

THE NIGHT ASCENSION: LESSONS FOR A RIGHTEOUS SOCIETY

WITH UST DR MUHD HANIFF HASSAN

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FREE ZOOM EVENT



Objective

- Learn/refresh information and theological significance of the Isra' and Mi`raj event
- Learn important lessons about faith from a Companion of the Prophet in relation to the Isra' and Mi`raj event
- Understand the meaning of faith and its application in today's context

Introduction


- A brief introduction of Isra' and Mi`raj and its significance in Islam

Meaning

- Isra' = night travel (linguistically) = the Prophet's night travel from Mecca to Masjid Al-Aqsa and back to Mecca in one single night (theologically)
- Mi`raj = ascension (linguistically) = the Prophet's ascension during the night of Al-Isra' to Sidrat Al-Munata (the highest point a creature could ascend) from Masjid Al-Aqsa in the night of Al-Isra' (theologically)
- Two miracles in a single night
 - a to-and-fro travel in one night that usually would take two months period
 - a to-and-fro to sky to have audience with Allah and witness His signs from
 - Mecca -> Masjid Al-Aqsa -> Heaven -> Masjid Al-Aqsa -> Mecca, from dusk till dawn




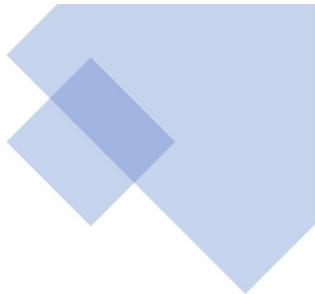

History

- No consensus on actual date of the event
 - more than 10 opinions
 - Popular date
 - 27 Rajab, 12 year after prophethood, in the year known as `Am Al-Hazn (Year of Sadness)
 - Muslim scholars are in consensus of its occurrence
 - mentioned in the Qur'an in surah Al-Isra' (17:1) and Al-Najm (53:7-18)
 - differing views on its actual date do not make the event theologically doubtful in view of the supporting scriptural evidences
 - modern science proved that the event is possible
 - > it takes just few hours to execute a return travel from Mecca to Al-Aqsa via supersonic jet (modern jet fighter)
 - > Allah's technology is far more advance
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- Contentious among Muslim scholars
 - Journey in person or in soul?
 - > majority view – in person (blood and flesh) based on the word “servant” in 17:1
 - > minority view – in soul (body in Mecca)


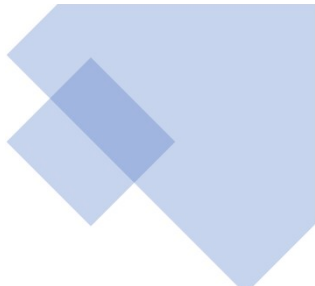
Theological significance

- A surah in the Qur’an is named after the event i.e. surah Al-Isra’ (Chapter no. 17)
 - although only a verse from the surah is dedicated for the event, the event was mentioned in 11 other verses in surah Al-Najm (53:7-18) = 12 in total
- God’s gift to the Prophet to console his sadness and strengthen his faith by demonstrating His signs = proofs of truth revealed to the Prophet i.e. heaven, hell, Akhirat, Qiyamat
 - > empirical evidence of truth for the Prophet
 - > privilege often given to God’s chosen servants
- the Prophet was sad due to; a) Meccan’s economic boycott of him, his followers and Bani Hashim clan, b) death of two of his staunch supporters i.e. Abu Talib and Khadijah
 - > reason for Year of Sadness name


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- Test of faith for Muslims
 - the Prophet's claim was outlandish by the standard of the time
 - > normal travel duration for return trip from Mecca to Bait Al-Maqdis was two months
 - > space travel was almost unimaginable
 - test to prepare Muslims for the next stage of da`wah = da`wah after hijrah
 - > more challenging / difficult
 - > greater commitment and strength of faith needed
 - > to test who would pass for the next stage = half of Muslims then denounced their faith when the Prophet broke the story
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Lessons

- A focused approach
 - a necessary and practical approach
 - many details and lessons from the event
 - > not realistic to be comprehensive and exhaustive
 - > not right to rely on one lecture session only = listen from others, read materials
- Most talks will cover the details of the Prophet's experience to deduce lessons i.e meeting with Prophets, witnessing punishments for certain category of sinners, tips and advice from Jibril
 - important, must continue to refresh memory on them

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- This talk will focus on a figure outside of the Prophet's experience of the event, but closely related
 - from the figure = learn an important Islamic value, pillar for being Muslim
 - > relates to the topic of the talk = Lessons For Righteous Society
 - > righteous = by the standard of Islam = standard for Muslims = being true Muslims

Who?

- Abdullah Ibn Quhafah
 - aka Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq
 - Al-Siddiq was honourable title given to Abu Bakr for his unflinching trust and belief of the Prophet's story
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How?

- It was reported in a hadith

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى أَصْبَحَ يَتَحَدَّثُ النَّاسُ بِذَلِكَ فَازْتَدَّ نَاسٌ مِمَّنْ كَانُوا آمَنُوا بِهِ وَصَدَّقُوهُ وَسَعَوْا بِذَلِكَ إِلَى أَبِي بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ فَقَالُوا هَلْ لَكَ فِي صَاحِبِكَ يَزْعُمُ أَنَّهُ أُسْرِيَ بِهِ فِي اللَّيْلِ إِلَى بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ قَالَ أَوْ قَالَ ذَلِكَ قَالُوا نَعَمْ قَالَ لَيْسَ كَأَنَّ قَالَ ذَلِكَ لَقَدْ صَدَقَ قَالُوا وَتَصَدَّقُهُ أَنَّهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّيْلَةَ إِلَى بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ وَجَاءَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُصْبِحَ قَالَ نَعَمْ إِنِّي لِأَصَدِّقُهُ بِمَا هُوَ أَبْعَدُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَصَدِّقُهُ بِخَبَرِ السَّمَاءِ فِي غَدْوَةٍ أَوْ رَوْحَةٍ فَلِذَلِكَ سُمِّيَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ الصِّدِّيقَ

“Aisha reported: After the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was miraculously taken by night to the furthest mosque in Jerusalem, the people began to talk about it. Some of them renounced their faith and belief in him. They sought Abu Bakr and they said, “Have you heard that your friend imagined he was taken by night to the sacred house?” Abu Bakr said, “Did he say that?” They said yes. Abu Bakr said, “If he said it, he has spoken the truth.” They said, “Do you believe he went by night to the sacred house and returned before morning?” Abu Bakr said, “Yes. Verily, I believe what is even more astonishing than that. I believe he has received messages from heaven for everything he does.” **For this reason, Abu Bakr was named the Truthful, Al-Siddiq.**” (Narrated by Al-Baihaqi in *Dala'il Al-Nubuwwah*. Rated Sahih by Al-Albani, in *Al-Silsilah Al-Sahihah*)

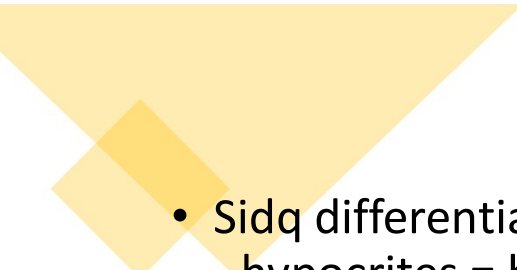
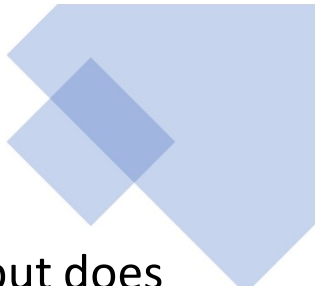

Virtue of Sidq

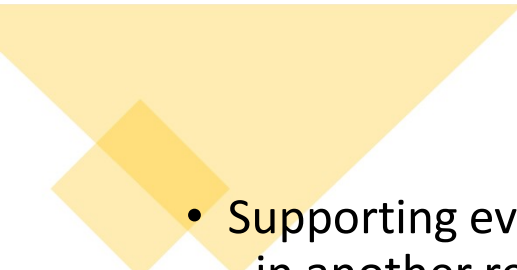
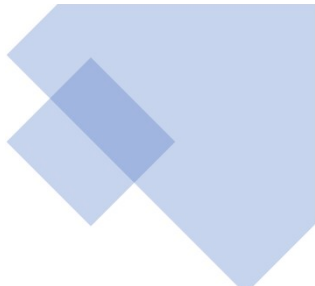

- Not just about emulating Abu Bakr's great character
 - strong faith and belief manifested in unflinching trust in the Prophet and tasdiq (affirmation) of truth
- Sidq = a pillar of Islamic akhlaq and being Muslims
 - a twin brother of faith
 - no faith/belief without Sidq
- Believer = must not only know truth, but affirm it (tasdiq) in heart, mind and behaviour
 - affirm in heart that God exist
 - know evidence and argument about the existence of God and remember Him constantly
 - follow God's guidance = perform all His commands, avoid all His prohibitions

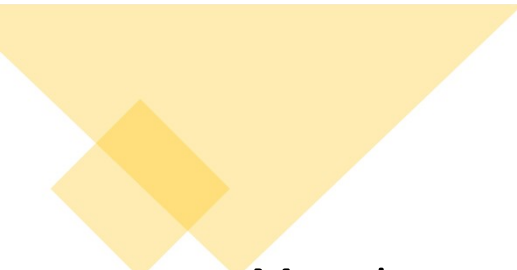
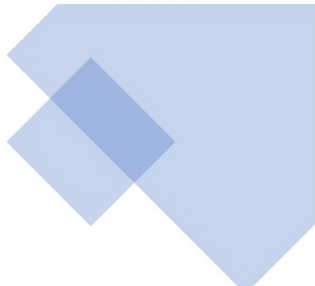

وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

“But he who brings the truth, and he who wholeheartedly accepts it as true - it is they, they, who are [truly] conscious of Him!” (39:33)

- Sidq is central to taqwa (righteousness)

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- Sidq differentiates Muslim from disbeliever and hypocrite
 - hypocrites = have information about truth, show behavioural commitment to it, but does not affirm/reject the truth in the heart
 - disbelievers – have information about truth, reject the truth in the heart and express behavioural rejection of it
 - Sidq = dogma, as demonstrated by Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq?
 - NO
 - Abu Bakr's attitude is not evidence for Islam's endorsement of dogmatism in the name of Sidq = blind following/obedience in Islamic theology or superiority of such Sidq
 - Abu Bakr's affirmation of the Prophet's story is rational and knowledge-based
 - based on right knowledge about the Prophet and calculation that by balance of probability the Prophet could not be lying
 - based on the Prophet's character = Al-Sadiq Al-Amin (Truthful and Trustworthy)
 - > the character was vouched by all people who have known him before prophethood
 - > no one would say otherwise about Muhammad
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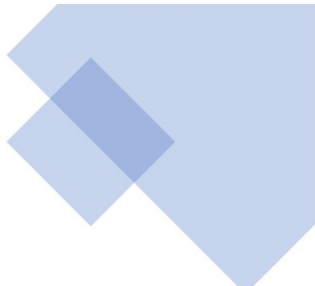

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- Supporting evidence for Abu Bakr's not dogmatic Sidq
 - in another report narrated by Ibn `Abd Al-Bar
 - > Abu Bakr went to the Prophet to verify the news after hearing about it from Meccans
 - > the Prophet affirmed the story
 - > Abu Bakr requested from the Prophet to describe Bait Al-Aqsa in detail because Abu Bakr knew them from his business travel to Sham
 - > the Prophet did it accurately
 - > Abu Bakr vouched for the Prophet and reaffirmed his trust on him
 - Truth is central in Islam
 - Islam is all about truth
 - affirming truth (Sidq) is central too
 - but Sidq in Islam cannot be dogmatic, blind taqlid
 - > knowledge-based, evidence-based, rational and methodological argument via critical assessment of information / knowledge / data
 - > see 12:108
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- More important in today's context
 - no person has the same standing of the Prophet
 - > the Prophet is ma`sum (infallible)
 - no infallible person after the death of the Prophet
 - critical thinking in Sidq has become more important
 - History reported the Prophet's misjudgment which implicated Abu Bakr too
 - the Prophet misjudged in the case of Meccans captured as POW after the Battle of Badr
 - > Umar Al-Khattab suggested execution of the POWs
 - > Abu Bakr preferred ransom
 - > the Prophet chose Abu Bakr's suggestion and instructed that the POWs were allowed to be released on ransom
 - Allah corrected the Prophet's decision in his revelation in 8:67-9 (see book of tafsir for elaboration)
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“....The Messenger of Allah said to Abu Bakr and `Umar (Allah be pleased with them): What is your opinion about these captives? Abu Bakr said: They are our kith and kin. I think you should release them after getting from them a ransom. This will be a source of strength to us against the infidels. It is quite possible that Allah may guide them to Islam. Then the Messenger of Allah said: What is your opinion, Ibn Khattab? He said: Messenger of Allah, I do not hold the same opinion as Abu Bakr. I am of the opinion that you should hand them over to us so that we may cut off their heads. Hand over `Aqil to `Ali that he may cut off his head, and hand over such and such relative to me that I may cut off his head. They are leaders of the disbelievers and veterans among them. The Messenger of Allah approved the opinion of Abu Bakr and did not approve what I said. The next day when I came to the Messenger of Allah, I found that both he and Abu Bakr were sitting shedding tears. **I said: Messenger of Allah, why are you and your Companion shedding tears? Tell me the reason. For I will weep, or I will at least pretend to weep in sympathy with you. The Messenger of Allah said: I weep for what has happened to your companions for taking ransom (from the prisoners). I was shown the torture to which they were subjected. It was brought to me as close as this tree. (He pointed to a tree close to him.) Then God revealed the verse: It is not befitting for a prophet that he should take prisoners until the force of the disbelievers has been crushed... to the end of the verse: so eat ye the spoils of war, (it is) lawful and pure. So Allah made booty lawful for them.”** (Narrated by Muslim)

Conclusion

- Isra' and Mi`raj's key reminder for a righteous society is about the importance of Sidq
 - Muslim should always affirm what is truth and to be on its side, despite the odds and challenges
- Sidq is not dogmatic and blind obedience
 - must be knowledge and evidence based
- What could not be proven rationally/scientifically now, may not be necessary untrue
 - but don't quick to discount rational argument, even in matters of faith i.e. belief in the unseens (ghaibiyat)
 - proxy evidence may still be available, in the absence of direct evidence i.e. integrity of the Prophet as proxy evidence of his truth claim
 - > don't quick to dismiss what the mind could not comprehend yet
 - > truth could still be affirmed based on proxy evidence

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- Today's context, no person is infallible after the Prophet
 - all claims of truth must be assessed critically on scriptural evidence, logical argument, methodological approach and relevant knowledge before applying Sidq
 - Be like Abu Bakr
 - unflinching trust of the Prophet but not dogmatic, unlike some popular opinion
 - verified news, looked for supporting proofs, despite the Prophet known to be Al-Amin
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End of Presentation Thank You

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