

The Isra and Mi'raj

(The Night Journey and Ascension)

Part 1



The Quran linguistic miracle series

By Nabeel Al Khalidy

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Introduction

The Night Journey (الإسراء) and Ascension to heaven (المعراج) of the Prophet ﷺ was a miraculous historical event which marked the obligation of the 5 daily prayers. Although there are many details and lessons to be learnt from it, we will be focusing on this event as Allah (swt) described it in the Quran.

The Night Journey and Ascension occurred in one night and each part of the journey is mentioned separately in the Quran. The Night journey is mentioned in the beginning of سورة الإسراء (Surah 17) while the ascension is mentioned in the beginning of سورة النجم (Surah 53). Many of the details can be found in books of Seerah or Hadith.

We will be explaining some of the linguistic subtleties as well as a word by word analysis of each verse together with an in depth grammatical analysis.

There will be a study forum for students to discuss the lessons and to ask questions.

The Isra (night Journey)

The Night Journey is mentioned in the first verse of Surat Al Isra.

Verse 1

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي
بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless,- in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who hears and sees (all things).

Structure of Surat Al Isra

Surat Al Isra is the 17th Surah of the Quran. This Sura is enclosed and enveloped in both glorification (التسبيح) and praise (التحميد) both before it and after it. The Sura Before it, Surat Al Nahl (16th Sura) begins with:

أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ **سُبْحَانَهُ** وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

*Allah's commandment has come, therefore do not desire to hasten it; **glory** be to Him, and highly exalted be He above what they associate (with Him).*

The Sura After it, Surat Al Kahf begins with:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا

*(All) **praise** is due to Allah, Who revealed the Book to His servant and highly exalted be He did not make in it any crookedness.*

Surat Al Isra itself starts off with glorification التسييح and ends in praise التحميد. The last verse of Surat Al Isra says:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ
فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِّنَ الذَّلِّ وَكَبَّرَهُ تَكْبِيرًا

And say: (All) praise is due to Allah, Who has not taken a son and Who has not a partner in the kingdom, and Who has not a helper to save Him from disgrace; and proclaim His greatness magnifying (Him).

The last verse of Surat Al Nahl (i.e. the verse preceding Surat Al Isra) discusses “being with” (المعية) Allah (swt). The verse is:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

For Allah is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good

The last verse of Surat An-Nahl is a general verse referring to all those who have Taqwa and have Ihsaan. Surat Al Isra explains the greatest level of closeness and being with Allah (i.e. the night Journey and ascension) and the one who achieved this rank was the greatest creation from amongst those who have taqwa and Ihsaan, RasulAllah ﷺ

In-depth analysis

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي

The Sura Begins with سُبْحَانَ which is a verbal noun that indicates the action of تسبيح and is

not related to time or a place or a particular doer. تسبيح means glorification/dissociation

from any blemishes occurs with or without creation. **سُبْحَانَ** is the most emphatic way to glorify Allah (swt). More details of this noun will be given in the course

Glorification is mentioned in many ways in the Quran. Here are some examples:

Past tense verb (سَبَّحَ اللهُ), Present tense verb (يُسَبِّحُ اللهُ), command verb (سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى) and from all the different forms of glorification that occurs in the Quran (and the Arabic language) **سُبْحَانَ** is the most emphatic.

There is no Surah in the Quran where **التسبيح** occurs more than it does in Surat Al Isra.

Ayah 43

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا

Glory be to Him and exalted be He in high exaltation above what they say

Ayah 44

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا **يُسَبِّحُ** بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ **تَسْبِيحَهُمْ** إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

The seven heavens declare His glory and the earth (too), and those who are in them; and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification; surely He is Forbearing, Forgiving.

Ayah 93

أَوْ يَكُونْ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِنْ زُخْرَفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتَّىٰ تُنْزِلَ
عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَقْرُؤُهُ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا

Or you should have a house of gold, or you should ascend into heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read. Say: Glory be to my Lord; am I aught but a mortal messenger

Ayah 108

وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبَّنَا إِن كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبَّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا

"And they say: 'Glory to our Lord! Truly has the promise of our Lord been fulfilled!'"

This indicates that the Prophet ﷺ will be led to a place and environment that is surrounded by the glorification of Allah (swt). This was the famous night journey where he was led to the furthest Mosque in Jerusalem and then ascended to the highest position in heaven that no other creation has attained. He saw and witnessed some of the greatest signs of Allah (swt) and had intimate discourse with Allah (swt).

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ is a statement made by a Muslim when they see or witness the greatness of Allah (swt). It means Glory be to Allah (swt) and that he is transcendent above all shortcoming and deficiencies e.g. having a son, having a partner in his dominion etc.

We don't say أَسْبَحَ اللَّهُ or any other way, because it is less emphatic.

The construction سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ is an إضافة construction (possessive case).

The sura starts off with سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي It uses the relative pronoun الَّذِي (who, the one who) rather than the proper name, Allah (swt). This indicates that what is mentioned after it is something of greatness and deserves glorification. An example outside this sura is the last verse of Surat Yaseen Ayah 83

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things, and to Him you shall be brought back.

You will notice in the Quran that التَّسْبِيح (and its derivations) is used in the Quran many times and is done for a number of reasons including:

- Mentioning the greatness of Allah (swt) power and majesty
- Denying any reference to deficiency or shortcoming in his attributes and actions
- Removal of Hardships for the slaves of Allah (swt) (e.g. The supplication of Prophet Yunus (as) in the belly of the whale)

Exercise: look for examples in the Quran of التَّسْبِيح being mentioned and try to determine why it has been mentioned. There are a few instances in the Quran of the Prophet ﷺ being commanded by Allah (swt) to make تَسْبِيح, can you find them?