

The Isra and Mi'raj

(The Night Journey and Ascension)

Part 2



The Quran linguistic miracle series

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The Isra (night Journey) Part 2

أَسْرَى is a transitive verb from the verb سَرَى which is the past tense verb that means: He travelled by night. By adding a أَ to the verb we make it transitive i.e. its action is directed to an object. Therefore أَسْرَى means to make/enable someone travel by night.

Then Allah (swt) say بَعْدَهُ (with his slave) and did not use other names such messenger or his proper name. Scholars say that if there was a nobler and honorable title then this, then Allah (swt) would have used it in the verse. It indicates that the greatest station in the site of Allah (swt) is to be a slave to him. The word slave was connected by إضافة to Allah (swt).

The Quran describes everyone as a slave in Surat Maryam Ayah 93

إِنَّ كُلَّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent Allah as a servant.

There are 2 types of slavery which scholars divide people into:

- (1) By compulsion (الْقَسْرِيَّة) – for all creations
- (2) By honoring (الِإِخْتِيَارِيَّة) – for the Prophets, Awliya, righteous etc

Throughout the Quran Allah (swt) uses the term عبد as an honouring for his Prophets (as). Notice when

Allah (swt) spoke to Musa (as) he didn't use the word عبد

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ۚ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ
 أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا
 وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَبَعًا ۚ فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

When **Moses** came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord had spoken unto him, he said: My Lord! Show me (Thy Self), that I may gaze upon Thee. He said: Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stand still in its place, then thou wilt see Me. And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And **Moses fell down senseless**. And when he woke he said: Glory unto Thee! I turn unto Thee repentant, and I am the first of (true) believers. [Al A'raf 7:143]

Falling down senseless is not honouring and so the word was not used in the context.

Q. See Surat As-Saffat (37: 75- onwards) and read the stories of many prophets. For some Prophets the word عبد was used for some it wasn't used.

Question: Why wasn't the verb رَى used instead of أَسْرَى because the ب in the verse will make the verb transitive?

Preliminary discussions:

ذَهَبَ مُحَمَّدٌ /Muhammad went

The verb ذَهَبَ is intransitive and does not take an object if it occurs alone. To make this verb transitive we can add the preposition ب to give the verb an object. An example of this is found in the Quran, Surat Al Baqarah ayah 17:

ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ نُورَهُمْ

Allah took away their light

The verb ذَهَبَ can also become transitive if we add the أ of transitiveness as found in ayah 34 of Surat Faatir

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي ذَهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ

And they shall say: (All) praise is due to Allah, Who has made grief to depart from us

Therefore one could argue that removing either the أ or ب would not change the meaning, and that having both is redundant.

In Atahreer and Tanweer by Imam Alusi (r.a) he talks about the difference between making a verb transitive with أ and ب

Using ب indicates that the action is shared between the doer and the object.

ذَهَبَ بِهِ /he went with him. This indicates they went together as companions of one another.

In the Quran 28:29,

فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ

So when Musa had fulfilled the term, and he journeyed with his family

On the other hand أَذْهَبَهُ / he made him go, doesn't indicate that the doer of the verb went with him.

In the Quran when Allah (swt) talks about his care and concern for his righteous servants He uses ب

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا

So wait patiently (O Muhammad) for thy Lord's decree, for surely thou art in Our sight

The ب in the verse indicates that Allah (swt) was with the Prophet (saw) through his care and divine assistance.

أَسْرَى indicates that he wasn't taken to the farthest Mosque and the heavens all alone. We know he was accompanied by the angels and was transported by the Buraaq.

Both letters were used in the most precise way to convey the precise meaning. Taking any letter out would make the verse deficient.

Question: Why was the word لَيْلاً (night) used with the word أَسْرَى since the verb itself indicates travelling by night?

The verb أَسْرَى can only occur in the night. The word لَيْلاً is an adverb of time (ظرف) which indicates a part of the night.

The verb أَسْرَى indicates that one's journey began in the night however it doesn't indicate when it ended, which could be a short or long period. The journey could also have ended in the morning or afternoon and it would still be correct to say أَسْرَى because it only indicates that the verb started at night.

So using the word لَيْلاً indicates that everything that the Prophet ﷺ experienced happened was during part of the night.

An indefinite noun is used for a number of reasons and one of them is to indicate reduction and decrease.

An Example in the Quran:

Surat Yunus ayah 44:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Surely Allah does not oppress mankind in the slightest, but mankind is unjust to themselves.

If the word الليل was used this would be incorrect because it would indicate the journey occurred the whole night and not part of it. Scholars of Nahw indicate that this word if followed by ال (will have the meaning of ALL) would indicate the whole night.

An example of this usage is found in ayah 20 in Surat Al Anbiya when it describes the worship of the angels:

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ ۖ النَّهَارَ لَا يَفْترُونَ

They glorify (Him) the whole night and day; they flag not

Why wasn't لَيْلَةً used? Because this signifies a long period and usually the whole night.

Brief discussion on the difference between لَيْلَةً and يَل

- end -