

Memorable Night

On the memorable night of *Isra* (Night Trip) and *Miraj* (Ascension to heaven) the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sleeping in the house of his cousin, Umm Hani. Said Umm Hani: "The Messenger of Allah spent the night in my house. He performed the Nigh (*Isha*) Prayer, then he slept, and we slept. Just before dawn we woke the Messenger of Allah, but when he performed the Dawn Prayer and we prayed with him, he said: '**O Umm Hani, I have prayed the Night Prayer with you in this valley, as you have witnessed, then I went to the House of Jerusalem and prayed therein, and I have prayed the Dawn prayer with you now, as you see.**' I said: 'O Prophet of Allah, do not tell it to the people, they may belie and harm you.' He replied: '**By Allah, I will tell it to them.**'" [Ibn Hisham, Ibn Saad]

Question may arise whether the Prophet's *Isra* and *Miraj* was spiritual or physical or both. We can only say that if one's belief in the free, limitless power and potency of God is firm and unshakable, then the question at issue loses much of its interest. Whether the Night Trip or the stupendous Ascent were spiritual or physical, the two events were of the greatest significance and confirm that this honour upon the Prophet by his Lord acclaims him as a Divine Prophet.

Its impact upon Makkah was enormous. Some persons, who lacked belief and imagination and therefore could not conceive of the possibility of the two unusual events, became so shocked that they reportedly lapsed into apostasy. Only Abu Bakr refused to be overwhelmed by the extraordinary nature of the two achievements. When he was first told about the incident, he replied, '**By Allah, if he had said it, he must be truthful for I have believed him in his claims that revelation descends upon him from Heaven during the night. This latter matter is by far greater than what you are now wondering about.**' Abu Bakr's reply showed his acute perception and natural common sense. Because of this incident, Abu Bakr was called 'As-Siddiq' - the one who affirms the truth.

Perfection - Al-Sharh (The Relief) - Chapter 94: Verse 5 "Verily with hardship comes ease."



Growing up I think I understood this ayah wrongly. I used to think it meant: after hardship comes ease. In other words, I thought life was made up of good times and bad times. After the bad times, come the good times. I thought this as if life was either all good or all bad. But that is not what the ayah is saying. The ayah is saying WITH hardship comes ease. The ease is at the same time as the hardship. This means that **nothing in this life is ever all bad (or all good)**. In every bad situation we're in, there is always something to be grateful for. With hardship, Allah also gives us the strength and patience to bear it. If we study the difficult times in our lives, we will see that they were also filled with much good. The question is— which do we chose to focus on? I think **the trap we fall into is rooted in this false belief that this life can be perfect— perfectly good or perfectly bad**. However that's not the nature of *dunya* (this life). That's the nature of the Hereafter. The Hereafter is saved for the perfection of things. *Jannah* (paradise) is perfectly and completely good. There is no bad in it. And *Jahannam* (hell— may Allah protect us) is perfectly and completely bad. There is no good in it.

Raising Children

When we talk about Islamic education and our children, the discussion usually revolves around strictly academic issues related to technical aspects of curriculum development, testing standards and methodologies, balancing between secular and religious education, and similar concerns. Sometimes we miss the greater objective of an Islamic education. That objective, in terms of what is necessary for the immediate success of our children in this world, and their ultimate success in the next, is nurturing balanced, wholesome, honest human beings who live lives based on principle and who exemplify good character in their dealings with other people.

The basis for the obtainment of this objective is captured in the following prophetic tradition, **“Be mindful of God wherever you are, and follow up any misdeed you might do with a good deed that will wipe it out (being weightier in the scale). And deal with people on the basis of good character.”** [Tirmidhi]

This tradition mentions three very important things that should be fundamental to our educational endeavour. **The first is endeavouring to instil a healthy fear of God in the child.** Cultivating a healthy fear of God is rooted in mindfulness of Him. Mindfulness is a prerequisite for fear. For this reason, one of the initial goals of the spiritual path is cultivating fear of God. This is the initial thrust that propels the aspirant through subsequent stages of true human development.

The second point emphasized by the tradition we are discussing is encouraging a spirit of repentance in our children. Sins and transgression involve consequences. With sincere repentance those consequences can be eradicated. Emphasizing this point and further emphasizing other manifestations of God’s mercy provide a balance that mitigates the harshness that might accrue by focusing on the reality of divine retribution and punishment. God is most willing to accept repentance. He is most merciful.

The third point raised by this prophetic tradition is to treat people with good character. We have to constantly encourage good character and manners in our children. “Did you say please?” “You didn’t say thank you.” “You should have held the door for the lady coming into the store after you.” Such urgings have to be constantly repeated until the desired traits become ingrained in our children. Repetition in many situations is a great pedagogical tool. It goes without saying that constantly repeated instructions also have to be diligently reinforced by adult example.