Sīrah of Muḥammad ﷺ

Part 7 - The Night Journey & Ascension

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Introduction

I begin in the name of Allāh   Lord of the Worlds and sending Peace & Salutations on our beloved Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

Islām had been strengthened with the reversion of ʿUmar . He had left his house with sword in hand to go and kill Rasūlullāh ﷺ, but on the way he was diverted to his sister’s house who had embraced Islām with her husband. When he arrived there, he heard them reading the Qur’ān and got very angry. After a while he asked to see the words they were reciting but was told to first become pure. The words he read had such an effect on him that he went straight to Rasūlullāh ﷺ and embraced Islām.

The Quraysh left no stone unturned in trying to turn people away from Islām. They decided to boycott the Muslims and their supporters. No one would talk to them, or trade with them or get their children married to them. This led to Abū Ṭālib leading his family and their supporters, the Banū Hāshim and the Banū Muṭṭalib to a valley on the outskirts of Makkah.

For 3 years they lived there in great difficulty and the boycott was finally broken when the parchment upon which the terms had
been written, which was hung inside the Ka‘bah, had been eaten away. All of the words except the words ‘Bi’ismika Allāh humma’ had been destroyed.

The boycott was followed by the ‘Year of Sorrow’, in which Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلاَم first and only wife at the time, Khaḍījah ﷺ passed away. She had been with him for around 25 years and they had 6 children together. She was the first person to believe in him and now she was gone.

Very soon after, Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلاَم uncle, Abū Ṭālib, who had looked after him since he was 8 years old, also passed away. Even though he had supported Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلاَم through thick and thin, he never embraced Islām and died on the religion of his forefathers.

Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلاَم then journeyed to Ṭāif with Zayd ﷺ hoping they would gain support from the local tribes. The local chieftains refused the invitation and they were chased out by the street urchins who pelted them both until they were seriously injured.

Allāh صلی الله عليه وسلاَم sent Jibrīl ﷺ and the Angel of the Mountains to Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلاَم so he could order them as he wished.
Rather than asking for them to get punished, he let them be and supplicated for them, that maybe there would be some people in their progeny who would believe in Allāh سبحانه وتعالی and not associate any partners with him.
The Journey

After coming back from Ṭāif, Allāh ﷻ took Rasūlullāh ﷺ on a journey which no man had ever undertaken before.

This journey started from Makkah and took him all the way to Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ in Al-Quds and then up to the Seven Heavens.

This journey is known as the Isrā’ and the Miʿrāj.

According to some of the Muffasirūn, it took place in the 11th or 12th year of Prophethood. Now regarding the exact date of the journey, there is a difference of opinion. There are 5 opinions in total, but the most common opinion is that it was on the 27th of Rajjab and Allāh ﷻ knows best.
The Definitions

Now sometimes there is a little confusion as to what Al-İsrā’ and Al-Mi‘rāj mean, so here are the definitions:

Al-İsrā’ is the term used for the night journey, from Makkah to Masjid Al-Aqṣā’.

And the term Al-Mi‘rāj is the term used for Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم going from Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ up to the Heavens, or the ‘Ascension to the Heavens’.

الاسراء والمعراج
The Importance of Masjid Al-Aqṣā’

Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ is a place which holds a very high status in Islām. Before we carry on with the Sīrah, let us look at its unique importance.

Revelation

Allāh ﷻ says in Sūrah Al-Isrā’:

سُبَحَـٰنَ ٱلَّذِى سَرَۡىٰ بِعَبۡدِهِۦ لََۡلا مِنَ ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ ٱلَۡۡرَامِ إِلَ ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ قۡصَا ٱلَۡۡ ٱلَّذِى بَـٰرَکۡنَا حَوۡلَُ ۦِيَهُ لِنُُ ۥ مِنۡ ءَايَـٰتِنَا ۚ إِنذهُ ۥ هُوَ ۱١۱(ٱلَۡۡصِيُ السذمِيعُ ”

“Glorious is He Who made his servant travel by night from Al Masjid Al-Ḥarām to Al-Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ whose environs We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs, Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing”

Allāh ﷻ mentions the Masjid by its own Name in the Glorious Qur’ān.

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1 Sūrah Al-Isrā’ Verse 1


**Ahādīth**

There are many narrations in many Books of Ahādīth which also mention the Sacred Site.

**The Three Masājid**

In Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, there is a narration which encourages us to visit Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ as follows:

“عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رضى الله عنه عَنِ النذبِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ..." لا تَشَدُّ الرَّحَالُ إِلَّا إِلَى ثَلَاثَةِ مَسَاجِدٍ مَسْجِدِ الرَّسُولِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَمَسْجِدِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَسْجِدِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْقِبْلَةِ..."

Abū Hurayrah narrates, that Rasūlullāh said

“A person should not set out on a journey except to 3 Masājid, Masjid Al-Ḥarām, the Masjid of the Rasūlullāh (Masjid Nabwī) and Masjid Al-Aqṣā’".

So only 3 Masājid are named in this Ḥadīth, where a person can make an intention to go and visit specifically. If a person follows this Ḥadīth and visits Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ then it will be very rewarding.

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2 Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī 1189
The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Masjid to be built

In \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī}, there is another narration where Rasūlullāh ﷺ tells us when Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ was built:

\begin{quote}
حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ العَمْرَاءُ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ سَمَعْتُ أَبَا ذِرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ إِنَّهُ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ كَمْ كَانَ بَيْنَهُمَا قَالَ مَرَّتُكَ يَنَمَّى أَرَبَعُونَ سَنَةٌ فَإِنذ الْفَضْلَ فِيهِ
\end{quote}

Abū Dharr says, “I said Oh Messenger of Allāh, which was the first Masjid set upon the earth, Rasūlullāh ﷺ said “Masjid Al-Ḥarām”. I then said, then which one, he said “Masjid Al-Aqṣā’”. I said what was the time in between the 2, he said 40 years. Then he said whenever the time comes for Ṣalāt, then read Ṣalāt there for indeed there is good in it”.

From this Ḥadīth, we can see that Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ was the second Masjid to be built, 40 years after Masjid Al-Ḥarām.

\(^3\) \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī} 3366
Wearing the Iḥrām from Masjid Al-Aqṣā’

This Ḥadīth is from Sunan Abū Dāwūd which tells us the reward for entering into the state of Iḥrām from the 3rd Holiest Masjid in Islām.

ٍعَنْ أَمِّ سَلَمَةَ زُوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أنَّها سَمِعَتْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ "مَنْ أَهْلَ يَحْجَةٍ أَوْ عُمْرَةٍ مِنَ المسْجِدِ الأَقْصَى إِلَى المسْجِدِ الْمُسْجِدِ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدُّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ" أَوْ "وَجَبَتْ لَهُ الحَجِّةُ" شَكَّ عَبْدُ اللهذِ أَيْتَهُمَا قَالَ قَالَ أَبُو دَاوُدُ يَرْحَمُ اللَّهُ وَكِيعا أَحْرَمَ مِنْ بَيْتِ الْمُقَدِّسِ يَغْنِي إِلَى مَكَّة ٤

Umme Salamah  the wife of Rasūlullāh  said, she heard Rasūlullāh  saying, “Whoever puts on the Iḥrām for Ḥājj or ‘Umrah from Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ to Masjid Al-Ḥarām, then all his previous sins are forgiven and his latter sins. Or Jannah become obligatory upon them”.

We can see from these narrations how important Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ is in Islām.

٤ Sunan Abū Dāwūd 1741
The Beginning of the Journey

One-night Rasūlullāh ﷺ was resting in the house of Umm Ḥāni. Umme Ḥāni was the first cousin of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and the daughter of Abū Ṭālib. Her real name was Fākhitāh.

You can see the location of her house in the picture below marked with the silver outline.⁵

Suddenly, the roof of the house opened and Jibrīl ﷺ came down from the Heavens with some other Angels. They woke Rasūlullāh ﷺ up and took him to the Ḥaram which was close by.

⁵ Picture courtesy of Binimad Al-Ateeqi (Binimad.com)
Rasūlullāh ﷺ then laid down in the Ḥaṭīm and fell asleep. Jibrīl ﷺ and Mīkā’il ﷺ woke up Rasūlullāh ﷺ again and took him to the well of zam-zam.

He was laid down and his blessed chest was split open by the Angels. They removed his heart and washed it with zam-zam. A golden tray was brought which was full of faith and wisdom. They filled Rasūlullāh ﷺ heart with this faith and wisdom and put it back in his body. The seal of Prophethood was then placed between his shoulder blades. This seal was visible proof of Rasūlullāh ﷺ being the last of the Prophets.

The Burāq

A Heavenly creature was then brought for Rasūlullāh ﷺ, which was called a Burāq. The earlier Prophets used to ride on this animal. It was smaller than a mule but larger than a donkey and white in colour. In another narration it mentions that it had 2 wings. This animal could go so fast that it could travel the distance one can see with their eyes, in one step.
Rasūlullāh ﷺ mounted the animal and it started to misbehave. Jibrīl  addressed the Burāq and said “What kind of misbehaviour is this? Until today, there has never been a servant of Allāh more respected and honoured than Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم who has sat on your back”. Out of shame, the Burāq started to perspire. Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم then left on the back of the Burāq accompanied by the 2 great Angels, Jibrīl  and Mīkā’īl . In other narrations it mentions that Jibrīl  put Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم on the back of the Burāq and then also sat on it behind Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم.

It was in this grace and dignity that Rasūlullāh ﷺ left for this miraculous journey.

**The Date Palms**

Shaddād ibn Aws  mentions that Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم said “On the way we passed by some land, where there were a lot of date palms”. Jibrīl  told Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم to dismount from the Burāq and read 2 Rak‘ah of Nafl (optional) prayers. Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم said
that I dismounted and read my Ṣalāt.

Jibrīl  then asked him, “Do you know where you have read your Ṣalāt?” Rasūlullāh  said he didn’t know. Jibrīl said “You have read Ṣalāt in Yathrib (which would later be known as Madīnah), where you will migrate.”

**Sinai**

They carried on their journey and after a while Jibrīl told Rasūlullāh  to dismount again and read 2 Rak‘ah of Nafl (optional) prayers. Rasūlullāh  again dismounted and read his Salāt.

Jibrīl said “You have read Ṣalāt in the valley of Sinai near the tree of Mūsā’ where Allāh talked to him”.

Sinai is the peninsular which is to the east of Egypt. It is through this land that Mūsā’ led the Banū Isrā’il.
St Catherine’s
St Catherine’s is a Monastery located at the base of Mount Sinai. It houses the ‘Burning Bush’ which according to Jewish and Christian narrations, is the place where Mūsā’.AllowUser الله وسلم spoke to Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَ-Ta‘alā.

On the right, you can see a picture of the ‘Burning Bush’.
Midian
After Sinai, Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم and Jibrīl  carried on until they stopped again in another land. Again, Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم was told to read Ṣalāt which he did. This time, Jibrīl  told him it was the land of Midian where Shuʿayb  was sent. According to Jewish and Christian sources, the land of Midian was to the east of Sinai, over the Gulf of Aqaba.

Bethlehem
Again they carried on, and again they stopped. Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم was told to dismount and read his Ṣalāt, and this time he was told it the birth place of ʿĪsā; , Bayt Al-Laḥm or Bethlehem as it is known. According to Christian sources, the location where ʿĪsā  was born is inside the Church of the Nativity, which is in Bethlehem.
Strange Encounters

In Bayhaqī, in a narration by ibn Jarīr, Rasūlullāh was travelling on the Burāq when they passed by an old woman. She called out to Rasūlullāh but Jibrīl said carry on going and don’t pay any attention to her.

They carried on and then saw an old man. Again he called out to Rasūlullāh and again Jibrīl told him to carry on.

They carried on again and passed by a group of people who sent greetings to Rasūlullāh in the following words:

السلام عليك يا أول
السلام عليك يا اخر
السلام عليك يا حاشر

Jibrīl told Rasūlullāh to reply to their greeting.

After a while Jibrīl told Rasūlullāh who all these people were. He said that the old woman who they met first was the World. And the World only has a little time left, in the same way as the old woman has a little time left in her life.
The old man who they met second was Shayṭān, the Devil. Both the World and the Devil’s aim is to entice you towards them.

And the group who greeted you were the blessed Messengers, ʿĪsā’!

عليهم السلام
Bayt Al-Maqdis

Rasūlullāh ﷺ now reached Bayt Al-Maqdis. Before we carry on with the story, I just wanted to clarify, what is Bayt Al-Maqdis or Masjid Al-Aqṣā’. Many times when we see pictures of Masjid Al-Aqṣā’, we see the Grey Domed Structure located to the South of the Holy Precinct.

In fact, the whole area which you can see within the old walls marked by the yellow dashed lines, the entire Holy Precinct is Bayt Al-Maqdis or Masjid Al-Aqṣā’.
The Dome of the Rock
There are two main structures in the area, firstly the Dome of the Rock or the Qubbat Al-Ṣakhirah. This is the Golden Domed building on the raised platform in the centre of Masjid Al-Aqṣā’.

This place is attributed as the location where Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم ascended to Heaven. Although it has a dome, it is not classified as a Masjid. It was built by the Ummayad Caliph ʿAbdul Malik in 688 AD and opened in 691 AD.

Masjid Al-Qibli
The second main structure is Masjid Al-Qibli. It is the Grey Domed Masjid located to the south of the Holy Precinct. This is the Masjid where Ṣalāt takes place.
The Burāq Wall

Rasūlullāh ﷺ had reached the land of the Prophets and dismounted from the Burāq. In Şahīl Muslim there is a Ḥadīth which is narrated by Anas in which he mentions that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said he tethered the Burāq to the same ring which the Prophets of Allāh used to tether their animals to.

There is another narration in Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī as follows:

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"لمَّا انتهَيتَا إِلَى بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ قَالَ جِبْرِيلَ بِابْصٍبْعِهِ فَخَرَقَ بِهِ الحُجَرَ وَشَدَّ بِهِ البُرَاقَ 
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Ibn Buraydah narrates from his father that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said: "When we reached Bayt Al-Maqdis, Jibrīl pointed with his finger causing a crack in the rock, and he tied Al-Buraq to it"

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6 Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī - 3424
In this picture you can see the entrance to Masjid Burāq which is where the Burāq was tied. It is located on the western side of the Holy Precinct.

In this picture you can see the inside of the Masjid and the location of the ring.
The Prayer of the Prophets

Abū Saʿīd Al-Khudrī narrates that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said that both he and Jibrīl ﷺ entered the Masjid and both read 2 Rakʿah Şalāt.

The Prophets of Allāh ﷺ had already gathered in the Masjid in anticipation of Rasūlullāh ﷺ visit. Among these were Ibrāhīm, Mūsā’ and ʿĪsā’ ﷺ.

After a while many people were gathered within Masjid Al-Aqṣā’. A Mu’adhīn then performed the Adhān and then the Iqāmah. All of the people were standing in line, waiting to see who would lead the prayer. Rasūlullāh ﷺ says, that Jibrīl ﷺ came and took his hand and made him go forward. He then led the people in prayer.

When the Şalāt was concluded, Jibrīl ﷺ asked Rasūlullāh ﷺ if he knew who he had just led in prayer. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said he didn’t know. Jibrīl ﷺ said, all of the Prophets who had been sent by Allāh ﷺ, read Şalāt behind you!

In another narration it says that the Angels also descended from the Heavens and Rasūlullāh ﷺ led both the Prophets and Angels in prayer.
After the Ṣalāt had concluded, the Angels asked Jibrīl  who was with him. Jibrīl  said, this was Muḥammad ﷺ.

The Three bowls

Rasūlullāh ﷺ left the Masjid and 3 bowls were presented to him, one had water, the other had milk and the 3rd had wine.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ chose the bowl of milk and Jibrīl  told him that he has chosen the natural religion. If he had chosen the wine, his people would have gone astray and if he had chosen the water, his people would have drowned. In some narrations it also says that a bowl of honey was presented to Rasūlullāh ﷺ from which he also drank.
The Ascension

Rasūlullāh ﷺ then made his way up to the heavens with Jibrīl . In some narrations it mentions that Rasūlullāh ﷺ made his way up on the Burāq whilst other narrations say that a ladder was sent down from heaven which he ascended.

Ibn Isḥāq  mentions that Abū Saʿīd Al-Khudrī  narrates that he heard Rasūlullāh ﷺ say “When I finished from the commands in Bayt Al-Maqdis, a ladder was brought down. I have never seen a more beautiful ladder than this. It was that ladder which the souls of the children of Ādam  ascend on the way up to the Heavens. When a person is passing away, it is this ladder they look towards”.

“My Companion Jibrīl  made me climb the ladder until I reached a door from the doors of the Heavens called ‘Bāb Al-Ḥafazāh’. There was an Angel from the Angels on this door who was called Ismāʿīl. He had 12,000 Angels under him. And under each of these Angels, were another 12,000 Angels!” At the time when Rasūlullāh ﷺ was narrating this Ḥadīth, he mentioned the verse:
When he was being entered through the door, the Angel said, “Who is this O Jibrīl?” Jibrīl ﷺ said “Muḥammad”. The Angel said, “Has he been sent for?” Jibrīl ﷺ replied “Yes”. The Angel then welcomed him and supplicated for him.

The Keeper of Hell

In another narration in Ibn Isḥāq, it mentions that Rasūlullāh ﷺ met the Angels when he entered the Heavens of the earth. All the Angels he would meet would be smiling, they would say nice things to him and supplicate for him.

Until he met an Angel from among the Angels, who said what the other Angels said. The Angel supplicated for him in the same way the other Angels supplicated for him, however he did not smile.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ asked Jibrīl ﷺ who this Angel was. Jibrīl ﷺ said if he was to smile at anyone before you, or smile at

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7 Sūrah Al-Mudaththir verse 31
anyone after you, he would have smiled at you, but he does not smile. This is ‘Mālik’ the keeper of Hell.

The First Heaven

Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم entered the first heaven and saw a venerable person, meaning a respected wise person. Jibrīl صلی الله علیه و سلم told Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم that this is your father Ādam صلی الله علیه و سلم. Jibrīl صلی الله علیه و سلم told Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم to greet him, and he did. Ādam صلی الله علیه و سلم replied and then said:

مرحبا وبابا الصالح و النبي الصالح

“Welcome pious son and pious Messenger”

He then supplicated for Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم.

Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم saw that there were some people to the right of Ādam صلی الله علیه و سلم and some people to his left. When Ādam صلی الله علیه و سلم looked at the people on the right, he would get happy and when he looked at the people on the left, he would get upset.

Jibrīl صلی الله علیه و سلم told Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم that the people on his right were his pious children, those who will go to Heaven so when he sees them, he gets happy. And the people on his left are his bad children, who are the people of the fire, so when he sees them, he cries.
Part 7 - The Night Journey & Ascension

The Second Heaven
Rasūlullāh ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ then made their way to the 2nd Heaven. The Gatekeeper again asked Jibrīl ﷺ who he was with. Again he replied it was Muḥammad ﷺ.

The door was opened, and they were welcomed inside. Here Rasūlullāh ﷺ saw Yaḥyā’ ﷺ and ‘Īsā’ ﷺ.

Jibrīl ﷺ again told Rasūlullāh ﷺ to greet them and he did, and they replied. They then said:

مرحبا با لاخ الصالح و بالنبي الصالح

“Welcome pious brother and pious Messenger”

The Rest of the Heavens
Rasūlullāh ﷺ then proceeded to the other Heavens, one after another. Each time, the Gatekeeper of the Heaven would ask Jibrīl ﷺ who he was and whether his Companion had been sent for. Upon receiving the answer, Rasūlullāh ﷺ would be welcomed inside.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ and Jibrīl ﷺ went up to the 3rd Heaven and saw a person whose face was like the full moon. He enquired, who this person was and Jibrīl ﷺ told him it is your brother Yūsuf ibn Yaʿqūb. 
They then proceeded to the 4th Heaven and there was a person also present there. Rasūlullāh صلی‌اللہ‌علیهِ وسلم enquired, who is this person. Jibrīl  said it is Idrīs .

When Rasūlullāh صلی‌اللہ‌علیهِ وسلم heard who it was he mentioned the following verse:

وَرَفَعۡنَـٰهُ مَكََناا عَلِيًّا

“We raised him to a high place”

Rasūlullāh صلی‌اللہ‌علیهِ وسلم then proceeded to the 5th Heaven with Jibrīl  and saw an elderly man with white hair and a large white beard. He had never seen an elderly person more beautiful than him.

Once again Rasūlullāh صلی‌اللہ‌علیهِ وسلم enquired as to who this person was and he was told it was he who was loved by his people, Hārūn ibn ʿImrān صلی‌اللہ‌علیهِ وسلم.

Rasūlullāh صلی‌اللہ‌علیهِ وسلم then proceeded to the 6th Heaven with Jibrīl  and saw a person with a dark complexion. He appeared as he was from the people of Shanū’ah.

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8 Sūrah Maryam verse 57
Rasūlullāh ﷺ asked Jibrīl ﷺ who this person was, and he was told it is your brother, Mūsā ibn ʿImrān ﷺ.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ then proceeded to the 7th Heaven with Jibrīl ﷺ. They saw an elderly person who was sat on a chair near the door of the Bayt Al-Maʿmūr.

The Bayt Al-Maʿmūr or the ‘Frequented House’, is directly above the Kaʿbah, and is the Qiblah of the Angels. Every day 70,000 Angels perform the Ṭawāf of the House and they will not return to it until the Day of Qiyāmah. This shows how many Angels have been created by Allāh ﷻﷻﷻ.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, that he hadn’t seen a person who looked so like himself, then he asked Jibrīl ﷺ once again, who this person was. He was told, it was his father, Ibrāhīm ﷺ.

Jibrīl ﷺ then told Rasūlullāh ﷺ to greet him. Rasūlullāh ﷺ greeted Ibrāhīm ﷺ who replied and then said:

مرحببا با لابن الصالح و النبي الصالح

“Welcome pious son and pious Messenger”
Sidrat Al-Muntahā’ (The Farthest Lote-Tree)

Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلم then went to the Sidrat Al-Muntahā’, the furthest Lote-Tree.

The Ḥadīth below describes this amazing tree.

"I heard Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلم while mentioning the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary, saying: 'A rider will travel in the shade of one of its branches for a hundred years,' or 'a hundred riders will seek to shade themselves with its shade'—(one of the narrators) Yaḥyā' was in doubt- 'in it are butterflies of gold, it is as if its fruits are Qilāl."

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Asmā' bint Abī Bakr رضي الله عنها narrates: "I heard Rasūlullāh صلی الله عليه وسلم while mentioning the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary, saying: 'A rider will travel in the shade of one of its branches for a hundred years,' or 'a hundred riders will seek to shade themselves with its shade'—(one of the narrators) Yaḥyā' was in doubt- 'in it are butterflies of gold, it is as if its fruits are Qilāl."
In this Ḥadīth, the fruits of the tree are described as well as the rivers that run from it:

Then I was made to ascend to Sidrat-Al-Muntahā’ (i.e. the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary) Behold! Its fruits were like the jars of Hajr (i.e. a place near Madīnah) and its leaves were as big as the ears of elephants. Jibrīl ﷺ said, 'This is the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary. Behold! There ran four rivers, two were hidden and two were visible, I asked, 'What are these two kinds of rivers, O Jibrīl ﷺ?' He replied, 'As for the hidden rivers, they are two rivers in Paradise and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates.’

This tree is a boundary. Everything that come up from below stops here, and everything that comes down from above also stop here. It was here that Rasūlullāh ﷺ saw Jibrīl ﷺ in his true form.

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10 Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī - 3887
Heaven, Hell & Ṣarīf Al-Aqlām

After going to the Sidrat Al-Muntahā, Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم then went to Heaven. After he visited Heaven, he was then shown Hell.

After this Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم was again raised to a place where he could hear the pens writing. The sound which is heard when the pens are writing is called Ṣarīf Al-Aqlām. And at that place the pens were busy writing destiny.

After this a throne was brought for Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه و سلم and he went to Allāh ﷺ.
Sūrah An-Najm

In Sūrah An-Najm, Allāh ﷻ tells us about Rasūlullāh ﷺ visit to the heavens on this blessed night.

"Then He drew near, and came down, (8) So as he was at a distance like that of two bows (joined together), rather even nearer. (9) Thus He (Allāh ﷻ) revealed to His slave what He revealed. (10)"

There is a narration in Khaṣāiṣ Kubrā’ where Anas narrates that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said he saw the light of Allāh ﷻ and then Allāh ﷻ sent Revelation to me whatever He wished i.e. He spoke to me directly.

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11 Sūrah An-Najm verses 8-10

37 | P a g e
Gifts from Allāh ﷺ

On this night, Allāh ﷺ gave Rasūlullāh ﷺ 3 gifts which are mentioned in the Ḥadīth below:

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd  narrates

"When Rasūlullāh ﷺ reached Sidrat Al-Muntahā, He said: 'There terminates everything that ascends from the earth, and everything that descends from above’. He said, there Allāh gave him three, which He did not give to any Prophet before him: He made five prayers obligatory upon him, He gave him the last Verses of Sūrah Al-Baqarah, and He pardoned the grave sins for those of his Ummah who do not associate anything with Allāh”

12 Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī 3587
Fifty Ṣalāt

Initially 50 Ṣalāt had been made obligatory on Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم. Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم began to return with the commandments. He first met Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who didn’t ask him about what Allāh ﷻ had commanded him.

He then met Mūsā’ عليه السلام who asked him, what Allāh ﷻ had commanded him to do. Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم said he had been commanded to read 50 Ṣalāt day and night. Mūsā’ عليه السلام said that he had experienced the Banū Isrā’īl and your Ummah is weak, they will not be able to complete this command, therefore go back to Allāh ﷻ and ask Him if he can lessen the amount.

Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم went back to Allāh ﷻ and asked for a reduction. Allāh ﷻ reduced it by 5 to 45.

Again on the way down Mūsā’ عليه السلام saw Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم and asked him how many it had been reduced to. When Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم answered, Mūsā’ عليه السلام advised him that this was still too much so go back to Allāh ﷻ.

Rasūlullāh صل الله عليه وسلم went back again to Allāh ﷻ, and it was reduced by another 5, so now 40 Ṣalāt were obligatory. Again Mūsā’ عليه السلام advised him to go back to get it reduced.
This process carried on. Rasūlullāh ﷺ would go to Allāh ﷻ who would reduce it by 5, then Mūsā’ ﷺ would send him back and Allāh ﷻ would then reduce it by another 5. 35, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10 until eventually Allāh ﷻ reduced the number to 5 obligatory Ṣalāt a day. Mūsā’ ﷺ again advised Rasūlullāh ﷺ to go back but this time Rasūlullāh ﷺ said “I have asked time and time again but now I am embarrassed”. He gave this answer to Mūsā’ ﷺ and left.
The Reward

Allāh had reduced the number of Ṣalāt from 50 to 5 however the Ummah of Rasūlullāh were to be blessed with no reduction in the reward.

Anas ibn Mālik narrated,

"On the Night of Isrā‘, fifty prayers were made obligatory upon the Prophet. Then it was decreased until it was made five. Then it was called out: 'O Muhammad! Indeed My Word does not change; these five prayers will be recorded for you as fifty.'"

Rasūlullāh made his way back to Bayt Al-Maqdis and then mounted on the Burāq and reached Makkah before Dawn.

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13 Jāmī‘ al-Tirmidhī 213
The Quraysh

In the morning Rasūlullāh ﷺ told the Quraysh about this amazing journey. They were shocked at what they heard. Some of them placed their hands on their heads and some started to clap. The Quraysh started to say “He has gone and come back from Bayt Al-Maqdis in one night! It takes one month to go from Makkah to Shām and one month to come back again, and he says he got there in one night and came back to Makkah as well!”.

The people who had been to Bayt Al-Maqdis started to test Rasūlullāh ﷺ by asking him about the features of the Sacred Place.

Allāh ﷻ brought a vision of Bayt Al-Maqdis in front of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and he was able to answer them. When they ran out of things to ask him, they said tell us something about the journey.
Rasūlullāh ﷺ said that he had met a trading caravan which was returning from Shām who had lost one of their camels, which they had later found. They will be back in Makkah after 3 days, Insha ‘Allāh. There will be an ashen coloured camel who will be at the front.

After 3 days the caravan entered Makkah and told the Quraysh how they had lost their camel. Upon hearing this, Walīd ibn Mughirah said that this was magic, and the people agreed with his opinion.

Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ٍ ﷺ
Some people went to Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ٍ ﷺ and said to him, what is with your friend, he claims that he went to Bayt Al-Maqdis last night, prayed there and come back to Makkah. Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ٍ ﷺ asked them if that was what Rasūlullāh ﷺ had said. They replied that Rasūlullāh ﷺ is talking about it to the people. Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ٍ ﷺ said to them, “By Allāh, if he has said it, then it is the truth, so what makes it so astonishing to you? By Allāh, he tells me that news comes from Allāh from the Heavens to the earth in a moment, either in the day or the night. And I believe him. And this is further then what you have been astonished with”. What an amazing answer!

From that day on, Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq ٍ ﷺ became known as Aṣ-Ṣiddīq.
Summary

Allāh blessed Rasūlullāh صلَّى الله عليه وسلم with a miraculous journey which will be remembered for all time. Before the journey, Jibrīl صلَّى الله عليه وسلم and Mikāīl صلَّى الله عليه وسلم took Rasūlullāh صلَّى الله عليه وسلم from the house of Umm Ḥāni رضي الله عنها to the Ḥaram. His heart was cleaned with zam-zam and filled with faith and wisdom.

Rasūlullāh صلَّى الله عليه وسلم then made the journey to Bayt Al-Maqdis on the Burāq. On the way, they stopped in several special places and saw many strange things.

They arrived in the Holy Precinct and the Burāq was tied in the same place the Prophets used to tie their animals. Rasūlullāh صلَّى الله عليه وسلم then led all the Prophets of Allāh صلَّى الله عليه وسلم in prayer. This is the only place in the world where this has ever happened.

After this, he ascended the Heavens with Jibrīl صلَّى الله عليه وسلم, meeting many Prophets on the way including Adam عليه السلام، ʿĪsā عليه السلام، Yaḥyā عليه السلام، Yūsuf عليه السلام، Idrīs عليه السلام، Hārūn عليه السلام، Mūsā’ عليه السلام & Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

He then journeyed to the Sidrat Al-Muntahā, the farthest Lote tree and Șarīf Al-Aqlām, where he could hear the pens write.
A throne was then brought for him and he went to Allāh ﷺ. On this miraculous occasion, Allāh ﷺ gave him 3 gifts including 50 Ṣalāt every day.

On the way back down, Rasūlullāh ﷺ saw Mūsā’ ﷺ who advised him to get the number reduced and eventually it came down to 5.

Rasūlullāh ﷺ went back to Makkah and told the Quraysh about his amazing journey. They tested him by questioning him about the features of Masjid al-Aqṣā’ and what he had seen on his journey. Allāh ﷺ brought a vision of the Masjid in front of him so he could answer their questions.

Even though Rasūlullāh ﷺ answered all their questions, the Quraysh still refused to believe. They went to Abū Bakr ﷺ to tell him about what Rasūlullāh ﷺ had claimed to have happened, and Abū Bakr ﷺ gave an amazing response supporting Rasūlullāh ﷺ claim and testifying to its truth. From that day on Abū Bakr ﷺ was known as Aṣ-Ṣiddīq.
The Importance of Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ in Islam

As this part of the Sīrah involved the blessed Masjid Al-Aqṣā’, I have included an extra chapter on its importance. It is imperative that we educate ourselves, our children, our families and our communities about Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ and the important role it plays in our religion of Islām. Here are some notable points.

1. Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ was built 40 years after the building of the Kaʿbah.
2. Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ is the 3rd Holiest Masjid in Islam
3. The whole area counts as Ḥaram Al-Sharīf, Masjid Al-Aqṣā’
4. It is the only place which where Rasūlullāh ﷺ led all the Prophets ﷺ in Prayer
5. Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ became the first Qiblah in Islām and remained the Qiblah until Rasūlullāh ﷺ came to Madīnah
6. If a person reads Ṣalāt in Masjid Al-Aqṣā’, they get the reward of 500 times.
7. Many Prophets and Ṣaḥābah ﷺ are buried there
8. The reward for performing ‘Umrah and Ḥajj from Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ is to have their sins forgiven or Jannah becomes obligatory upon them
9. The surrounding areas are also Holy to us, like Al-Khalil or Hebron where Ibrāhīm, Ishāq and Yaʿqūb are buried along with their wives.

10. There is also Bayt Al-Laḥm or Bethlehem where ʿĪsā was born.

We should all try and visit Masjid Al-Aqṣā’ with our families and friends and supplicate to Allāh that He brings peace to the whole region.
Sīrah of Muḥammad ﷺ
Part 7 - The Night Journey & Ascension

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