

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 15: Night journey and the blessed land!

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ وَمِنَ
ءَايَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

Immaculate is He who carried His servant on a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose environs We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing (al-Isrā' 17:1)

Reflections:

The belief in the Night journey of the Holy Prophet (S) is a hallmark of faith, especially in the latter days. The opening verse of Chapter 17 which begins by negating all imperfections from the Almighty (Tasbīh), holds within itself the secrets to the journey towards the Almighty. Even though the act of carrying the prime servant Muhammad bin Abdillāh (S) was performed by the Almighty, at night, from one sacred mosque to another; there are some points of note for all believers wanting to ascend towards the Sacred Precincts, using Salāh as a means¹.

Being an utter servant ('abd) is a requirement: The Almighty highlights the characteristic of His Beloved being His Servant. A wayfarer on the path of seeking the Almighty, must revert to the state of utter submission and servitude, whereby the person does not see himself independent of His Lord, rather sees his own being as a countenance and mercy of the Almighty, to be expediently used in the way of seeking His Pleasure.

Benefitting from the Night: Seeking the Beloved has its etiquette – during the day it is through servitude, at night it is through using the veil of darkness and secrecy to travel towards the One. Imam al-ʿAskarī (ʿa) has said: “Indeed reaching Allāh (swt) is a journey not possible except through riding on the night”². The believer wanting to ascend through Ṣalāh must make the night prayer – the Tahajjud – a lasting component of his schedule.

Identifying with the Masjid: Islam being a way of life has an emphasis on sacred spaces for not only worship and community growth, but to form identity. The true identity of a Muslim is defined by his attachment to the Almighty, and spaces reserved for His Remembrance serve as ways to foster authentic Islamic culture. From the most sacred Masjid al-Ḥarām to the local masajid, all of them are in-sync spiritually by virtue of being the Houses of God. A servant cares for his local masjid by visiting regularly, actively upholding its upkeep and holding the masjid in high regard to bring the hearts together towards the Almighty in His House.

The Sacred mosque and the one surrounded by blessings: The Masjid first established is the one at *Bakkah*, holding promise for the unity of all humanity and for their *qiyām* (rising for the Truth)³. The Masjid furthest (al-Aqsa) is the one where the destination of movement ought to be – as was for the physical journey of the Holy Prophet (S) – for the eventual *qiyām* of the Mahdī (aj). The land surrounding Masjid al-Aqsā has been termed blessed, full of bounty by the Almighty, potentially to indicate that the land of Palestine has intrinsic religious and spiritual significance for all Prophets of Allāh and their monotheistic followers, besides holding keys to the material riches of the world. A Mu'min upholding the night prayer and attachment to the local masjid is also the one who cares deeply for the rise of the Truth around the world, especially in the Holy Lands.

¹ Biḥār al-Anwār v.79 p.303² Biḥār al-Anwār v.75 p.380³ al-Māidah 5:97