
Messengers 12 – The miracle of Israa and Mi'raaj

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

QUESTION: What was miracle of the Israa (night journey to Jerusalem) and the Mi'raaj (ascension to the Heavens)?

ANSWER:

We have mentioned that this was one of the special favours bestowed on the last of the series of Prophets, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

Muslims believe that approximately one year before the first Muslims migrated to Madeenah, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) travelled on a miraculous journey.¹

The first leg of the journey was from Mecca to Jerusalem, and he was awake on this journey which occurred in the space of one night.

The second leg of the journey was from the al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem up through the heavens, during which he met various Prophets, including Ibraaheem (Abraham) and Moosa (Moses). He also saw Jibreel (the angel Gabriel), as well as Heaven and Hell. It was during this ascension that the daily prayers were ordained on the Muslims.

He then returned to Jerusalem, and from there to Mecca. And this entire journey took place within one night during an era where normally a journey from Mecca to Jerusalem would have taken about one month.

This incident is mentioned in a verse from the Qur'aan:

Exalted is He who took His servant (i.e. Muhammad – peace and blessings be upon him) by night from al Masjid al Haraam (in Mecca) to al Masjid al Aqsa (in Jerusalem), whose surroundings We have blessed, so as to show him our signs.

Indeed He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing.

[Soorah al Israa' (17) verse 1]

¹ Refer to al irshaad ilaa saheeh il i'tiqaad of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan p201 - 202 for more information

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Some people have misunderstood the Israa and Mi'raaj claiming that it was just a journey of the soul and not his body as well.

The response to this is that the Qur'aan states:

Exalted is He who took His 'abd (servant)....

[Soorah al Israa' (17) verse 1]

And the word 'abd (servant) is not used in Arabic for a soul alone; rather it implies a physical component i.e. the body as well as the soul.

Other Muslims have claimed that it was just a dream which Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) had one night. This too is incorrect, because why then would Islam hold the Israa and Mi'raaj as being something miraculous? Everyone has dreams which contain visions and miraculous things, so what lesson or admonition could be taken from the Israa and Mi'raaj if they were just an interesting dream?

Rather Islaam teaches that the Israa and Mi'raaj was something experienced by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in body and soul on one particular night during his life, and it was a privilege not given to any of the other Muslims.