

From the Commentary of al-Qurṭubi on Quran 17:1^a

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ﴾

Praise to Him who made His servant to travel by night from the mosque of sanctuary to the furthest mosque, whose surroundings We have blessed

﴿لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

to show him of Our signs; indeed it is He who is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing

فيه ثمان مسائل:

In relation to this there are eight questions:

فأما المسألة الأولى — وهي هل كان إسرائاً بروحه أو جسده؛ اختلف في ذلك السلف والخلف،

As for the first question – it is was the *isrā'* [the night journey, the causing of one to travel by night] by his spirit or his body; in respect of this differ the *salaf* [the forebears – the immediate generations of the Prophet, or in some opinions the early Muslims and scholars of the first 300 years] and the *khalaf* [the successors – the later generation of scholars],

فذهبت طائفة إلى أنه إسرائ بالروح، ولم يفارق شخصه مضجعه، وأنها كانت رؤياً رأى فيها

and a faction hold the view that it is an *isrā'* of the spirit, and his person did not leave his place of resting, and that it was a *ru'yā* [vision] in which he saw

الحقائق، ورؤيا الأنبياء حق. ذهب إلى هذا معاوية وعائشة، وحكي عن الحسن وابن إسحاق

the verities, and the *ru'yā* of the prophets is a truth. Mu'āwiyya and 'Āisha held this view, and it is told of al-Ḥasan and Ibn Ishāq.

وقالت طائفة: كان الإسرائ بالجسد يقظة إلى بيت المقدس، وإلى السماء بالروح؛ واحتجوا بقوله

And a faction said, “The *isrā'* was of the awakened body to *bayt al-maqdis* [Jerusalem, Temple of Jerusalem], and to heaven by spirit; and they advance the argument by the saying of

تعالى: ﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا﴾ فجعل

the Exalted One, ‘Praise to Him who made His servant to travel by night from the mosque of sanctuary to the furthest mosque’ and He has rendered

المسجد الأقصى غاية الإسرائ. قالوا: ولو كان الإسرائ بجسده إلى زائد على المسجد الأقصى

al-masjid al-ʿaqṣa [the furthest mosque] the ultimate destination of the *isrā'*: And they say, “Were the *isrā'* by his body to more than *al-masjid al-ʿaqṣa*

^a Translation by Muhammad Al-Hussaini

لذكره، فإنه كان يكون أبلغ في المدح. وذهب معظم السلف والمسلمين إلى أنه كان إسراء بالجسد

He would have recalled it, and indeed it used to be the ultimate in praiseworthiness". And the majority of the *salaf* and the Muslims hold the opinion that it was an *isrā'* of the body

وفي اليقظة، وأنه ركب البراق بمكة، ووصل إلى بيت المقدس وصلّى فيه ثم أسريّ بجسده. وعلى

and in awakenedness, and that he mounted *al-Burāq* [the beast upon which the Prophet undertook the *isrā'*] in Makkah, and arrived at *bayt al-maqdis* and prayed therein, then was caused to undertake the *isrā'* of his body. And in respect of

هذا تدل الأخبار التي أشرنا إليها والآية. وليس في الإسراء بجسده وحال يقظته استحالة، ولا

this demonstrates the account which we have indicated and the *aya* [verse of the Quran]. And in relation to the *isrā'* of his body and the state of his awakenedness it is not impossible, and

يُعدّل عن الظاهر والحقيقة إلى التأويل إلا عند الاستحالة، ولو كان مناماً لقال بروح عبده ولم يقل

and there has not been interpretation equal in the evidence and the truth except the impossible, and if it were in sleeping, He would have said 'the spirit of His servant' and would not have said,

بعده. وقوله: ﴿مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى﴾ [النجم:17] يدل على ذلك. ولو كان مناماً لما كانت

'his servant'. And His saying, 'His sight did not turn aside nor did it go wrong' [Quran 53:17] demonstrates this. And were it in sleep, there would not have been

فيه آية ولا معجزة، ولما قالت له أم هانئ: لا تحدّث الناس فيكذبوك، ولا فضّل أبو بكر

an *aya* [verse of the Quran] in respect of it nor a miracle; and 'Umm Hānī' would not have said to him, "Do not discuss with the people for they will belie you", nor would have Abū Bakr been caused to prefer

بالتصديق، ولما أمكن قريشاً التشنيع والتكذيب، وقد كذبه قريش فيما أخبر به حتى آرتد أقوام

believing it as truth, nor would have been possible for the Quraysh to slander and belie, and the Quraysh did belie him in respect of what he brought news even until there apostatised groups

كانوا آمنوا، فلو كان بالرؤيا لم يستنكر، وقد قال له المشركون: إن كنت صادقاً فخبّرنا عن عيرنا

which used to believe, for had it been a vision they would not have sought to deny it, and the polytheists said to him, "If you are truthful, then tell us of our caravan,

أين لقيتها؟ قال: «ممكان كذا وكذا مررتُ عليها ففرع فلان فليل له: ما رأيت يا فلان، قال: ما

where did you encounter it?" "In such-and-such a place I passed upon it and so-and-so was affrighted and it was said to him, 'What have you seen, O so-and-so? He said,

رأيت شيئاً غير أن الإبل قد نفرت». قالوا: فأخبرنا متى تأتينا العير؟ قال: «تأتيكم يوم كذا

'I saw nothing save that a camel bolted"'. They said, "So inform us, when will the caravan reach us?" He said, "It will reach you on a day

وكذا». قالوا: آية ساعة؟ قال: «ما أدري، طلوع الشمس من هاهنا أسرع أم طلوع العير من such-and-such». They said, “Which hour?” He said, “I do not know, the rising of the sun from here, or the approach of the caravan from

هاهنا». فقال رجل: ذلك اليوم؟ هذه الشمس قد طلعت. وقال رجل: هذه عيركم قد طلعت، here”. So a man said, “Such day? This sun has risen,” and said a man, “Here is your caravan which has approached”.

وأستخبروا النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم عن صفة بيت المقدس فوصفه لهم ولم يكن رآه قبل ذلك. And they enquired information of the prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, concerning the description of *bayt al-maqdis* and he described it to them, while he had not seen it before then.

روى الصحيح عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم:

The *ṣaḥīḥ* [sound collection of *ḥadīth*] narrated of Abū Hurayra who said, “Said the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace,

”لقد رأيتني في الحجر وقريش تسألني عن مسراي فسألني عن أشياء من بيت المقدس لم أثبتها

‘I saw myself in the *hijr* [sanctuary of Makkah] and the Quraysh were asking me of the night journey, and asked me of things from *bayt al-maqdis*, which I had not been able to confirm,

فكربت كرتاً ما كرت مثله قطّ — قال — فرفعه الله لي أنظر إليه فما سألوني عن شيء إلا أنبأهم

and I became anxiously vexed such as I had not ever been vexed” – he said – “So God raised it up to me, I looked upon it and they did not ask me of anything but that I informed them

به” الحديث. وقد اعترض قول عائشة ومعاوية: «إنما أسرى بنفس رسول الله صلى الله عليه

of it”. And the saying of °Aīsha and Mu°āwīyya has been refuted, “It was but the soul of the Messenger, may God bless him

وسلم» بأنها كانت صغيرة لم تشهد، ولا حدثت عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم. وأما معاوية

and grant him peace, caused to undertake the *isrā*” by reason of her being young and had not borne witness [made credal declaration of faith] nor had she narrated *ḥadīth* [oral transmission or narration] of the Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace. And as for Mu°āwīyya

فكان كافراً في ذلك الوقت غير مشاهد للحال، ولم يحدث عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم. ومن

he was an unbeliever in that time, not a bearer of witness to anyone, and had not narrated *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace. And whomsoever

أراد الزيادة على ما ذكرنا فليقف على (كتاب الشفاء) للقاضي عياض يجد من ذلك الشفاء. وقد

wishes more upon what we have recounted, so let him stay upon *The Book of Healing* [or ‘satisfaction’] of the Qādī °Ayyād from where he will find satisfaction. And he has

احتجّ لعائشة بقوله تعالى:

argued the position to °Aisha by the saying of the Exalted One:

﴿وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّؤْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ﴾ [الإسراء:60]

‘And We have not made the *ru’yā* [vision] which We have shown to you except as a trial for the people’ [Quran 17:60]

فسماها رؤيا. وهذا يرده قوله تعالى: ﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا﴾ ولا يقال في النوم

and He named it *ru’yā*, and this refers back to the saying of the Exalted One, ‘Praise to Him who made His servant to travel by night’, and it was not said in sleep

أسرى...

He caused to travel by night...

...السادسة: قوله تعالى: ﴿إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى﴾ سُمِّيَ الْأَقْصَى لبعده ما بينه وبين المسجد

...And the sixth [question]: The saying of the Exalted One ‘*To al-masjid al-‘aqṣa*’ named *al-‘aqṣa* by reason of the distance between it and between *masjid*

الحرام، وكان أبعد مسجد عن أهل مكة في الأرض يعظّم بالزيارة، ثم قال: ﴿الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ﴾

al-ḥarām [the mosque of the sanctuary, sanctuary at Makkah], and it was the most distant mosque from the people of Makkah in the world, which made great difficulty visiting it. Then He said, ‘Whose surroundings We have blessed’.

قيل: بالثمار وبمجارى الأنهار. وقيل: بمن دُفن حوله من الأنبياء والصالحين؛ وبهذا جعله مقدّساً.

It is said, “By fruits [or ‘benefits’] and the neighbouring of rivers”. And it is said, “By those who are buried around it of prophets and the righteous”; and by this He made it holy.

وروى معاذ بن جبل عن النبيّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: "يقول الله تعالى يا شام أنت صفوتي

And narrated Mu‘ādh bin Jabal of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, that he said, “Says God the Exalted, ‘O *Shām* [the Levant, Syria-Palestine], you are My choicest [or ‘pure’]

من بلادي وأنا سائق إليك صفوتي من عبادي" أصله سام فعرب. ﴿لُنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا﴾ هذا من

from among my lands, and I am driving to you the choicest [or ‘pure’] from among My servants”; its origin is *Sām* [Shem] and it became Arabised. ‘To show him of Our signs’; this is from

باب تلوين الخطاب. والآيات التي أراه الله من العجائب التي أخبر بها الناس، وإسراؤه من مكة إلى

the category of colouring of the address. And the *‘ayāt* [signs] which God caused him to see of the wonders which he recounted to the people, and his *isrā’* from Makkah to

المسجد الأقصى في ليلة وهو مسيرة شهر، وعروجه إلى السماء ووصفه الأنبياء واحداً واحداً،

al-masjid al-'aḡṣa in one night, while it is the journey of a month, and his ascension to heaven and his description of the prophets one by one,

حسبما ثبت في صحيح مسلم وغيره...

just as he confirmed in the *Saḥīḥ* of Muslim and others...