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“THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD’S MYSTICAL ASCENSION TO HEAVEN”

IRAN; C. 1580

One night, Muhammad ascended to heaven on the winged creature Buraq and met God. The story, which was first recounted in the Koran, has inspired innumerable illustrations, especially the ones created for the great epic poems of Iran. This painting is from a copy of Jami’s *Yusuf wa Zulaykha*.

In the Sufi’s interpretation of the words of the Koran, Muhammad himself is the ”original mystic” and the ascent to heaven is a metaphor for the inner journey towards union with the divine. Muhammad never let himself become completely one with God, however. He experienced God’s presence and then returned to the world to answer his call as a prophet.