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**ANSWER:** Masjid al-Aqṣā

## **SŪRAH AL-‘ISRĀ’: VERSE 1**

**Pure is He Who made his servant travel at night from al-Masjid al-Ḥaram to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā the environs of which We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs. Surely, He is the All Hearing, All Seeing. [1]**

## **COMMENTARY**

Described in this verse is the event of Mi'rāj (the Ascent to the heavens, or al-'Isrā', the midnight journey of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is a signal honor and distinctive miracle of our Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The word: (*asrā*) is a derivation from: (*isrā'*) which literally means to make someone travel at night. After that, the introduction of the word: (*lailan*) also makes this sense very clear. Then, by placing this word as a common noun, the indication released was that during this event the time spent was that of a part of the night - not even that of the whole night. The journey from al-Masjid al-Ḥaram to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā mentioned in this verse is called al-'Isrā' and the name of the journey from here to the seven heavens is al-Mi'rāj. Isra' stands proved under the definitive textual authority of this verse and the Mi'rāj finds mention in the verses of Sūrah an-Najm and is proved by Aḥadīth appearing in an uninterrupted succession. The word: (***bi'abdiḥi***: His servant) used here for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is special. It shows that, in this magnificent setting of honor and welcome, when Allah Ta'ālā, on His own, elects to call someone 'His servant', a unique bond of love lies embedded therein and that this is the highest honor any man could ever have.

This is similar to what has been said in another verse: **(and the servants of Ar-Raḥmān [the Most Merciful] are those who walk on the Earth gently - al-Furqān, 25:63)** where the objective is to increase the prestige of those who are acceptable with Him. From here, we also learn that the highest achievement man is capable of is to become a perfect servant of Allah - for, on this eve of special honor, the quality of ideal servitude, out of his many attributes of perfection, was chosen. Then, the presence of this expression yields yet another beneficial outcome in that no one gets the wrong impression of divinity from this wonderful journey by night which, from its beginning to the end, is full of extra-habitual miracles. This is something like what happened with the Christians who fell into deception over the event of Sayyidnā 'Isā 'alayhis salām being raised unto the heavens. For this reason, by saying (***'abd***: servant), it was declared that, despite all those attributes, achievements and miracles, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still a servant of Allah, not god.

**The Qur'ān, Sunnah and 'Ijmā' prove that the Mi'rāj was physical.**

It is proved from the text of the Holy Qur'ān, and from Aḥadīth coming in uninterrupted succession mentioned later that the entire journey of the Isra' and Mi'rāj was not simply spiritual, instead, it was

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physical - like the journey of anyone else. The very first word of the Holy Qur'ān in this Sūrah: (*Subhān*: Pure is He!) carries a hint in this direction because this word is used to register wonder or introduce a great marvel. Had the Mi'rāj been merely spiritual, just a matter of dream, what was there so unusual about it? As for a dream, every Muslim, even every human being, can see it and report that he or she went to the heavens, did this and did that.

The second indication embedded in the word: (*'abd*: servant) also points out in the same direction because 'abd is no spirit all by itself, instead, it is the name of the combination of body and spirit.

In addition to that, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the event of Mi'rāj to Sayyidah Umm Hānī' raḍī'allāhu 'anhā, she advised him not to mention it before anyone otherwise people would falsify it even more. Had this been the matter of a dream, what was there in it that needed to be falsified?

After that, when he did tell people about it, the disbelievers of Makkah called it a lie and made fun of him, so much so that some neo-Muslims became apostates (*murtadd*) after hearing the news. If this would have been the matter of a dream, the likelihood of such reactions was least warranted. And that he had experienced some spiritual Mi'rāj in the form of a dream, before this or after that, does not become contrary to it. According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the word: (*ar-ru'yā*) in the verse of the Qur'ān: (**And We showed you the scene - 17:60**) means: (*rūyah*: seeing). But, it has been expressed through the word: (*ru'yā*, which is frequently used in the sense of seeing a dream). The reason for this expression could be that this thing has been called *ru'yā* in the sense of a simile. This is like someone seeing a dream. And if, *ru'yā* is taken to mean dream itself, then, it is also not too far out to say that the event of Mi'rāj, in addition to its being physical, also transpired, before or after it, in the form of a spiritual Mi'rāj as a dream as well. Therefore, the saying, that it was a dream, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās raḍī'allāhu 'anhu and Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'A'ishah raḍī'allāhu 'anhā also correct in its place - but, it does not necessarily imply that physical Mi'rāj did not take place.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the Aḥadīth relating to the event of al-Isrā' are recurrent and uninterrupted. Naqqāsh has reported related narratives from twenty Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ has given additional details in Al-Shifā (Qurṭubī).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has, in his Tafsīr, reported all these narratives and after applying the standard rules of scrutiny has mentioned the names of twenty-five Ṣaḥābah from whom these reports come. Their names are: (1) Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, (2) Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā, (3) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, (4) Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, (5) Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'ah, (6) Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, (7) Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, (8) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, (9) Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws, (10) Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b, (11) Sayyidnā 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-Qurāz, (12) Sayyidnā Abū Ḥayyah,

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(13) Sayyidnā Abū Lailā, (14) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, (15) Sayyidnā Jabīr ibn 'Abdullāh, (16) Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān, (17) Sayyidnā Buraidah, (18) Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, (19) Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah, (20) Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub, (21) Sayyidnā Abū al-Ḥamrā', (22) Sayyidnā Suhayb al-Rūmī, (23) Sayyidah Umm Ḥanī', (24) Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, (25) Sayyidah Asma' bint Abī Bakr.

After that, Ibn Kathīr said: *As for the Ḥadīth of al-Isrā', there is a consensus of all Muslim on it. Only heretics and atheists have denied it.* (Ibn Kathīr)

### **A brief account of Mi'rāj - as reported by Ibn Kathīr**

After having explained the present verse in his Tafsīr along with a detailed background of relevant Aḥadīth, Imām Ibn Kathīr has said: The truth of the matter is that the journey of Isrā' came to pass when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was awake, not dreaming. From Makkah al-Mukarramah to Baitulmaqdis, the journey was covered on *burāq* (a special heavenly horse to ride). When he reached the gate of Baitulmaqdis, he tied the *burāq* close to the gate, entered the Maṣjid of Baitulmaqdis and offered two *rak'āt* of Taḥiyyatul-masjid (prayer in honor of the Mosque) facing its orientation. After that, a staircase was brought which had steps to go up from below. Through this staircase, he went to the first heaven. After that, he went to the rest of the heavens. [Only Allah knows the reality of this staircase - what it was and how did it work and things like that. In our day too, many kinds of stairs are in use. There are stairs that escalate automatically and there are elevators that take one up. Therefore, falling into any doubt or suspicion about this miraculous staircase is not right.] On every heaven, the resident angels greeted him and on every heaven, he met blessed prophets who were stationed on a particular heaven, such as, Sayyidnā Mūsā 'alayhis salām on the sixth heaven, and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh on the seventh heaven. After that, he went beyond the stations of all these blessed prophets and reached a plain where he could hear the sound of the pen writing destinies. And he saw the Sidratul-muntaha, the Far Tree in Jannah, on which moths in gold and variegated colors were falling from above by the command of Allah and which was surrounded by angels of Allah. And it was at this place that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn in his real form with six hundred wings. And right there, he saw a flag in green that had the horizon all covered up. And he also saw al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr (the well-attended House believed to be located in Jannah exactly above the Baytullah in Makkah) sitting by which was the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm 'alayhis salām with his back reclining against its wall. Seventy thousand angels enter this Bayt al-Ma'mūr every day who shall be waiting for their turn to re-enter there right through the day of Qiyāmah. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the Jannah and the Jahannam with his own blessed eyes. At that time, first came the command that his people were being obligated with fifty prayers, then, these were reduced to five. This shows the importance and merit of Ṣalāh as being the foremost out of all acts of 'Ibādah.

After that, he alighted back into Baytul-maqdis and, with him, so did the blessed prophets he had met on

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different heavens (as if) they had come to see him off as far as Baytul-maqdis. At that time, as it was time for Ṣalāh, he offered the prayer with all prophets. It is also probable that this Ṣalāh was the Ṣalāh of Fajr the same day. Ibn Kathīr says that this event concerning the prayer with prophets led by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come to pass, as held by some, before he went to the heavens. But, as obvious, this event took place after the return because it has been reported in the incident relating to his meeting with blessed prophets at different heavens that it was Sayyidnā Jibra'īl who introduced him to all prophets. Had this event relating to his leading the prayer passed earlier, no introduction was needed there - and, for that matter, it is obvious enough that the real purpose of this journey was to visit with the heavenly hosts. Doing that first appears to be more likely. Once he was done with the real mission, all prophets came to say good bye to him up to Baytul-maqdis and by making him the Imām of the prayer through a signal from Sayyidnā Jibra'īl, his precedence over others was demonstrated practically.

After that, he departed from Baytul-maqdis riding burāq and reached Makkah al-Mu'azzamah while it was still dark. (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

### **The testimony of a non-Muslim about the event of Mi'rāj**

It appears in Tafsīr ibn Kathīr that Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, in his book, Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah, has reported a narrative from Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī on the authority of Muḥammad ibn 'Amr al-Wāqidi\* giving details of the event as follows:

The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah raḍī'allāhu 'anhu with a blessed letter from him to the Roman Emperor, Caesar. After that, he has given a detailed account of how Sayyidnā Diḥyah reached the Emperor, delivered the letter, and how intelligent he was in his mission (an event present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī as well as in all trustworthy books of Ḥadīth). Towards the end of it, it has been reported that Hiraql, the Roman Emperor, once he had read the blessed letter, ordered that all Arab traders who were visiting the country at that time should be assembled together. He wanted to investigate into the background of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The royal order was carried out. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb and those with him visiting Syria at that time with their famous trade caravan were presented before the Emperor. Details of the questions asked by the Emperor are present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as elsewhere. Abū Sufyān was really eager to use this occasion to say things about the Holy Prophet ﷺ which show his insignificance. But, says Abū Sufyān: *Nothing stopped me from doing that except that I may slip and say something which turns out to be a lie and I stand disgraced in the eyes of the Emperor and my own comrades keep taunting me for being a liar. Certainly, then it occurred to me that I should relate the event of Mi'rāj before him. The Emperor would himself conclude from it that it was a lie. So, I said: I shall describe before you what he claims to have happened to him regarding which you will yourself realize that it was a lie. Hiraql asked: What event is that? Abū Sufyān said: This claimant of prophethood says that, one night, he left Makkah al-Mukarramah, reached this Masjid Baytul-maqdis of*

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*yours and, then, within that night, before dawn, he returned to us in Makkah al-Mukarramah!*

At that time, the leading scholar of Elia' (Baytul-maqdis) was standing close to Hiraql, the Roman Emperor. He disclosed that he knew that night. The Emperor turned to him and inquired as to how did he come to know about it. He submitted that, as a matter of habit, he would not sleep at night until he had closed all gates of Baytul-maqdis. That night he habitually closed all gates but one which would not close despite his effort. He summoned his staff. They all tried but they too failed to close it. The panels of the gate remained simply unmoved from their place. It seemed as if they were trying to move some mountain. Rendered helpless, he called technicians and carpenters. They looked at the gate and decided that the weight of the building has come to rest on the panels of the gate. There was no way it could be closed before morning. When morning comes, they said, they will see how this could be fixed. Non-plussed, he returned leaving both panels of the gate ajar. As soon as it was morning, he came back to the gate where he noticed that someone had made a hole in the rock close to the gate of the Masjid which gave the impression that some animal was tied down there. At that time he had told his colleagues: Perhaps, Allah Ta'ālā has caused this gate not to close today because some prophet was to come here. And then, he also stated that this blessed prophet has also offered his prayer in this Masjid of ours. Thereafter, he has described further details. (Ibn Kathīr, p. 24, v. 3)

\*The Scholars of Ḥadīth say that Al-Wāqidi is weak in Ḥadīth narrations but a cautious Muḥaddith like Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported his narration for the reason that this matter is not connected with 'Aqā'id or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and in such historical matters his narration is trustworthy - Muḥammad Shafi'

## **The date of the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj**

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that the narratives of Ḥadīth regarding the date of Mi'rāj are quite different. According to Musa ibn 'Uqbah, this event came to pass six month before the Hijrah to Madīnah. Sayyidah 'A'ishah raḍī'allāhu 'anhā says that Umm al Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadijah raḍī'allāhu 'anhā had passed away before the injunction making Ṣalāh a Farḍ (obligation) was revealed. Imām Zuhri says that the event of the sad demise of Sayyidah Khadijah raḍī'allāhu 'anhā took place seven years after the call to the mission of prophet-hood.

According to some Ḥadīth narratives, the event of Mi'rāj happened five years after the call to prophet-hood. Ibn Ishāq says that the event of Mi'rāj took place at a time when Islam had spread throughout the tribes of Arabia generally. The outcome of all these narratives is that the event of Mi'rāj dates back to several years before the Hijrah to Madīnah.

Al-Ḥarbi says that the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj has happened during the night of the 27th of Rabī' ath-Thānī, one year before Hijrah and Ibn al-Qāsim adh-Dhahabiāsays that it took place eighteen months after



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the call to prophet-hood. Esteemed Muḥadīthīn (Ḥadīth scholars) who have mentioned these different narratives have not followed it up with any decisive statement. And as commonly known, the 27th night of the month of Rajab is the Night of Mi'rāj. (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

## Al-Masjid al-Ḥaram and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī raḍī'allāhu 'anhu says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: *'Which Masjid of this world comes first?'* He said, *'Al-Masjid al-Ḥaram.'* Then he inquired, *'Which one after that?'* He said, *'Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.'* Then he tried to find out the intervening time difference between the two whereupon he said, *'Forty years.'* After that, he added, *'(as for the order of these masājid, this is it) but, Allah Ta'ālā has made the entire Earth a masjid for us. Wherever comes the time of Ṣalāh, offer it right there.'* (Reported by Muslim)

Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says that Allah Ta'ālā has made the site of Baytullah two thousand years before He made the entire Earth and that its foundations reach as far down as the seventh (strata of) Earth and that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was made by Sayyidnā Sulayman 'alayhis salām. (Reported by an-Nasā'ī; with sound chains of authority from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar) (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 137, v. 4)

And al-Masjid al-Ḥaram is the name of the Mosque that stands around the Baytullah ash-Sharīf while, on occasions, the entire Ḥaram is also identified as al-Masjid al-Ḥaram. In terms of this second sense, the dichotomy of those two reports - some hold that the Holy Prophet ﷺ left for the nocturnal journey, al-'Isrā', from the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' raḍī'allāhu 'anhā while others say that he departed from the section of Baytullah known as Ḥaṭīm - stands removed. If we were to take al-Masjid al-Ḥaram in its general sense, it is not far out to believe that he may have been there in the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' raḍī'allāhu 'anhā, then he walked over to the Ḥaṭīm of Ka'bah and then began the journey of al-'Isrā' from there. Allah knows best.

## Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and blessings of the Syrian environs

The word: (*ḥawl*: environs) in the **verse: (the environs of which We have blessed)** means the entire land of Syria. It appears in a Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā has made the land from the 'Arsh (Divine Throne) to the river, Euphrates and, out of this, He has bestowed particular holiness on the land of Palestine. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blessings it has are both religious and worldly. As for religious blessings, it has been the Qiblah of all past prophets, and their home, and the last resting place. And that its land is green, lush and verdant with streams, rivers and fruit farms etc. shows its worldly blessings.

Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal raḍī'allāhu 'anhu reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *Allah Ta'ālā says: O*

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*land of Syria, thou art My region chosen from many and I shall make My chosen servants reach thee.* (Qurṭubī) And it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Imposter will traverse the whole Earth but he will not be granted access to four Mosques: (1) Masjid of Madīnah, (2) Masjid of Makkah al-Mukarramah, (3) Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and (4) Masjid Tūr.

## SŪRAH SABA: VERSES 12-14

**And for Sulayman (We subjugated) the wind; its journey in the morning was (equal to the journey of) one month, and its journey in the afternoon was (equal to the journey) of another month. And We caused a stream of copper to flow for him. And there were some Jinns who worked before him by the leave of his Lord. And whoever of them would deviate from Our command, We would make him taste the punishment of the blazing fire. [12]**

**They used to make for him whatever he wished of castles, images, basins as (large as) tanks and big cook-wares fixed (in their places). "Do good, O family of Dāwūd, in thankfulness. And few from My slaves are thankful." [13]**

**So, when We decided (that) death (should come) upon him, nothing gave them any indication of his death, except a creature of the earth that had eaten up his sceptre. So, when he fell down, the Jinns came to know that if they had the knowledge of the Unseen, they would not have stayed (so long) in the humiliating punishment. [14]**

## COMMENTARY (n.b. only relevant portions are included)

We can now turn to **verse 12: (And for Sulaymān: (We subjugated) the wind; its journey in the morning was (equal to the journey of) one month, and its journey in the afternoon was (equal to the journey) of another month).** After having mentioned the blessings bestowed upon Sayyidnā Dāwūd ‘alayhis salām, the text refers to Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām. It was said that the way Allah Ta‘ālā had subjugated mountains and birds for Sayyidnā Dāwūd ‘alayhis salām, similarly, the Wind was subjugated for Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām. It would take the throne of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām on which he was seated with a large number of his courtiers to wherever he wished always under his command. Early exegete, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as said that the miracle of the subjugation of the Wind was bestowed upon Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām in return for what he had done once while inspecting his stable of horses. So engrossed he became in this activity that he missed the Ṣalāh of al-'aṣr. Since the horses became the cause of this negligence, Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām decided to eliminate the very cause of negligence. He sacrificed these horses by slaughtering them (since the sacrifice of horses was also permissible in the law of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām very much like the cows and oxen) and since these horses were owned by Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām, the question of bringing loss to the Baytul-Mal simply does not arise, and the doubt of wasting personal property because

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of the sacrifice also does not hold good. Full relevant details about it will appear in the commentary on Sūrah Sad (38:30-40, appearing later in this very Volume VII). In short, because Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām sacrificed the horses he rode, Allah Ta’ālā blessed him with a better ride. (Qurtubī)

In the other part of the verse taken up immediately earlier: (34:12), the word: (*ghuduww*) means moving in the morning and the word: (*rawāḥ*) means moving in the evening. Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that this throne of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām perched on the wings of the wind from the morning to the afternoon would cover the travel distance of one month, and then, from early evening to late night, that of another one month. In this way, it used to cover the travel distance of two months in one full day.

According to Ḥasan al-Baṣri raḥimahullāh, Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām would leave Baytul-Maqdis in the morning, reach Istakhr by afternoon and had his lunch there. Then he would leave after Zuhr and by the time he got to Kābul, it would be night. The travel distance between Baytul-Maqdis and Istakhr is something a swift rider could cover in a month. Similarly, the travel distance from Istakhr to Kābul is also what a swift rider could cover in a month. (Ibn Kathīr)

### **The strange event of the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām**

The elements of guidance embedded in this event are many. For example, Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām was a ruler having such an unmatched state at his command that ruled not simply over the world of his time, but over the Jinns and birds and the wind as well. Yet, despite all these assets at his command, he too had no escape from death, and that it had to come only when the time was appointed for it to come. The construction of Baytul-Maqdis started by Sayyidnā Dāwūd ‘alayhis salām and completed by Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām had part of it still unfinished. This construction job was entrusted with the Jinns. They were contumacious by nature but kept working in fear of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām. If they were to find out that he had died, they would have stopped working instantly and the structure would have been left incomplete. With the leave of Allah, Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām made appropriate arrangements to offset this situation. So, when came the time of his death, he got ready for it and entered the mihrab (seat of authority in the palace) which was made of sparking transparent glass. His presence could be clearly seen from outside. As was his routine, he stood there in a stance of worship slightly supported by his scepter, so that, once his soul departs (when he dies), the body remains poised at its place with the support of his staff. The soul of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām was taken away at the appointed hour, but he kept firmly reclining on his staff and from the outside it appeared as if he was engrossed in worship. In that state, Jinns would not dare come close and peek at him. They kept working under the impression that Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām was alive. Thus passed a full year and when the remaining work on Baytul-Maqdis was complete, Allah Ta’ālā empowered the termite, (which is referred to by the Qur’ān as (*dābbatul-arḍ*: a creature of the earth), to occupy the staff of Sayyidnā



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Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām. The termite ate out the wood and weakened the staff. When the staff was gone, Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām fell down. That was the time when the Jinns came to know about his death.

Allah Ta'ālā has given the Jinns the capability of traversing very long distances within moments. They used to be aware of many circumstances and events not known by human beings. When they would communicate this information to human beings, they took it to be news from the unseen surmising that the Jinns too possess the knowledge of the unseen ('ilm-ul-ghaib). Moreover, the possibility that the Jinns themselves had a claim of possessing the knowledge of the unseen cannot be ruled out. But, this unusual incidence of death unfolded the reality of all that. The Jinns themselves found out - and human beings too - that the Jinns are no possessors of the knowledge of the unseen. Because, had that been the case and had they been aware of the workings of the unseen, they would have come to know about the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām more than a year ago, and would have been spared of the hard labor they went on doing on the assumption that he was alive. This is what has been stated in the last sentence of the verse: **So, when he fell down, the Jinns came to know that if they had the knowledge of the Unseen, they would not have stayed (so long) in the humiliating punishment. (34:14).**

Here, the expression: (*al-'adhabil-muhīn*: humiliating punishment) refers to the hard labor they had to do in completing the edifice of Baytul-Maqdis under the orders of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām. Part of this unusual event of the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām has been mentioned in this very verse of the Qur'ān while its details have been reported from several Tafsīr authorities, including Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās raḍī'allāhu 'anhu, and are there in Ibn Kathīr and all other Tafsīrs.

From this unusual event, we also learn the essential lesson that there is no escape from death for anyone and also that Allah Ta'ālā can, when He decides to have someone do something, arrange to have it done the way He wills. This is exactly as it happened during the course of this event when Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām was kept, despite his death, standing at his place and the Jinns were made to complete the work assigned to them. This event also shows that all causes and instruments of the whole world keep fulfilling their function until such time as Allah would let them do so. When He would not let them do so, causes and instruments fail, like the support of the staff here that was terminated through the termite. Moreover, soon after the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām, there existed the danger that people, who notice the astonishing performance of the Jinns and come across their apparently unbelievable access to things unseen, might take them as their objects of worship. This danger was also eliminated by this event of death. Everyone came to know that the Jinns were really unaware and helpless in this matter.

From this submission, it becomes clear that Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām had adopted this particular mode at the time of his death for two reasons: (1) That the remaining work on the construction of Baytul-

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Maqdis gets to be completed. (2) That people find out the truth about the Jinns, realize that they were really unaware and helpless, and thus there remains no danger of Jinns being taken by them as objects of veneration and worship. (Qurtubī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr raḍī'allāhu 'anhu reported by Imām Nasā'ī with sound chains of authority, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, *"When Sulaymān 'alayhis salām accomplished the building of Baytul-Maqdis, he made some prayers that were answered. One of these was: O Allah, whoever enters this masjid with the sole intention of making Ṣalāh (and having no other worldly motive), purify him before he goes out of this masjid, from all his sins (making him) as pure as he was when born from the womb of his mother."*

And in the narration of Suddiyy, it also appears that soon after Sayyidnā Sulaymān 'alayhis salām was finished with the building of Baytul-Maqdis, he sacrificed twelve thousand cows and heifers and twenty thousand goats as a token of thanksgiving and declared the feast open to all. Celebrating the day as a day of rejoicing, he stood on the Sakhrāh of Baytul-Maqdis praying: *O Allah, it is You who bestowed this power, and all these resources, on me by virtue of which the edifice of Baytul-Maqdis reached its completion. Now, also give me the ability to thank you for this blessing; and give me death while adhering to the faith you chose for me; and once you have given me right guidance, let there come no crookedness or deviation in it."* And he further supplicated, *"O my Lord, for a person who enters this masjid, I ask you of five things: (1) Accept the repentance of a sinner who enters this masjid to confess and repent, and forgive his sins. (2) Guarantee peace for a person who enters this masjid to remain safe from fear and danger, and deliver him from all dangers. (3) Heal the sick person who enters this masjid. (4) Make the poor person who enters here need-free. (5) Let Your mercy be on the person who enters it as long as he remains here - except a person who is busy doing something unjust or faithless."* (Qurtubī)

This Ḥadīth tells us that the work of building Baytul-Maqdis was already completed during the lifetime of Sayyidnā Sulaymān 'alayhis salām. But, the event mentioned above is really not contrary to the possibility that there remained some construction work left out even after the completion of the main building, as is usually done in the case of such huge projects. May be, Sayyidnā Sulaymān 'alayhis salām had devised the plan mentioned above for the completion of the remaining work.

It has also been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās raḍī'allāhu 'anhu that Sayyidnā Sulaymān 'alayhis salām kept standing for a year supported by his staff, even after his death. (Qurtubī) And according to some narrations, when the Jinns found out that a long time had passed since the death of Sayyidnā Sulaymān 'alayhis salām while they had remained in the dark all along, they tried to determine the time of his death, and for that purpose, they went for an experiment. They released a termite on a piece of wood. Thus, from whatever of the wood was eaten by the termite in one day and night, they calculated

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that a year had passed over the staff of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām in that state.

## **Special Note**

Citing historians, al-Baghawi has said that Sayyidnā Sulaymān ‘alayhis salām lived for fifty-three years and ruled for forty years. He had succeeded to the throne at the age of thirteen years and had started building Baytul-Maqdis in the fourth year of his reign. (Maḏharī, Qurṭubī)

This concludes the commentary for Day 14.