SAMPLE

Al-Quds: The Night Journey

Jerusalem (القدس) in the Quran

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Contents

Disclaimer

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Night Journey — Al-Isra

Chapter 2: The Furthest Mosque — Al-Masjid al-Aqsa

Chapter 3: The City of the Prophets

Chapter 4: The Children of Israel and the Holy Land

Chapter 5: The Temple of Sulayman

Chapter 6: The Two Corruptions

Chapter 7: Jerusalem and the Qibla

Chapter 8: Jerusalem and the Other Sacred Places

Chapter 9: Lessons and Reflections

Frequently Asked Questions

Glossary

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

The Quran tells the story of a journey — a journey that happened in a single night, from the sacred mosque in Makkah to the furthest mosque in Jerusalem. The journey is the Night Journey — al-Isra — and it is the event that connects the two holiest sites in Islam, the city of the Ka'bah and the city of the earlier prophets.

Jerusalem — Al-Quds in Arabic — is the city of the prophets. Before the Prophet Muhammad, Jerusalem was the center of the prophetic tradition: Ibrahim passed through it, Ishaq and Yaqub lived in it, Musa led the people toward it, Dawud built the kingdom in it, Sulayman built the temple in it, Zakariya and

Yahya served in it, and Isa was born in it. The city that was the center of the earlier revelations is the city that the final revelation honors with the Night Journey.

The Quran mentions Jerusalem not by the name "Jerusalem" or "Al-Quds" but by the name "al-Masjid al-Aqsa" — the Furthest Mosque: "Glory to Him who took His servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs" (17:1). The name is the significance: the mosque that is "furthest" — the mosque that is the most distant from the Ka'bah — is the mosque that is connected to the Ka'bah by a single night. The distance is the geography; the connection is the revelation.

This book — the third in the Places in the Qur'an series — covers Jerusalem: its Night Journey, its Furthest Mosque, its prophets, its history with the Children of Israel, its temple, its two corruptions, its role as the first qibla, and its connections to the other sacred places. The book follows the same approach as the first two books — Makkah: The Holy City and Madinah: The City of the Prophet — exploring the place as the Quran presents it, not as a political survey but as a location where the divine and the human intersected across centuries of prophetic history.

The Places in the Qur'an series traces the sacred geography of the Quran. The first book explored Makkah — the center of worship. The second book explored Madinah — the center of community. This third book explores Jerusalem — the center of the prophetic tradition. The three cities are the three centers: the center of the House, the center of the community, and the center of the prophets. The person who understands the three understands the sacred geography of the Quran — the places where Allah chose to reveal His message, establish His community, and honor His prophets.

The three cities — Makkah, Madinah, and Jerusalem — are the three pillars of

the sacred geography of the Quran, and this book is about the third pillar.

Chapter 1: The Night Journey — Al-Isra

The Quran records the Night Journey in a single verse:

"Glory to Him who took His servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (17:1).

The verse is the event: the Prophet Muhammad was taken by night from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to the Furthest Mosque in Jerusalem. The journey is the miracle — a journey of hundreds of miles accomplished in a single night. The verse begins with "Glory to Him" — the glorification of Allah, the acknowledgment that the journey is the work of Allah, not the work of the human. The Prophet is "His servant" — the servant who is taken, not the master who travels. The journey is the gift; the servant receives it; the Giver is glorified.

The verse establishes three things: the origin (al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah), the destination (al-Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem), and the purpose ("to show him of Our signs"). The origin is the center of worship; the destination is the center of the prophets; the purpose is the revelation of signs. The Night Journey is not a sightseeing trip — the Night Journey is a revelation. The Prophet who was taken to Jerusalem was taken to see the signs of Allah, and the signs are the purpose.

The Night Journey occurred at night — "by night" — and the night is the significance. The darkness is the cover: the journey that happened in the darkness was the journey that was hidden from the eyes of the people. The night is the privacy: the Prophet who was taken by night was taken in a moment that was between him and Allah. The night is the intimacy: the revelation that happened in the darkness was the revelation that was personal, direct, and veiled from the world.

The night teaches a lesson about the relationship between the hidden and the revealed. The most significant journeys of the Prophet happened at night — the Night Journey to Jerusalem, the migration from Makkah to Madinah. The night is the time of the private revelation, the time when the world is asleep and the Prophet is awake with Allah. The person who seeks the signs of Allah should not look only in the daylight of public life; the person should also look in the night of private devotion. The signs that are shown in the night are the signs that are seen by the one who is awake when the world is asleep.

The verse states the purpose: "to show him of Our signs." The signs are the reason for the journey. The Prophet was not taken to Jerusalem for rest, for

travel, or for sightseeing — the Prophet was taken to see the signs of Allah. The signs are the lessons: the things that Allah shows to the Prophet are the things that Allah wants the Prophet to know. The signs are the revelation: the visual, experiential revelation that complements the textual revelation of the Quran.

The purpose teaches a lesson about the nature of revelation. The revelation is not only words; the revelation is also experiences. The Prophet who received the Quran in words received the Night Journey in experience. The two are complementary: the words tell, the experience shows. The person who reads the Quran reads the words; the person who understands the Night Journey understands the experience. The two together — the word and the experience

— are the complete revelation.

After the Night Journey, the Prophet returned to Makkah. The return is the test: the Prophet who had been to Jerusalem and back in a single night had to tell the people of Makkah what had happened. The telling was the challenge — the people of Makkah who had rejected the Prophet's message about the oneness of Allah were now asked to believe that he had traveled hundreds of miles in a single night. The telling was the test of faith: the person who believed the message believed the journey; the person who rejected the message rejected the journey.

The return teaches a lesson about the relationship between the miracle and the faith. The miracle is not the foundation of the faith; the miracle is the confirmation of the faith. The person who believes because of the miracle believes in the miracle; the person who believes because of the message believes in the message. The people of Makkah who had rejected the message rejected the miracle too — because the rejection was not of the miracle but of the message. The miracle does not create the faith; the miracle confirms the faith that is already there.

The Night Journey is associated with the Ascension — al-Mi'raj — the Prophet's ascent through the heavens. The Quran does not describe the Ascension in detail in the verse of the Night Journey (17:1), but the Quran does reference the ascent in another verse:

"And he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord" (53:18).

The ascent is the elevation: the Prophet who was taken to Jerusalem was also taken beyond Jerusalem — to the heavens, to the presence of the divine, to the place where the signs are the greatest. The ascent is the intimacy: the Prophet who was the servant on earth was the guest in heaven. The two journeys — the horizontal journey to Jerusalem and the vertical journey to the

heavens — are the two dimensions of the Night Journey: the journey across the earth and the journey beyond the earth.

The ascent teaches a lesson about the relationship between the earthly and the heavenly. The Prophet who traveled to Jerusalem traveled to the earthly center of the prophetic tradition. The Prophet who ascended to the heavens traveled to the heavenly center of the divine presence. The two are the two directions: the horizontal and the vertical, the earthly and the heavenly. The person who follows the Prophet follows both directions — the earthly journey of the community and the heavenly journey of the spirit.

The Night Journey is not just a miracle; the Night Journey is a statement. The statement is the connection: the mosque in Makkah and the mosque in Jerusalem are connected by a single night, and the connection is the continuity. The God who is worshipped in Makkah is the God who was worshipped in Jerusalem. The Prophet who was sent from Makkah is the Prophet who was honored in Jerusalem. The religion that was established in Madinah is the religion that inherits the tradition of Jerusalem. The Night Journey is the bridge — the bridge between the old and the new, between the inherited and the revealed, between the tradition of the earlier prophets and the tradition of the final Prophet.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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