

The Night Journey and the Ascension (part 6 of 6): The Return

Description: This great miracle and honour becomes a chance for the disbelievers to attack Islam as well as a test of faith for the Muslims.

By Aisha Stacey (© 2008 IslamReligion.com)

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Prophet Muhammad travelled on the back of Al-Buraq all the way to the farthest Mosque in Jerusalem. He ascended through the seven heavens and marvelled at wonders unimaginable. He looked into the faces and exchanged greetings with many of his fellow Prophets, and the final slave and Messenger of God, Muhammad, stood in the presence of God Himself. On the same night, only several hours after he had commenced his journey, Prophet Muhammad returned to Mecca.

This miraculous journey was about to become a weapon against Prophet Muhammad and his followers by his enemies, and equally it would be an extreme test of faith for the believers. Upon his homecoming, Prophet Muhammad made his way to Umm Ayman and told her of his miraculous journey. She responded, "O Messenger of God, do not tell anyone about this." Umm Ayman had perfect faith in Prophet Muhammad and believed his account of the journey, but she was afraid of how others would respond.

Prophet Muhammad described Umm Ayman as "my mother after my own mother". She was the faithful servant of his mother Aminah and remained with Prophet Muhammad through the deaths of his mother and grandfather. Prophet Muhammad and Umm Ayman had always been very close, and at the completion of this wondrous journey, he went to Umm Ayman's home, perhaps for comfort and ease while he contemplated this miracle, and decided his next move.

Prophet Muhammad responded by saying that he would tell the people about the wondrous night. He considered it his responsibility before God to convey the message, no matter the response or consequences; God was responsible for the outcome. He left the house quietly with sombre contemplation, and made his way to the Holy Mosque. He met people along the way, and slowly the news of the night journey spread amongst the people.

The Response

While Prophet Mohammad was sitting silently in the Mosque, Abu Jahl approached him and asked casually, "O Muhammad is there anything new?" Known as one of the greatest enemies of Islam Abu Jahl was responsible for the torture, punishment, murder and harassment of the new Muslims throughout the early days of Islam. Even though he was aware of the animosity and hatred Abu Jahl felt towards him, Prophet Muhammad answered truthfully and said, "This past night I have travelled to Jerusalem and back."

Abu Jahl, being unable to contain his amusement, responded by requesting Muhammad to repeat these words in front of the people of Mecca. Prophet Muhammad responded in the affirmative, and Abu Jahl left the Mosque running, calling out to the people as he ran through the streets. When sufficient people had gathered in the Mosque, at Abu Jahl's request Prophet Muhammad said, for all to hear, "I have been to Jerusalem and back."

The crowd of people started to laugh, whistle, and clap. They treated it as a big joke and fell against one another laughing. This was the response expected by Abu Jahl and he was thrilled. The disbelievers in the crowd saw a chance to put an end to Islam. They ridiculed and belittled Prophet Muhammad's claim. Among the crowd were people who had travelled to Jerusalem and they asked Prophet Muhammad to describe what he had seen.

The Prophet of God began to describe his journey but he became irritated. He spent only a brief amount of time in Jerusalem, and the miraculous nature of this travels had meant that he did not remember small details and descriptions. However, Prophet Muhammad tells us that God showed him the details "right in front of his eyes" and he described what he had seen "stone by stone, brick by brick". The travellers confirmed his descriptions. **(Saheeh Bukhari)**

There is another narration^[1] that says that whilst travelling back to Mecca, Prophet Muhammad passed over a caravan. He was able to describe clearly. The caravan had lost a camel, and Prophet Muhammad called from the sky telling them the whereabouts of the camel. He also drank from their water supply.

The people of Mecca immediately dispatched some one to meet the caravan before it entered the city to ask questions about the previous night. They confirmed that a strange voice called out the location of the lost camel and that part of their water supply had disappeared. Still these confirmations were not enough. The people jeered and laughed and disbelieved the words of the Prophet of God. This miraculous event was such a test of faith that even some of the new Muslims disbelieved and turned away from the faith of Islam.

The Sweetness of Faith

To those whose faith was strong and true, the Power of God was obvious. Some of those who found the whole story difficult to believe went to see Abu Bakr, the best friend and loyal supporter of Prophet Mohammad. They asked him if he believed Prophet Muhammad travelled overnight to Jerusalem, and back to Mecca. Without hesitation Abu Bakr replied, "If the messenger of God said so, then it is true". It was because of this occasion that Abu Bakr earned the title As-Siddeeq (the foremost believer). This was a turning point for many Muslims; after already facing the physical torture and abuse of the disbelievers, they now had to grapple with a concept beyond their wildest imaginings. Some failed, but many soared to new heights and were able to taste the sweetness of true submission to the One God.

The journey by night, from the Holy Mosque in Mecca to the farthest Mosque in Jerusalem, and the ascension through the heavens and into the presence of Almighty God was a miracle granted by God to His final slave and Prophet, Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, and one of the greatest of honours bestowed upon any

human.

Endnotes:

[1] The Biography of Prophet Muhammad by ibn Hisham.

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