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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

الحمد لله حمد الشاكرين، والصلاة والسلام على المبعوث رحمة للعالمين، وهدايا للناس أجمعين. صلاةً وسلاماً دائمين إلى يوم الدين، وآله وصحبه ومن تبعهم بإحسان، وسلم تسليماً كثيراً، أما بعد:

﴿ أسرى ومعراج النبي ﷺ ﴾

Israa Wal Meraaj – The Journey by Night and Ascension to the Heavens

The term Israa Wal Meraaj defines a very important and pivotal journey taken by the Prophet ﷺ. Its importance is proven by the very mention of this blessed journey in the Holy Qur'an. Allah ﷻ says: Glorified is He (Allah) who took his slave (Muhammed ﷺ) for a journey by night from Masjid Al Haram (Makkah) to Masjid Al Aqsa (in Jerusalem). (Al-Isra s17, v1)

And indeed Muhammed ﷺ saw Gibrail ﷺ at a second descent...Indeed, Muhammed ﷺ did see the greatest signs of his Lord. (An-Najm, v13-18)

The first verse of the Qur'an details the first portion of this blessed journey, where Allah ﷻ took the Prophet ﷺ on a journey by night from Masjid Al Haram to Masjid Al Aqsa and along the way making the Prophet ﷺ witness to many great signs and occurrences. The second verse of the Qur'an details the second portion of the journey from Masjid Al Aqsa to the heavens and beyond the highest point of the seventh heaven. In the Tafseer of Sura Najm Ibn Abbas رضى الله عنه states that Allah ﷻ has revealed that the Prophet ﷺ met Allah ﷻ. (Tafsir Ibn Abbas vol 3, p301)

The Prophet ﷺ saw Gibrail ﷺ in his original form on two occasions, firstly when the revelation first came and secondly on the night of Meraaj on the seventh heaven. (Ma'ariful Quran vol 8, p199)

Zurqani رحمه الله has mentioned in his book Muwahibeh Ludina that the journey of ascension of the Prophet ﷺ to the heavens has been narrated by 45 Companions رضى الله عنهم. The journey of Israa Wal Meraaj is also found extensively in the 6 famous books of Ahadith and other famous work contain narrations on the portrayal of this blessed journey. Ibn Kathir رحمه الله has stated: 'Upon these Ahadith mentioning the Israa Wal Meeraj the Muslim Ummah is united, only those devoid of Iman refute its reality.' (Tafsir Ibn Kathir vo3, p22)

When did the journey of Israa Wal Meraaj take place?

The most well know narrations state that this journey took place on the 27th night of the month of Rajab, one year prior to the migration of the Prophet ﷺ to Madinah Munawarrah. This is approximately 12 years after Prophethood, which is also found to be narrated by Imam Nawawi, Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Jawzi and Ibn Hazm رحمه الله who all confirm this through their research on the topic. Ibn Atheer and Ibn Muneer (rah) stated that this journey took place on the night of Monday. (Imdadul Bari Shara Bukhari, vol 7, page7)

The condition in which this journey took place

The Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat are unanimously united on the fact that the incident of Israa Wal Meraaj took place once in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and both form part of the same journey. This journey was performed in both bodily and spiritual form, in a state of total consciousness. It was in this journey that the Prophet ﷺ was taken on the Israa (Journey by night to Masjid Al Aqsa) from Masjid Al Haram and Meeraj (Ascension to the Heavens) from Masjid Al Aqsa. The Prophet ﷺ traversed

through every level of heaven and upon reaching the seventh heaven went even further into the court of Allah ﷻ, where the Prophet ﷺ met his Lord Most High and conversation took place between them.

Other than this one incident which took place in full consciousness, the Prophet ﷺ experienced Meeraj many times in a spiritual state. The Prophet ﷺ stated: “My condition is that, everything that is to come, Allah ﷻ shows me in a dream beforehand.” (Sahih Bukhari, vol 1, page1)

The journey of Meeraj was shown to the Prophet ﷺ in a dream to inform the Prophet ﷺ of the impending journey he was about to undertake. This was to prepare the Prophet ﷺ beforehand for this and other incidents both mentally and physically and to remove the element of fear and overburdening. (Imdadul Bari Shara Bukhari, vol 7, page7)

The proof that this journey to the heavens took place in a state of full consciousness is that the verse of the Qur’an related above refers to the Prophet ﷺ as ‘Slave’. If this journey had taken place in spiritual form then the term slave would not have been used, in Arabic this term is only used when referring to a physical being.

When this blessed journey was narrated by the Prophet ﷺ to the people, the polytheists of Makkah were amazed and astonished at the fact that a man could travel to Jerusalem, from there to the heavens and come back within one night. If this was the narration of a dream, then there would be no cause for astonishment. For even today, an individual can sleep sound in his bed in London and dream of being in far away places such as Makkah Mukarramah and Madinah Munawarah.

The polytheists of Makkah to confirm the occurrence of this journey questioned the Prophet ﷺ as to the signs of Masjid Al Aqsa, to which he gave the correct answers. If the journey was related from a dream, this questioning would not have taken place. As in a dream there are things which are remembered and other which are not, therefore precise verification cannot be obtained.

Prior to the journey of Israa to Jerusalem, the blessed chest of the Prophet ﷺ was split open. Malik bin Sa’sa’a رضى الله عنه related that the Prophet ﷺ stated: “Whilst I was sitting in the vicinity of Kaba, I saw some angels descend from the heavens with a golden vessel which was full of Iman and Hikmah (Faith & Wisdom). I was then made to lay on the ground and my chest was opened up from my throat to my stomach. This portion was then washed with Zam Zam, and then my chest was filled with Iman and Hikmah. (Sunan Nasai #451)

The reason for the opening up of the blessed chest of the Prophet ﷺ was to increase the spiritual strength of the Prophet ﷺ and make him capable of performing the planned journey. This incident of the splitting of the chest on the night of Meraaj is the most authentic in terms of Ahadith narrations on this topic. After this comes the splitting of the chest of the Prophet ﷺ during infancy in the household of Haleemah Saadiyah رضى الله عنها. The third being the splitting of the chest of the Prophet ﷺ prior to attaining maturity to remove the possibility of any thoughts and desires occurring that young men experience. The fourth being the splitting of the chest of the Prophet ﷺ upon the commencement of the first revelation (Wahi). (Imdadul Bari Shara Bukhari, vol 7, p13)

The meeting of The Final Prophet Muhammed ﷺ with the other Prophets عليهم السلام during Meeraj

Sayyidina Anas bin Malik, Sayyidina Malik bin Sa’sa’a and Sayyidina Abu Dharr رضى الله عنهم all relate in detail that the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ stated: “On the 1st heaven the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ met Prophet Adam رضى الله عنه, on the 2nd heaven he met the Prophets Yahya (John) and Isa (Jesus) رضى الله عنهما, on the 3rd heaven he met Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) رضى الله عنه, on the 4th heaven he met Prophet Idrees رضى الله عنه, on the 5th heaven he met Prophet Haroon (Aaron) رضى الله عنه, on the 6th heaven he met Prophet Musa (Moses) رضى الله عنه and on the 7th heaven he met Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) رضى الله عنه. (Sahih Bukhari, vol 1, p548/ Sahih Muslim, vol 1, p91 & 93)

It is found in narrations that during the meeting of Prophet Muhammed ﷺ with Prophet Musa عليه السلام on the 6th heaven, when the Prophet ﷺ started to move on to the 7th heaven, Prophet Musa عليه السلام started to weep. When asked by Allah ﷻ why he was crying, Musa عليه السلام stated: “After my time this young man (Muhammed ﷺ) has been made a Prophet and his followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than mine.” (Sahih Muslim, vol 1 p93)

The Prophet ﷺ stated: “On this journey Allah ﷻ made the performance of 50 prayers binding upon my nation. When I took this order and was returning, I met Musa عليه السلام on the 6th heaven and he asked: ‘What has Allah ﷻ ordained for your nation?’ I replied that Allah ﷻ made the performance of 50 prayers binding upon my nation. Musa عليه السلام told me: ‘Return to my Lord and request a decrease in the number of prayers, for your nation does not have the strength to bear 50 prayers a day.’ I returned and put this request to my Lord who decreased the performance of prayers in the day. In this manner Musa عليه السلام made the Prophet ﷺ return five times. The Prophet Muhammed ﷺ said: ‘the Prophet Musa عليه السلام made me return to my Lord five times from which I was ordered to relate to my nation that 5 prayers were binding upon my followers in a day. Even then, the Prophet Musa عليه السلام told me to return to Lord and request a decrease in the number of prayers stipulated in a day. I replied: ‘I feel ashamed now to go before my Lord and request a decrease in the number of prayers.’ I was then accompanied by Gibrael عليه السلام until we reached the highest point in Heaven, Sidratul Munthaha (the Lote Tree). At this station, I was enveloped in many different colours. (Sahih Bukhari, vol1, p548)

Before the incidents of the night of Israa & Meeraj no prayers were compulsory upon the Muslims, it was only the Tahajjud prayer that was mandatory upon the Prophet ﷺ. This was not the case for the Muslim masses. However, even before Israa Wal Meeraj it is proven from the Ahadith that the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims at large used to pray twice a day, Fajr (dawn) and Isha (night). (Dars Tirmidi, vol1, p393)

Sayyidah Aisha (ra) relates that: “When Allah ﷻ made the performance of prayers binding upon us, then for each prayer, two Rakats were performed, in both states of travel and being resident at a place. Then the prayer for travel was kept as it was and the prayer of residents at a place was increased.” (Sahih Bukhari, vol1, p549)

From another narration in Sahih Bukhari it is understood that the increasing of the Rakaats for the prayers of residents took place after the migration of the Prophet ﷺ to Madinah Munawarah. (Sahih Bukhari, vol 1, p560)

The performance of prayer as a compulsory act prior to Meeraj is proven from a number of narrations. It is related that the Prophet ﷺ and Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه used to pray together; something which Abu Talib also witnessed and appreciated. It is also narrated that Sayyidah Khadija رضي الله عنها used to perform Salaah. During the time the Prophet ﷺ stayed in Makkah Mukkaramah, the Muslims used to pray in secret. It was only after the acceptance of Islam by Sayyidina Umar ibn Khattab رضي الله عنه that the Muslims used to perform Salaah openly. All these narrations occurred before the incident of Meraaj. However, the decree of five prayers a day as binding upon the Muslims was only established after the night of Meeraj. (Imdadul Bari Shara Bukhari, vol7, p24)

May Allah ﷻ grant the Muslim Ummah the guidance to appreciate and act upon this gift which was given to the Prophet ﷺ on the night of Meraaj. آمين! Ameen!

والله وحده هو المسؤول والمستعان وهو الهادي إلى سبيل الخير والسلام .

محمد يوسف (عفى الله عنه)

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