

JERUSALEM: THE HEART OF THE WORLD

Part 2

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When we were in Jerusalem, we wanted to go into *Qubbet'us Sahra*, the building with the golden dome, where Prophet Muhammad ascended to *miraj* and *the Muallaq Stone* is kept, but the attitudes of the guards there were displeasing. They treated the visitors very rudely and scolded them angrily. They urged people to recite the *kalima shahadah* or a verse from the Quran. They said if they did not recite it, they would not be allowed to go in. These were really offensive and not pleasant at all. I say that the heart of the world is Jerusalem, but Jerusalem, the heart of the world, is in pain. There is heartache. It was really sad to see that these people's attitudes were so rude, so hostile and they claimed to do it all for the sake of religion.

Talking about the virtues, the beauty of Islam; about its taste, its joy, I can clearly say that we are ashamed of the attitudes of those people who claim to represent it. They of course do not represent the meaning of Islam but they claim to. When we wanted to go into the churches, nobody told us we were not allowed to go in because we were Muslims. We went to the *Kotel*; we were even allowed to go into it. But unfortunately, we were not welcomed in the Muslim neighbourhood. The non-Muslim guests were all left out behind the door, which still makes my heart bleed. We were enormously ashamed. Is this what our mercy is? It is certainly not. Aren't the Islamic countries interested in this place, which is the heart of the entire world, where all our attention is focused on? Why don't they come together and share the services given there? Why don't they serve the people going there with the affection, the compassion, and the beauties of this religion?

Prophet Muhammad's ascent (*miraj*) is something that has been a matter of dispute in history. There is the exoteric view on the one hand, and the esoteric on the other; there is always a contradiction, not only in Islam but in every religion. On the one hand we have the spiritual people, and on the other merely exoteric, imitating believers. There is no problem if these people are sincere in what they do, but there is an unpleasant contradiction if they are insincere. Even though they are sincere people, there is dispute among the scholars. Some of them are literalist; that is, they take each word literally. When they read something in the Quran, or in the *Hadith Qudsi*, or in the scriptures, they do not search for any allegoric, symbolic, or inner meaning behind the words. If it says "he drank a glass of milk", it means he actually drank a glass of milk. And when you say that milk represents spiritual knowledge, they say there is no such thing, it is nonsense. People who do not know the symbolic structure of the tradition always sacrifice the meaning and the spiritual aspect of religion by these kinds of rejections and objections.



Consequently, there is this *Isra* (the Night Journey) of Prophet Muhammad as stated in the Quran. There are people who understand that the Prophet experienced a *miraj*, he ascended and went to Allah as stated in his own hadith. Allah encompasses all; he is One with each particle everywhere. Allah does not dwell in a particular place; there is no place apart from him. Therefore, saying that the Prophet went to talk to Him in the heavens is infidelity, it is in fact polytheism. It violates the essence, the taste, the joy of Islam. Unfortunately, some people who are regarded as scholars but fail to understand the truth, say that the Prophet was taken to the heavens, he went up to talk to Allah. Does Allah dwell in the heavens? There is no such thing. But there is of course *miraj*, an ascent, purification in one's own, a process in which there is a gradual isolation from one's personality and going through sustaining, compassionate and divine states, respectively. This is experienced spiritually. It takes place in the Spirit.

This process of the Prophet's *miraj* is also told by the Prophet's wife herself. She says that he was right by her side in bed; he did not leave for anywhere. They may say he had a dream. Even then, the dreams of the people who receive divine revelations, who we call as prophets or *wali* (friend of Allah) and the psychological dreams of the ordinary people, are not the same. It seems to some people as if these taking place in his vision degrade or humiliate the Prophet, as if it would be much worthier if he went up in his body. This ascent was not a touristic journey. But as people worship their bodies, as they think they consist only of their bodies, they say he ascended in his body; here I am talking about those who are not open to spiritual meaning. The Prophet himself says he went to Jerusalem and ascended from there to the heavens, this is a spiritual elevation. "The heavens" does not mean the sky. It means the spiritual sky. So, we are not talking about an ascent into the sky and flying among the stars like Superman. This is a spiritual elevation, a spiritual understanding.

The Prophet says: "*I've ascended from Quddus (Jerusalem),*" which means from Heart as *Quddus* is heart. But the Jewish people, the Jewish scholars of the time oppose to it and say: "*How could it be? You've never been to Jerusalem. You say you've gone there in a night, but you can't go there just in one night. It would take a week or more to go from Jerusalem to Mecca on camel. You are lying.*" But the Prophet says he really experienced such an ascent. Then they ask him to prove it. He asks them what to prove. They say there is Masjid al-Aqsa which is far from Mecca, a temple meaning "the farthest mosque", they ask him how many windows this temple has. The Prophet answers. They ask him questions about the temple, so specific that people could not answer even if they have been to it. He answers them all and the people are astonished to get the right answers. Then they say he is probably a magician or an illusionist otherwise how could he answer those questions? He cannot have gone there in just one night. He may have dreamt about it, or as he knows the answers, he is a magician. Then the Prophet says that this is prophecy: "*Allah inspires whoever he wishes with revelations. This information has been given to me, I am not lying.*"

Now, this is a spiritual fact and it is also related to space. It is a complicated matter. We went to *Masjid al-Aqsa* and saw the *Muallaq Stone* which is preserved under *Qubbet'us Sahra*, which is the *Golden Dome*. This is the legendary stone that is told to tend to move with the Prophet as he was ascending and that suspended in the air. That is the place where Prophet Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son. This son is Isaac according to some scholars and

Ishmael according to the others, yet it is the place, the cave where he wanted to sacrifice his son. It is told that the Prophet performed his *salaat*, performed his prayer in this place. There is also a symbolic explanation about this *Muallaq Stone*. The symbol of stone represents the densest form of the spirituality of man, which is the body. During the ascension, the stone wanted to go up with the Prophet but he told the stone to stay back and ascended spiritually. This symbolism, this allegory is the proof that he ascended not in his body but it was a spiritual ascent. However, this explanation is for those who feel the joy of this symbolism. Everyone is free in his belief; we cannot ask anyone to understand it in a certain way. Yet, the spiritual people have the joy of it; they understand the truth of it.

People standing in front of the *Kotel* (the Wall) do not worship the wall or the stones of the wall. Unfortunately, some people misunderstand it and think it is idolatry. In this case, the prayer performed towards the wall of *Qaba* can be mistaken as performed towards the stones of it. It is not so. We saw a little part of the wall which has remained in that place. But when we went under it through a corridor which was 400 metres long, we saw the rest of this wall. That is the temple prophet Solomon had got built. It is a very big, an enormous temple. Huge blocks of stones were used to build this magnificent temple.

Within the whole chain of prophets from Adam to Muhammad, we have *Qabatullah* in Mecca which was first built, according to the Islamic literature, as a house for Adam. *Qaba* in Mecca is defined as the first house, the first temple. But the next first gathering place is the temple in Jerusalem that prophet Solomon had got built. It is not the house of Adam anymore but the house of the community; a place to come together and pray.

(...) Jesus Christ once said in front of Solomon's temple: There will not be one stone upon another because of your attitude. He was addressing to the people of the time who forgot about spirituality and were taken with the worldly things. They used to do trade and exchange money in the temple. Therefore Jesus Christ said to these people: You have desecrated the temple, so there will not be one stone upon another, you'll see. It is interesting that, 60-70 years after Jesus, there comes a Roman commander to Jerusalem, he destroys the temple and sets the city on fire. A big massacre also takes place at that time and many of the Israelites are killed.

The temple, destroyed after the time of Jesus Christ by the Romans, could not be rebuilt. A part of the temple wall has remained up today. People once used to perform their prayers within the temple, and now they pray in front of the wall; that is, at the temple. The prayers performed here are meditative like any other prayer. The moment you forget about yourself, the moment of trance is the prayer; prayer is not repeating some words or following a pattern. It is nothing formulated beforehand. It is called meditative, a state of trance in which we forget about ourselves. In some of these moments, ecstasy may be experienced, as in the example of Prophet Muhammad when he got the revelations. We saw at the *Kotel* that some of the Rabbis were in an ecstatic state. Ecstasy makes a person cry as he is filled with divine feelings. Crying is a result of this ecstatic state. Hence, people may start to cry or wail, which also frequently takes place in our temples. People burst into tears.

This is an outburst of feelings. This place is also called as *the Wailing Wall* because of what happens there. Other than this, it is not a place to cry but to perform your prayer.

The Ethiopian Jews are the Black Jews. The discourse of Judaism is related to aryan race. The existence of the Ethiopian Jews violates this discourse. We know about a historical figure called *Belkis (Balqis)*, which also exists in our folkloric culture. She is the Queen of Sheba and the lover of King Solomon. The Quran tells about their story. Prophet Solomon asks an *ifrit* of the *jinns* and a wise man who could bring him the throne of the Queen of Sheba, which is very far away. This is a very interesting, technological or mystical story from the Quran. The *ifrit* says: "I will bring it to you before you can rise from your place." But the wise man says: "I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye." So what is this? Is it transportation of matter? This is something which takes place in the Quran and it should be studied. When the Queen of Sheba, *Belkis* comes to the palace, she falls pregnant as a result of her love affair with King Solomon. Yet, she has to return to her hometown because of the people's reactions to the relationship between King Solomon and a black woman. King Solomon has to accept to send her back. But as the Queen of Sheba returns to her country and gives birth to Solomon's child, her lineage maintains the Judaic tradition and faith there.

There are very interesting statements related to this story. It is said that a black man from King Solomon's lineage will finally become the king of the world, which is the symbol of apocalypse. Once, this was believed by some people to be Haile Selassie, who was a black man and the emperor of Ethiopia. However, the prophecy was not to be the king of a particular region, but of the whole world. This of course should have both earthly and spiritual aspects.

There is another interesting story related to this. The symbolism of stone is told in terms of the body and also takes place in the Holy Bible. It says: "The stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone." This is the stone that the temple builders rejected. Being a part of the temple, the temple of mankind; maturing, carving and polishing oneself is told with the symbol of a stone, in terms of alchemy. Just as a stone is put into the wall of a temple and is in harmony with the rest of the wall, every person takes his place in the temple of mankind to create a peaceful society in the world. The stone symbolizes this fact. And the disapproved stone, the disapproved race are the black people. Yet, the Holy Bible says "the rejected stone has become the corner stone." Unfortunately, in Christian interpretations, this stone, which is also called as Peter (*Petros/Rock*), is said to be Jesus Christ himself. Spiritually, of course it is Jesus Christ but genetically it is widely believed to be the black people. It is taken as a symbol to show the king of the world when the time comes. This is a complicated matter and God knows the truth of it.

Tawalla and *tabarra* are two very important terms that take place in the Quran but, unfortunately, they are almost forgotten today. Make friends with the friends of Allah; *wali* and *tawalla*. *Wali* is a friend of Allah, so make friends with them. *Tabarra* means dissociating



yourself from the enemies of Allah. However, it does not mean to be enemies with these people, but just to dissociate yourself, to stay away from them. Make friends with those who are the friends of Allah and stay away from those who are the enemies of Allah, who deny Him, who talk against or swear at Him. How can we understand that someone is swearing at Allah? This is not only about talking against Him. Stay away from the enemies of the friends of Allah, from the enemies of those who have devoted themselves to Allah. These two concepts *tawalla* and *tabarra* are very important and have existed in the whole ancient wisdom starting with the issue of Qabil and Habil. This problem between Qabil and Habil has not come to an end. In the Old Testament they are called as Cain and Abel. In the last period of Islamic literature, Cain is referred as Qabil. They are meaningful in both cases. After all, there is enmity; there is dispute between two brothers. The two sons of Adam have fought with each other and this fight still goes on today. One of them is on the side of God and the other is against Him.

Then, everyone has to decide which side to take. We can see this in the example of Jesus Christ. In this sense, those who rejected and killed him are of the lineage of Cain. The contradiction, the conflict between the Pharaoh and Moses is another example – or the conflict between Prophet Abraham and Nemrut. All the other prophets doubtlessly have opponents. When it comes to Prophet Muhammad, his opponent is Abu Jahl. When we look at Imam Ali, we can see the same controversy. The opponent of Imam Ali is Muawiyah. Muawiyah makes war with him. In the last period of this tradition, Ali is *waliullah*, he is the friend of Allah. Then, one should be a friend of Ali and stay away from Muawiyah. Those who have not understood this distinction, who have not attained this joy of meaning, are not regarded as faithful. In the Holy Quran, the terms *tawalla* and *tabarra* are commands. Yet, it doesn't tell you to be enemies of these people; you should only dissociate yourself, stay away from them. In the last analysis, it is also expressed as: Stay away from the ignorant, come closer to the complete man. This is what we mean by *tawalla* and *tabarra*.

The symbolism in the ancient wisdom cannot be understood in just one way. It cannot be reduced to a single meaning because symbols have more than one meaning. This does not mean that you can attribute any meaning you want to, but symbols have counterparts in all levels of intellect, body, mind, heart and loving heart, nature and cosmos, and society. When you say “*I am Kizilbash*” (red head), it means “*I have taken my blood up to my head; I will sacrifice myself.*” The followers of Imam Ali tied red scarves around their heads so that they could be distinguished from his opponents as they did not use to wear any uniforms in those days. And genetically, the faithful and the unfaithful ones were mostly relatives of each other.

There was a war between those who were relatives by blood and those who were relatives by faith. In this war, the faithful ones were the victims; they did not attack the others. But the unfaithful ones accused the faithful ones of separating from them and not following their sheikhs. They waged a war and started killing the followers of Imam Ali. And the followers of Ali tied red scarves around their heads to realize who their friends are and who are not. So, when the unfaithful ones saw the followers of Ali, the *Shiah*, with red scarves on

their heads, they called them the *Kizilbash*. Therefore, this is a term used for the followers of Ali. The Japanese also have a similar concept. You must have seen these people called Kamikaze in all the films about World War II. They used to tie red scarves, too. They are like the *Kizilbash*. The symbolic meaning of it in all cultures is to take your blood up to your head, to sacrifice yourself, to go willingly to death.

Actually, this is only one of its meanings. Another meaning of it is as in the clothes of an imam. When you look at the clothes of an imam, you can see a red cap in the middle of his turban. This red cap represents the heart; love. The heart is washed with red blood, as the *Qaba* is washed with rose water. When someone is filled with love, as his joy of love increases, the heart starts to beat faster. Blood circulation accelerates and the body temperature actually increases. When this happens, the face colours up, it becomes pink like a rose. Then, that person is called *Kizilbash*, or "in love". Therefore, when you say "*I am Kizilbash*", you mean you are in love; you are devoted to Ali; you can sacrifice yourself in the name of *Haqq*; you can shed your blood just as Hussein did and you will never bow to falsehood.*

* These excerpts are taken from *Ashura*, a TV programme by Metin Bobaroğlu and Ayşe Acar on Anatolia, and translated by Nurgül Demirdöven