

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

JOURNEY OF THE HEAVENS



Shaykh Omar Suleiman

Introduction

- **Dua for the Oppressed:**
 - May Allah ease the plight of the people of Palestine and free Masjid Al-Aqsa from its oppressors.
 - A parallel is drawn between the Prophet's ﷺ journey (Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj) and the ascension of martyrs in Gaza to the heavens today.
- **Context of Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj:**
 - Occurred after the Prophet ﷺ experienced the *Year of Grief* (عام الحزن): Loss of Abu Talib, his uncle, and physical protector. Loss of Khadijah (RA), his wife and emotional support.
 - The Prophet ﷺ faced hostility, rejection, and no safe haven to practice Islam.
 - In this moment of despair, Allah granted him the miraculous journey to:
 - Show him a *viable place in the Hereafter*.
 - Provide numerous miracles to reaffirm his mission.

Significance of Hardship and Ease

- **Quranic Parallels:** "Verily, with every hardship comes ease." (Surah Ash-Sharh, 94:6).
 - Ibn Mas'ud (RA): He described the Prophet's ﷺ fever as so

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- severe that his body radiated intense heat.
 - The Prophet ﷺ said: “Prophets are tested twice as much as others because they have twice the reward.”
- **Ibn Al-Qayyim (RA):** “Ease is legislated in proportion to hardship.”
 - After the hardship of the Year of Grief, the Prophet ﷺ was blessed with the miraculous journey of Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj.

The Journey to the Heavens

- **Special Miracles Exclusive to the Prophet ﷺ:**
 - **Quran:** The everlasting miracle of Islam.
 - **Splitting of the Moon:** Witnessed by the Quraysh.
 - **Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj:**
 - The Prophet ﷺ was taken from Makkah to Jerusalem (Masjid Al-Aqsa), then to the heavens and back, *body and soul*, in one night.
 - Unique distinction: Unlike other prophets (e.g., Idris (AS) and Isa (AS)) who were elevated to a boundary in the heavens, the Prophet ﷺ journeyed through all levels and returned.
- **Preparation for the Journey:**
 - A decade of revelation and prayer (Qiyam Al-Layl) prepared the Prophet ﷺ spiritually to face his trials.

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- **Parallel:** The faith and resilience seen in the people of Gaza, who endure trials with unwavering reliance on Allah:
 - *“Alhamdulillah wa la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah wa hasbuna Allah wa ni’ma al-wakeel.”*
 - *This spiritual strength is cultivated over years of steadfast worship and trust in Allah.*

Reflection Points

Relief Comes After Hardship:

- The Prophet ﷺ endured immense personal and communal loss before receiving the greatest spiritual honor.
- Believers are reminded that trials are a pathway to spiritual elevation and eventual relief.

Faith and Resilience:

- Like the Prophet ﷺ, steadfast worship and a strong connection with Allah are crucial in preparing for life’s trials.
- The people of Palestine exemplify this through their patience and reliance on Allah during extreme adversity.

The Significance of the Journey After the Year of Grief

- **Khadijah (RA) and the Timing of the Five Prayers:**
 - Aisha (RA) noted that Khadijah (RA) passed away before the five daily prayers, Ramadan, or Salat Al-Janazah were prescribed.

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- This emphasizes the early timing of Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj in the Seerah and its profound gift to the Prophet ﷺ and the Ummah: the five daily prayers.
- **The Five Prayers as the Ultimate Gift:**
 - Scholars describe the journey as a *ceremony* for the establishment of the five prayers.
 - The prayers became a consistent connection between the Prophet ﷺ, his Ummah, and Allah SWT.
 - The greatest gift that Allah is going to give the Prophet S on that night Journey, beyond everything that he sees is a consistent connection for him and for his ummah of the five daily prayers.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"Glory be to Him Who took His servant by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Verily, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing." (Al-Isra, 1)

- **Reflections:**
 - **"Subhan"**: Declaring Allah's perfection beyond human limitations.
 - Allah is not dependent on any means of travel; the miraculous journey of the Prophet ﷺ happened without fatigue or preparation.

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- For Allah, taking the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Jerusalem and through the heavens in one night is as simple as any other task.
- **“Abdihi”**: Refers to the Prophet ﷺ as Allah’s servant.
 - Servitude (*‘uboodiyyah*) to Allah is the highest form of honor.
 - This title, shared by all prophets, signifies complete humility before Allah, which elevates one spiritually.
 - *Example*: Zakariyya (AS) is honored in Surah Maryam as ذُكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكْرِيَّا "Allah’s servant" when describing his miraculous answer to du'a.
- **Visual Evidence is Unnecessary**:
 - Scholars emphasize that Allah’s attributes as *As-Samee’* (All-Hearing) and *Al-Baseer* (All-Seeing) affirm the truth of the journey.
 - Believers trust in Allah's perfection and testimony without requiring physical evidence.

Subhan’Allah and Alhamdulillah

- **Connection Between Tasbeeh and Tahmeed**:

- *Subhanallah*: Declares Allah’s perfection in matters beyond human perception.
- *Alhamdulillah*: Expresses gratitude for observable blessings.

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- Example: Eating, drinking, or experiencing blessings in life calls for Alhamdulillah.

- **Mirroring Events:**

- Tasbeeh accompanies the Prophet ﷺ's ascent through the heavens.
- Tahmeed marks the descent of the Quran, an observable blessing for humanity.
- Both expressions together—*SubhanAllahi wa bihamdihi SubhanAllahi al-'Adheem*—combine acknowledgment of Allah's perfection and praise.

Servitude to Allah and Miracles

- **The Elevation Through Servitude:**

- The more one submits to Allah, the more Allah elevates them.
 - The Prophet ﷺ embodied this humility, resulting in the miraculous journey of Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj.
- Scholars contrast this with arrogance:
 - Example: Pharaoh's materialistic mindset led him to demand a ladder to "see what's up there."
 - **Pharaoh's arrogance:** He was entirely tied to the material world and ordered the construction of a tower to "see" the heavens.
 - **Submission to Allah:** In contrast, humility and servitude to Allah lead to miraculous outcomes, even if

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- they are unseen.

Before Al-Isra' wal-Mir'aj: Context and Significance

The Prophet's State After Taif

- **Emotional State:** The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ experienced immense sorrow and hardship. After the rejection at Ta'if, he returned to Mecca with no apparent refuge or support.
- Why Taif?
 - The Prophet ﷺ was inspired to visit Ta'if, possibly influenced by a dream of greenery resembling the geography of Yathrib (later Medina).
 - While Ta'if was home to the elite of the region, Yathrib primarily had young, hopeful individuals who later became the Ansar.
 - His rejection at Ta'if was one of the harshest he faced, intensifying his need for divine support.

The Setting: House of Umm Hani (RA)

- The Prophet ﷺ was resting in the house of **Fakhita Umm Hani bint Abi Talib** (RA), whose name means "a bird that spreads its wings." She was the sister of Ali (RA) and an early believer.
- Her home was near the Ka'bah, close to Abu Talib's family. It was here that the extraordinary events of Al-Isra' wal-Mi'raj began.

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The Beginning of the Journey

- **Jibreel (AS) Descends:**
 - Unlike his first appearance in the Cave of Hira, the Prophet ﷺ now fully recognized Jibreel (AS).
 - Jibreel (AS) was adorned in a green garment with jewels, symbolizing the grandeur and significance of the event. Green is also associated with Jannah.
- **The Opening of the Chest:**
 - Jibreel (AS) opened the Prophet's chest, as he had done during his childhood, but this time for a different purpose.
 - Using a golden vessel, Jibreel (AS) washed the Prophet's heart with Zamzam water and filled it with:
 - **Hikmah (Wisdom)**
 - **Iman (Faith)**
 - **Significance of Hikmah and Iman:**
 - Both are limitless gifts that increase one's ability to perceive and act according to divine guidance.
 - The sweetness of faith creates a desire for more, while wisdom helps navigate reality and understand Allah's signs.

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Preparing for the Journey

- **Location of the Start:**

- The Prophet ﷺ was taken to the Hijr (semi-circular area near the Ka'bah) where Ibrahim (AS) had shaded his family, connecting the event to Ibrahim's legacy.
- After praying two rak'ahs, the Prophet ﷺ was brought Al-Buraq, a creature described as:
 - Larger than a donkey but smaller than a mule.
 - Its stride spanned the distance of the horizon.
 - Its name, derived from "Barq" (lightning), reflected its speed.
- **Al-Buraq's Reaction:** Overcome by the Prophet's nobility, Al-Buraq became shy. Jibreel (AS) calmed it, saying, *"No man nobler than him has ever mounted you."*

The Prophet's Stops on Earth

- **Taybah (Medina):**

- Jibreel AS instructed the Prophet ﷺ to pray two rak'ahs and revealed that this land, Medina, would be his future place of Hijrah (migration).
- This was a reassuring glad tiding of refuge amidst his current trials.

- **Mount Tur (Palestine):**

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- The Prophet ﷺ prayed and was informed by Jibreel AS that this was the mountain where Allah had spoken to Musa (AS).
- A reminder of the honor of prophetic communication and divine missions.
- **Bethlehem:**
 - After praying, Jibreel (AS) revealed this was the birthplace of Isa (AS).
 - **Wisdom of This Stop:**
 - Isa (AS) was miraculously brought into this world, paralleling the Prophet's miraculous journey out of this world.
 - It also highlighted the closeness between Isa (AS) and Muhammad ﷺ, as the Prophet ﷺ stated, *"I am the closest person in this world to Isa (AS); there is no prophet between us."*

Arrival at Al-Aqsa (Jerusalem)

- **The Prophet ﷺ** reached **Al-Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)** and prayed two rak'ahs in this sacred space.
- This marked the beginning of the celestial part of the journey, as he prepared to ascend to the heavens.

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Reflections:

- Each step of the journey, from the opening of the Prophet's chest to the stops at Medina, Mount Tur, and Bethlehem, emphasized the interconnectedness of all prophets and their shared mission. This earthly journey, rich with symbolism, prepared the Prophet ﷺ for the momentous events that would follow in the heavens.

Why Al-Aqsa?

- **Historical Connection:**
 - Al-Aqsa is the second masjid built on Earth after Al-Masjid Al-Haram in Mecca, with a 40-year gap between their constructions.
 - It has been associated with multiple prophets since the time of Adam (AS), making it a deeply rooted location in prophetic history.
- **Central to the Qiblah:**
 - Before the qiblah changed to the Kaaba, Muslims prayed toward Al-Aqsa. This connection made it a fitting place for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to transition from the earthly journey to the heavenly ascent.
- **Blessed Land (Ard Muqaddasah):**
 - Referred to as "blessed surroundings" **الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ** in the Quran. (Al-Isra,1)

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- Al-Aqsa and its surrounding land of Al-Sham are described as purifying and sacred. It is called the land of the prophets and is marked by countless acts of worship by prophets and angels alike.
- **Prayers of the Prophets:**
 - Ibn Abbas (RA) noted that every inch of Al-Aqsa has witnessed the worship or burial of a prophet, tying it deeply to the legacy of divine guidance.
- **Connection to Suleiman (AS):**
 - Prophet Suleiman (AS) prayed for three things while building Al-Aqsa: unmatched wisdom, unparalleled kingship, and forgiveness for those who prayed there seeking Allah's pleasure, leaving them sinless as on the day they were born.

Key Benefits of Al-Aqsa:

- **Spiritual Portal to the Heavens:** Al-Aqsa is where Idris (AS) was raised, where Isa (AS) ascended before the crucifixion plot, and where the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ began his heavenly journey.
- **Centrality to Prophet's Stories:** Many prophets met by the Prophet (ﷺ) in the heavens—such as Musa (AS), Ibrahim (AS), and Isa (AS)—are directly linked to Palestine, highlighting its prophetic significance.

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- **End Times Connection:** Palestine and Al-Sham hold eschatological importance as the land of resurrection (ard al-mahshar), where major events of the Day of Judgment will unfold.
- **Unified Worship in Three Holy Sites:** In one night, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ prayed in the three most sacred sites: Al-Masjid Al-Haram, Al-Masjid An-Nabawi (Medina), and Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, unifying the legacy of monotheistic worship.
- Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa serves as the gateway for the Isra wa Al-Miraj, symbolizing the connection between the earthly and heavenly realms, uniting the stories of the prophets, and offering blessings and purification. Its selection for this monumental journey emphasizes its spiritual prominence and timeless significance in Islam.

Jerusalem at the Time of the Prophet's Night Journey

- **Historical Context:**
 - In the year 614 CE, just a few years after the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received revelation, the Persian Empire captured Jerusalem from the Byzantine Romans.
 - The Persians carried out brutal massacres, reportedly killing up to **90,000 people**. Christian churches, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, were destroyed, and relics such as the "True Cross" were taken to Persia.

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- The city was desecrated and abandoned, with no active worshippers honoring its sacredness.
- **Relevance to Surah Ar-Rum:**
 - During this time, **Surah Ar-Rum** was revealed: غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ فِىَ أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِى بَضْعِ سِنِينَ "The Romans have been defeated in the nearest land. But after their defeat, they will overcome it within a few years." (Ar-Rum: 2-4)
 - This prophecy paralleled the Muslims' struggles in Mecca and their eventual victory at **Badr**, drawing a symbolic connection between the Romans' triumph over the Persians and the Muslims' victory over the Quraysh.

The Prophet's Arrival in Jerusalem

- **The Occupied State of Al-Quds:**
 - When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ arrived in Jerusalem, it was under Persian occupation, with its sacred sites desecrated and devoid of active worship.
 - Despite the physical desolation, Allah chose this moment and place for a profound gathering of prophets and the spiritual ascent of Muhammad ﷺ.
- **Tying Al-Buraq and Praying Two Rak'ahs:**
 - Upon arriving, **Jibreel (AS)** tied Al-Buraq to a rock in the area, marking the sacredness of the site.

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- The Prophet ﷺ prayed two rak'ahs in Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, unaware of the extraordinary gathering about to unfold.

Gathering of the Prophets

- **The Symbolic Choice:**

- Jibreel (AS) presented two drinks to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: milk and wine. Although wine was not prohibited at that time, the Prophet ﷺ chose milk.
- Jibreel (AS) remarked: *"All praise is due to Allah, who guided you to your natural disposition. Had you chosen wine, your ummah would have gone astray."*

- **Reflection of the Ummah's Guidance:**

- This choice symbolized the innate purity of the Prophet ﷺ and the destined guidance of his followers.
- Even in small choices, the mercy and foresight of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ benefited his entire ummah.

Reflections and Lessons

- **Mercy to the Ummah:**

- Every miracle granted to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, including Isra wa Al-Miraj, was not just a personal blessing but a sign of Allah's mercy to the ummah.

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- **The Spiritual Significance of Jerusalem:**
 - Despite its physical desolation, Allah elevated Al-Quds by making it the site of the prophets' gathering and the starting point of the heavenly journey.
 - This reminds us that Jerusalem remains sacred, regardless of who occupies it.
- **Unity of Prophetic Missions:**
 - The gathering of all prophets behind the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in prayer signifies the unity of the message of monotheism and the culmination of prophethood in Islam.
- **A Parallel Between Struggles and Triumphs:**
 - Just as the Romans regained their strength after being defeated by the Persians, the Muslims in Mecca would rise against oppression and find victory, drawing hope and lessons from this divine decree.

Conclusion

The Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ arrival in Jerusalem during Isra wa Al-Miraj was not just a physical journey but a profound event that intertwined the sacred history of the prophets, the trials of the ummah, and the mercy of Allah. It underscored Jerusalem's eternal significance and set the stage for the Prophet's ascension to the heavens.