

MERAAJ

(The Night of Ascension to the Heavens)

Rajab is the seventh month of the Islamic calendar and is also one of the four Sacred Months. The event of Al-Isra-wal Meraaj took place on 27th night of Rajab as indicated in the Holy Qur'aan:

“Glory be to the one who took His Servant by night from Masjid Al-Haram to Masjid Al-Aqsa, the precincts of which We have blessed, so that We might show him some of Our Signs. Surely He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing”
(Qur'aan - Surah 17 Ayat 1)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was awakened by the Arch Angel Jibraeel (A.S) whilst he was sleeping. They travelled on Al-Buraaq (a winged-horse) from Makkah to Jerusalem and reached Masjid Al-Aqsa, where Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) led salaah with all the prophets behind him. Jibraeel (A.S) then proceeded with Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to the heavens. As he ascended the different levels of the heavens, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) met several other prophets. Amongst them were Hazrat Aadam (A.S), Hazrat Yusuf (A.S), Hazrat Haroon (A.S), Hazrat Isa (A.S), Hazrat Moosa (A.S) and Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S). Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was also shown Heaven and Hell on this remarkable journey.

At the summation of the ascent was the Lote Tree (Sidratul-Muntahaa) where Jibraeel (A.S) bid farewell to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to continue his ongoing journey as no other creation was allowed to go beyond that point. This demonstrates the superiority of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) above all creations. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) continued travelling until he came very close to the Divine Throne of Almighty Allah. Allah spoke directly to His Beloved Prophet and ordained the daily 5 prayers (Salaah) for his Ummah. It was originally ordained as fifty and then eventually reduced to five in number with the promise that whoever performs the five daily prayers will get the reward of the original fifty prayers.

This journey was accomplished in less than a night as the Prophet's bed was still warm when he came back to Makkah, which shows that the event took place in a very short span of time. The next morning the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) told the people about his experience during the night. On hearing this, the unbelievers found it a great opportunity to ridicule the Prophet's message. Despite the fact that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) actually described Masjid-ul-Aqsa of Jerusalem in detail, when in fact he had never seen Masjid-ul-Aqsa previously.

Lessons from Al-Isra-wal Meraaj

There are many lessons for Muslims to draw from Al-Isra-wal Meraaj. Most importantly it demonstrates the centrality of prayer in Islam which was uniquely prescribed in the heavens directly to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) without the medium of Jibraeel (A.S). Performing the five daily prayers connects a servant with his Lord and most clearly and effectively distinguishes a Muslim from a non-muslim. The event of Al-Isra-wal Meraaj also demonstrates the importance of Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem for Muslims. The Prophet was taken to Masjid Al-Aqsa, whose precincts are blessed. It was the first Qiblah (direction of prayer) for Muslims. It is also regarded as the third holiest mosque in Islam and one of three places to which the Prophet gave specific permission to travel, for the purpose of worship.

There is no special religious mode of worship prescribed by any authentic sources of Hadith on this night or on the day of 27th Rajab. However the day or night of 27th Rajab can be used as an opportunity to inform people about the significance of the event of Al-Isra-wal Meraaj and the practical lessons to be learnt from it such as the obligation of prayers.