

## **The Prophet Muhammad's Amazing Night Journey** **[Found in the Hadith, Book of Faith (Kitab al-Iman), Verse 309]**

One night, the Prophet Muhammad lay down in his bed to go to sleep. Things had been difficult. First, his uncle had died. Then, his wife had died.

On top of that, some of the people in the city were constantly being mean to Muhammad and his followers. Muhammad believed that there was only one God, Allah. But many other people in the city believed that there were many gods. They didn't like Muhammad's message, and they tried to make his life miserable. One day, someone threw dirt at Muhammad. It covered his clothes and face, and he looked awful. The dirt didn't really hurt Muhammad; they just threw it to be disrespectful.

Sometimes, when Muhammad was trying to teach the people about Allah, they whistled and clapped their hands, so no one could hear what he was saying. One time, they even threw stones at the Prophet.

At nighttime, when Muhammad went to bed, he would sometimes replay the events of the day in his head. He found it helpful to focus on Allah's love and mercy rather than the upsetting things that might have happened.

**What kinds of things do you think of at night when you go to bed?**

One night, Muhammad was feeling especially prayerful. He thanked Allah for protecting his family, and he requested Allah's guidance as he continued spreading Allah's message of peace and love. Muhammad truly believed that Allah had a plan, and he was grateful to be an important part of that plan.

Allah heard Muhammad's prayers. He had been Allah's special prophet for 7 years now, so Allah was well-aware of Muhammad's devotion. He had clearly shown that his connection with Allah was both powerful and unwavering. Allah decided that Muhammad was finally ready to glimpse the infinite magnificence of the Divine. Very few people earn this privilege, but Allah felt that the time was right.

First, Muhammad was given an animal to ride. The animal's name was Buraq. Buraq was more splendid than any animal Muhammad had ever seen, which made it difficult to describe. Buraq was sort of like a donkey or a horse, but his coat was whiter than the whitest snow and glistened in the dark night. Many people say Buraq had wings on his back, and some people think Buraq had the face of a human. Either way, Buraq's eyes were filled with wisdom and love. He truly was the most amazing animal Muhammad had ever seen.

**What is the most amazing or unusual animal you have ever seen?**

Muhammad climbed onto Buraq's back and was carried away to a temple. Muhammad prayed in the Temple, and when he came out, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. The angel's name was Gabriel. Gabriel showed Muhammad two vessels. One vessel contained wine, and the other vessel contained milk. The angel Gabriel asked Muhammad to choose one of the vessels.

**Which vessel do you think Muhammad will choose?**

Muhammad chose the vessel with milk. Then, Gabriel took Muhammad to heaven. At the gate of heaven, a voice asked Gabriel, “Who are you?”

Gabriel answered, “I am Gabriel.”

Then the voice asked, “Who is with you?”

And Gabriel replied, “Muhammad.”

“Has Muhammad been sent for?” the voice continued.

Gabriel replied, “Yes, indeed, Muhammad has been sent for. He is here with me.”

Then, the doors of heaven opened for them.

They immediately saw Adam, the first person ever created by God.

Adam welcomed Gabriel and Muhammad and offered a prayer to wish them well.

**Do you believe in heaven? If so, what do you think heaven is like?**

Gabriel and Muhammad then continued their journey. Soon, the door to the second heaven opened for them. There, Gabriel and Muhammad saw Jesus and his cousin John, who is sometimes called John the Baptist. Like Adam, Jesus and John welcomed Gabriel and Muhammad to the second heaven and offered a prayer to wish them well.

The journey then continued to the third heaven. This time, they saw Joseph, the son of Jacob. You might remember Joseph because he had dreams that made his brothers mad. They sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt, but eventually Joseph became a great leader and saved everyone from a horrible seven-year famine.

Like Adam, Jesus, and John, Joseph offered a prayer wishing Gabriel and Muhammad well.

Then, they ascended to the fourth heaven.

This time, they saw Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah. Noah is famous for building an ark that saved both the humans and animals from a great flood.

Muhammad couldn't believe he had traveled all the way to the fourth level of heaven, but his journey wasn't over yet! When they ascended to the fifth level of heaven, yet another door was opened for them. This time, they saw Aaron, the brother of Moses.

Can you guess what happened? Yep...Aaron welcomed them and offered a prayer wishing them well.

Then, they ascended to the sixth heaven!!

This time, they met Moses, himself.

Finally, the door to the seventh heaven was opened. This would be the final stop on Muhammad's journey, and it was more magnificent than Muhammad could ever have imagined. First, Muhammad saw Abraham, the great prophet who was told that he would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky.

All these figures – Adam, Jesus, John, Joseph, Enoch/Noah, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham – are considered prophets in the Islamic tradition. They are also important in both Judaism and Christianity. Have you ever heard of any of them? What do you know about them?

Muhammad also saw two additional visions in the seventh level. First, he saw the sacred house of Allah. It was the holiest mosque in the universe and, each day, 70,000 angels would visit it to pray. Then, Muhammad saw a gigantic and mysterious tree. Its leaves were as big as elephant ears, and its fruit was as big as a huge vase.

Muhammad was trying desperately to understand all that he was seeing and experiencing. But then, almost as quickly as it had appeared, the magical scene evaporated into thin air. That's when Allah revealed to Muhammad that he should instruct his followers to pray 50 times a day.

Wow. Fifty times a day seemed like a lot! Muhammad knew that prayer was very important, but he also knew that people needed to work, eat, sleep, and relax with family and friends. Muhammad decided he needed guidance on this matter. And who better to offer guidance than the heavenly prophets he had just met?! Muhammad decided to travel back to the sixth level of heaven to consult with Moses.

“Moses,” Muhammad began, “The glory of Allah has been revealed to me in the seventh, and final, heavenly level. It included a request that all followers of Allah offer prayers 50 times a day. What do you think? Please share your profound wisdom on this matter.”

“Hmmm,” Moses said, “This seems like an awful lot to me. I think it's too much to expect from humans who must also maintain their daily lives. Perhaps you could ask Allah for a reduction.”

If you had a difficult decision to make, what wise person would you ask for advice?

Muhammad did as Moses suggested and traveled back to the seventh heaven to seek a reduction in the number of daily prayers required. Allah, known for compassion and mercy, agreed. The next revelation indicated that Muhammad's followers needed to pray only 45 times a day.

But, when Muhammad went back to Moses, Moses once again said, “I think 45 times a day is still too much. I think you should consider asking Allah for yet another reduction.”

So Muhammad went back to Allah. This went on and on. Allah would reveal a number to Muhammad. Muhammad would ask Moses about it. Moses would suggest that Muhammad ask for another reduction. And Muhammad would go back to Allah. Back and forth and back and forth Muhammad went.

Finally, Allah revealed that Muhammad's followers should pray five times a day.

“OK, Moses,” Muhammad said on his trip back to the sixth level. “We are now down to five prayers a day. What do you think? I really don't think we can go much lower. Allah has shown infinite patience with our requests on behalf of the people, and I think we should accept five as the final number.

“I still think five prayers a day is too much,” Moses said. “Ask Allah, just one more time, to make one more teeny tiny reduction.”

“Nope,” Muhammad said. “I think this is the Divine Word. The people of Allah will pray five times a day. It is done.”

And so it remains even now. Muslims all over the world still pray five times a day, and it's all because of Muhammad and his amazing night journey.

What do you think? Do you think praying five times a day is too much, too little, or just right?

Do you think you could pray five times a day?

Do you pray? If so, when – and how often – do you pray?