

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran, Imam Zafrullah Domun said:

Members might be aware that on the 27th of the month of Rajab which is the seventh month of the Islamic calendar a majority of Sunni Muslims around the world celebrate what we know as the *laylatul Mi'raj* which is usually translated as the Night of Ascension. This year the 27th of Rajab fell on Monday last. On Tuesday 27th May many Sunnis even fasted. Although we do not condemn anyone for such celebrations but that much we will say that such celebrations do not have their origin in Islam. No one can produce any reliable hadith to say that the Holy Prophet (saw) asked any of his followers to celebrate that night or fast the following day. If someone does it as a way to seek blessings from Allah through the performance of additional acts of devotion, Allah will most surely appreciate such efforts. However to say that Muslims should celebrate this event is not warranted by any practice of the Holy Prophet (saw) or even the companions. In Addition there is still difference of opinion between what the learned understand about this particular event and what the common people led by Mullahs know and practice.

Hence we Ahmadi Muslims we do not celebrate these events. In addition we hold this journey to be spiritual contrary to the majority of Muslims who think that it was a physical journey to the heavens and back. In addition we understand that the Night Journey which is mentioned in the Holy Quran in Chapter 17 and the ascension to heaven which is mentioned in chapter 53(*An Najm*) are two separate events. Unfortunately in popular knowledge these two events have been taken to be only one event. The hadiths concerning these events are narrated by no less than twenty five companions. From their reports a picture of what happened has been built up. However the majority of scholarly opinions believe that the *Miraj* took place in the fifth year of the call and the journey to Jerusalem took place in the eleventh to twelfth year. Since our young people are not quite aware of this event I have chosen to speak about it today in this sermon. Imam Bokhari (ra) reports in his book as follows:

“Malik bin Sasaa said that Allah's Apostle described to them his Night Journey saying, "While I was lying in Al-Hatim or Al-Hijr, suddenly someone came to me and cut my body open from here to here." I asked Al-Jarud who was by my side, "What does he mean?" He said, "It means from his throat to his pubic area," or said, "From the top of the chest." The Prophet further said, "He then took out my heart. Then a gold tray of Belief was brought to me and my heart was washed and was filled (with Belief) and then returned to its original place. Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me." (On this Al-Jarud asked, "Was it the Buraq, O Abu Hamza?" I (i.e. Anas) replied in the affirmative). The Prophet said, "The animal's step (was so wide that it) reached the farthest point within the reach of the

animal's sight. I was carried on it, and Gabriel set out with me till we reached the nearest heaven.

When he asked for the gate to be opened, it was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has Muhammad been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!'

The gate was opened, and when I went over the first heaven, I saw Adam there. Gabriel said (to me). 'This is your father, Adam; pay him your greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious son and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me till we reached the second heaven. Gabriel asked for the gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel answered in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!' The gate was opened.

When I went over the second heaven, there I saw Yahya (i.e. John) and 'Isa (i.e. Jesus) who were cousins of each other. Gabriel said (to me), 'These are John and Jesus; pay them your greetings.' So I greeted them and both of them returned my greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.' Then Gabriel ascended with me to the third heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed, what an excellent visit his is!' The gate was opened, and when I went over the third heaven there I saw Joseph. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is Joseph; pay him your greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to the fourth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed, what an excellent visit his is!'

The gate was opened, and when I went over the fourth heaven, there I saw Idris. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is Idris; pay him your greetings.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.' Then Gabriel ascended with me to the fifth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed, what an excellent visit his is!' So when I went over the fifth heaven, there I saw Harun (i.e. Aaron), Gabriel said, (to me). 'This is Aaron; pay him your greetings.' I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to the sixth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. It was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!'

When I went (over the sixth heaven), there I saw Moses. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is Moses; pay him your greeting. So I greeted him and he returned the greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet.' When I left him (i.e. Moses) he wept. Someone asked him, 'What makes you weep?' Moses said, 'I weep because after me there has been sent (as Prophet) a young man whose followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than my followers.'

Then Gabriel ascended with me to the seventh heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'who is accompanying you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!'

So when I went (over the seventh heaven), there I saw Abraham. Gabriel said (to me), 'This is your father; pay your greetings to him.' So I greeted him and he returned the greetings to me and said, 'You are welcomed, O pious son and pious Prophet.' Then I was made to ascend to *Sidrat-ul-Muntaha* (i.e. the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary) Behold! Its fruits were like the jars of Hajr (i.e. a place near Medina) and its leaves were as big as the ears of elephants. Gabriel 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 Gabriel?' He replied, 'As for the hidden rivers, they are two rivers in Paradise and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates.'

Then Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mur (i.e. the Sacred House) was shown to me and a container full of wine and another full of milk and a third full of honey were brought to me. I took the milk. Gabriel remarked, 'This is the Islamic religion which you and your followers are following.' Then the prayers were enjoined on me: They were fifty prayers a day. When I returned, I passed by Moses who asked (me), 'What have you been ordered to do?' I replied, 'I have been ordered to offer fifty prayers a day.' Moses said, 'Your followers cannot bear fifty prayers a day, and by Allah, I have tested people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israel (in vain). Go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your followers' burden.' So I went back, and Allah reduced ten prayers for me. Then again I came to Moses, but he repeated the same as he had said before. Then again I went back to Allah and He reduced ten more prayers. When I came back to Moses he said the same, I went back to Allah and He ordered me to observe ten prayers a day. When I came back to Moses, he repeated the same advice, so I went back to Allah and was ordered to observe five prayers a day.

When I came back to Moses, he said, 'What have you been ordered?' I replied, 'I have been ordered to observe five prayers a day.' He said, 'Your followers cannot bear five prayers a day, and no doubt, I have got an experience of the people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israel, so go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your follower's burden.' I said, 'I have requested so much of my Lord that I feel ashamed, but I am satisfied now and surrender to Allah's Order.' When I left, I heard a voice saying, 'I have passed My Order and have lessened the burden of My Worshipers.'

From the historian Ibn Kathir we learn that the prophet is reported to have said “We travelled on the Buraaq until we reached the Baitul Maqdis. Jibraeel carved a hole in the wall with his finger and tied the Buraaq around it”. (Ibn Katheer). The same ring which the various Ambiyaa Alayhimus Salaam had used to tie their animals. They entered the Masjid and found people engaged in the motions of Salaat. They too performed two rakaats Salaah each. “The sound of Azaan was heard, followed by the entire crowd getting into rows, in anticipation of someone to be the Imaam. Then Jibraeel Alayhis Salaam took my hand and led me to the front and I led all those that were present in Salaah”. (Ibn Katheer)

“When I completed the Salaah, Jibraeel Alayhis Salaam said “O Muhammad! Do you know the people who were behind you in Salaah?” When I replied, “No”, Jibraeel Alayhis Salaam said that these are all the Ambiyaa whom Allah had sent on earth”

Another report on this matter is from Umme Hani, cousin of the Prophet and sister of Hazrat Ali. She said ““Rasoolullah *Sallallaahu Alayhi Wa Sallam* was taken on the Night Journey the night he was in my house. He had prayed Esha and slept. At the time of Fajr, Rasoolullah woke us up. Then he prayed Fajr with us. He said, ‘*Umme Hani*’! *I prayed Esha with you as you saw then I went to Jerusalem and prayed there. Then I prayed Fajr with you as you see.*” (Ibn Ishaq, *at-Tabarani and Ibn Jarir*). From this many have concluded that the journey was physical. But Hazrat Ayesha has categorically said that the journey was one of the soul and not that of the body. It is reported in Ibn Ishaq thus “The apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night”. (Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasulullah*, p. 183).

In a nutshell, we understand from a good analysis of available literature that the journey to Jerusalem and the ascension to heaven were two events which took place with an interval of six years. The experience was a spiritual one and not a physical one. In fact from the above quoted Hadith we see that Jesus Christ was among the dead prophets. There is no special ceremony sanctioned in Islam for these events. What is important for a Muslim is to follow the example of the Holy Prophet and not to invent practices of our own which are not sanctioned by Islam. May Allah help each one amongst us to learn, to understand and to practice as best as we can *incha* Allah.