to Abu Bakr and told him that his companion, Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam), claimed that he went to Jerusalem, made Salaah there, and returned to Makkah in one night. Abu Bakr told them that they were lying about the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam), because the story was too strange, but they told him that the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) was at the Ka'bah telling it to the people. When they told him that, they were sure that he would also leave Islam, because it was obvious to them that Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) must be lying. But Abu Bakr told them "By Allaah, if he actually said that, he has told the truth. There really is nothing to be amazed about, for he has

told me that information comes to him from Allaah, from the sky to the earth, in an instant during the night or day and I believe him. And that is even more strange.” Because of that statement of Abu Bakr, the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) gave him the title of “as-Siddeeq (the truthful).” The people then demanded from the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) proof of what he said. They knew that he had never traveled to Jerusalem, so some of them demanded that he describe it. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) became worried, as he had forgotten most of its details. He had only been there at night and had not paid much attention to its details. But, Allaah blessed him with a vision in which he saw Jerusalem as if he were there. So he was able to describe even its smallest details for them.[1] 1. For the others, he told them that on his way to Jerusalem he passed by a stray camel belonging to one of the clans which had camped in a valley. It had escaped from a group of them and he led them to it. He also told them that on his return he passed by the same clan’s caravan and found them all sleeping. They had a drinking vessel with some water in it which they had covered, so he uncovered it, drank its contents and put the cover back on the same way it was. He then informed them that the caravan was on its way to Makkah and he further described its lead camel. So the people rushed out to meet the caravan and found it as he had described it. They then asked the clan about the stray camel and the drinking vessel, and they replied, “By Allaah! He told the truth, we had camped in the valley which he mentioned and one of our camels had run off. We heard a man’s voice calling us to it until we caught it.” They also mentioned that they had left water in their jug and were surprised to find that it was all gone the next morning.

[1] Reported by Anas Ibn Maalik and Abu Dharr and collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol 9, pp 449-450, no, 605) and Muslim (Sahih Muslim (English Trans.) vol.1, pp. 103-4, no.313

[2] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Muslim (Sahih Muslim (English Trans.) vol.1, p.110, no. 328).

[3] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Muslim (Sahih Muslim (English Trans.) vol.1, p.108, no. 322).

[4] It is a house of worship in the heavens used by the angels after which the Ka’bah was designed.

[5] Reported by Anas ibn Maalik and collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol.9, pp 449-54, no. 608).

[6] Reported by Ibn Hazm and Anas and collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic-English), vol. 9, pp.449-54, no 608) and Muslim (Sahih Muslim (English Trans.), vol. 1, pp. 103-4, no. 313).

[7] Reported by Jaabir and collected by al-Bukhaari and Muslim (Sahih Muslim (English Trans.), vol.1, p. 104, no. 326).