

The Night of Destiny (Lailatul-Qadr)

The Messenger of Allah (S) is quoted on page 265, Vol. 3, of al-Amin's work *Muftahul Jannat*, saying, "Allah has favored Friday over all other days, the month of Ramadhan over all other months, and the Night of Destiny (Lailatul-Qadr) over all other nights." And Allah has favored the Holy Qur'an over all other Books which He revealed. Ibrahim, one of the companions of Imam Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq (as), is quoted on p. 25, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, saying that he once asked the Imam (as) about how the Holy Qur'an was revealed during Lailatul-Qadr, knowing that it took more than twenty years to reveal.

The Imam (as) answered by saying, "The Holy Qur'an was revealed as a whole during the month of Ramadhan at the Ancient House (the Ka'ba), then from there it was revealed along the span of (more than) twenty years." Then he cited the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, "The Books of Ibrahim (as) were revealed on the first night of the month of Ramadhan; the Torah was revealed on the sixth of the month of Ramadhan; the Gospel (Injil) was revealed on the thirteenth of the month of Ramadhan; the Psalms (Zabur) were revealed on the eighteenth of the month of Ramadhan, and the Holy Qur'an was revealed on the twenty-fourth of the month of Ramadhan." This tradition is also recorded on p. 80, Vol. 1, of al-'Ayyashi's *Tafsir*.

This name was used for Lailatul-Qadr because Allah Almighty determines in it for everyone all what will happen the entire next year. The "Qadr" in this sense means destiny. According to al-Qummi's *Tafsir*, as explained on p. 432 of its second volume, such destiny includes life and death, sustenance, abundance of crops or famine, and everything good or bad. This means that Allah the Glorified and Exalted determines in this night each and every event to occur during the next year to any and all of His creation.

Al-Majlisi quotes his father on p. 12, Vol. 94, of his own *Bihar al-Anwar* quoting al-Nadar quoting Yahya al-Halabi quoting Ibn Maskan quoting Imam Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq (as) saying, "During Lailatul-Qadr, the angels, the spirit, and the trusted scribes all descend to the lower heavens and write down whatever Allah decrees that year, and if Allah wishes to advance something or postpone it or add thereto, He orders the angel to erase it and replace it with whatever He decrees." This is also confirmed by al-Qummi in his renown *Tafsir*, exegesis of the Holy Qur'an.

On p. 182, Vol. 1, of *'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida*, and on p. 14, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, Ja'far ibn Ali ibn

Ahmed quotes al-Hassan ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Sadaqah quotes Muhammad son of 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz quoting al-Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Nawfali quoting Sulayman al-Marzawi asking Imam al-Rida (as), "Could you please tell us why the Chapter of Qadr was revealed?" The Imam (as) said, "O Sulayman! Lailatul-Qadr is the night when Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, decrees what will take place from one year to another of life or death, good or evil, or regarding sustenance, and whatever He then decrees is sure destiny."

On p. 315 of *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, and also on p. 18, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, Ibn Musa quotes Ibn Zakariyya citing Muhammad ibn al-Abbas quoting Muhammad ibn al-Sary quoting Ahmed ibn Abdullah ibn Yunus quoting Ibn Tareef quoting Ibn Nubatah quoting Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) saying, "The Messenger of Allah (S) asked me once, 'O Ali! Do you know the implication of Lailatul-Qadr?' I said, 'No, indeed, O Messenger of Allah!' He (S) said, 'Allah, the Praised One, the Most Glorified, decreed in it what will take place till the Day of Judgment, and among what He, the most Exalted, the Most Great, decreed was your own Imamate and Wilayat and the Imamate and Wilayat of your offspring till the Day of Resurrection.'"

Both *Ma'ani al-Akhbar* and *Bihar al-Anwar* quote Sa'd citing the great traditionist Abdullah son of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab quoting Muhammad ibn 'Ubayd ibn Mahran quoting Salih quoting Salih ibn 'Uqbah quoting al-Fadl ibn 'Uthman saying, "When the Chapter of Qadr was mentioned in the presence of Abu Abdullah Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as), he was asked about its merits over other chapters, and he said, 'It was revealed with reference to the Wilayat of the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali) (as).' He (as) was asked, 'Do you mean Lailatul-Qadr for which we look in anticipation during the month of Ramadhan?' He (as) said, 'Yes; it is the night in which the heavens and the earth were determined, and the Wilayat of the Commander of the Faithful (as) was decreed.'"

Ahmed ibn Muhammad and Ahmed ibn Ishaq, as recorded on p. 21, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, quote al-Qasim ibn Yahya quoting others citing Imam Abu Abdullah (as) saying that Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) quite often used to say, "We saw the Messenger of Allah (S) once in the company of al-Taymi and a friend of his while the latter was reciting Chapter al-Qadr. He (S) was profoundly moved and he kept weeping to the extent that he (S) was asked, 'How so deeply moved by this Chapter your heart is!'

He (S) said, 'My heart is deeply impressed because of what my eyes had witnessed, and what my mind had comprehended, and because of what the heart of this man [meaning Ali (as)] will go through after me.' Both men asked the Messenger of Allah (S), 'Did you really see all of that?! And what will he (Ali) see?' He (S) would then recite the verse saying, 'The angels and the Spirit descend therein with the permission of their Lord for every affair; peace, it is, till the break of the morn.'

Then he (S) would pause and ask them, 'Is there anything left after the Almighty having verbally said 'every affair?'' They would both answer in the negative, and he (S) would then ask them, 'Do you both know regarding whom it is revealed?' They would both say, 'No, by Allah, O Messenger of Allah!'

He (S) would then say, 'Yes; is there going to be a Lailatul-Qadr after me (i.e., after my demise)?' They would answer in the affirmative, and he (S) would then ask them, 'Will every affair descend therein?' They said: 'Yes.' He then asked them, 'To whom will it descend?' They answered, 'We do not know.' He (S), with his hand on my head, pushed me gently forward and said, 'If you do not know, then it is regarding this person after me.' Both men, ever since the demise of the Messenger of Allah (S), used to be filled with awe whenever that night approached."

The Almighty says,

"Therein every wise affair is made distinct" (44:4).

This means that in this night, the Exalted One decrees everything that will happen next year. It is also said in Arabic that someone has a "qadr," a social status or a certain prestige, which he enjoys among people. The "Qadr" in this sense, therefore, also connotes prestige and significance.

The Almighty also says in the Holy Qur'an, "They did not honor Allah as He ought to be honored," that is, they did not glorify Him as He ought to be glorified; thus, "qadr" in this verse implies glorification. Lailatul-Qadr, then, is the great night which enjoys a great deal of prestige and high esteem with Allah and in which He determines and decrees the fate and sustenance of all His creation. It has a special status simply because obedience to Him during it is regarded with great seriousness and urgency, and a great reward awaits those who honor the month wherein it falls.

It is also said that it was so named because a Book from Allah which enjoys greatness of status was revealed to a Prophet who also enjoys a great honor and prestige. Another view is that it was named so because the earth becomes straitened due to the number of angels on it. "Qadr," according to this view, carries the meaning of straitness due to the fact that the Almighty has said "... and whoever He decides to straiten his sustenance...", and Allah knows best.

The Almighty has addressed His servant and Messenger, our master, Muhammad (S), saying, "And what will make you comprehend what Lailatul-Qadr is? Lailatul-Qadr is better than a thousand months;" that is, "How would you know the greatness, significance, and sanctity of this night which I have decreed to be better than a thousand months?"

There are indications that the Holy Qur'an was revealed as a whole to the Messenger (S). In the Holy Qur'an, we read:

"Haa, Meem. By the Book that makes (the truth) manifest, surely We revealed it on a blessed night" (Surah Dhukhan 44: 1-3),

and also,

"Surely We revealed it on Lailatul-Qadr" (Surah Bayyinnah 98: 1).

Ibn Abbas is quoted saying, "The Holy Qur'an was revealed as a whole from the Safeguarded Scroll from the heavens to the lower earth on Lailatul-Qadr, then Gabriel (as) used to reveal it unto Muhammad (S) gradually." It is well known that the Holy Qur'an was revealed unto the Messenger of Allah (S) in installments during a period of twenty-three years. The first chapter revealed unto the Messenger of Allah (S) at the Cave of Hira was the Chapter of al-'Alaq when Gabriel said to him: "(O Muhammad!) Read!" He (S) said: "I cannot read." He repeated, "Read!" Again the Prophet (S) said, "I cannot read." So he said once more,

"Read in the Name of your Lord Who created..." (Surah Alaq 96: 1),

up to the end of the chapter. The last verse of the Glorious Book of Allah revealed unto the Messenger (S) was:

"Today have I completed for you your religion, perfected My blessing unto you, and accepted Islam as your religion" (Surah Maida 5:3).

Thus, suffices this blessed night the honor and dignity of being particularly chosen by the Glorified and Exalted One for the revelation of His Glorious Qur'an which is the shining and guiding light of the religion of Islam and the constitution of its adherents.

Why is Lailatul-Qadr better than a thousand months? Why not better than ten or a hundred thousands?! Al-Qummi indicates on page 432, Vol. 2, of his *Tafsir*, that the Messenger of Allah (S) once saw in a vision monkeys climbing over his pulpit, and he felt very distressed; thereupon, the chapter of Qadr was revealed to remove his distress. The period of Banu Umayyad's government lasted roughly a thousand months: from 661 to 750 A.D., with the first ruler being Abu Sufyan and the last Mu'awiyah al-Himar.

Both al-Kulayni in his *Al-Kafi* and al-Majlisi in his *Bihar al-Anwar* quote Ahmed ibn Muhammad quoting Ali ibn al-Hassan quoting Muhammad ibn al-Walid and Muhammad ibn Ahmed quoting Yunus ibn Ya'qub quoting Ali ibn 'Eisa al-Qammat quoting his uncle quoting Imam Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq (as) saying, "The Messenger of Allah (S) was shown in a vision how Banu Umayyah climbed over his pulpit (like monkeys climb over trees), so he felt very unhappy, whereupon Gabriel (as) descended upon him and asked him why he was so forlorn.

He (S) said, 'I have seen (in a vision) tonight Banu Umayya ascending my pulpit after having misled people from the Straight Path.' Gabriel (as) said,

'I swear by the One Who has sent me (as a messenger) with the truth, this is something with which I am not familiar.' Having said so, he ascended to the heavens. After a short while, he brought him one verse to remove thereby his grief; it said: 'Have you considered if We would let them enjoy themselves for (a few) years, then that with which they are threatened comes to them, so much so that whatever they were permitted to enjoy shall not avail them (in the least)?' (Holy Qur'an, Surah Shu'ara 26:205-207).

And he also brought him: 'We revealed it in Lailatul-Qadr, and what will make you comprehend what Lailatul-Qadr is? Lailatul-Qadr is better than a thousand months..., etc.'

Lailatul-Qadr is a blessed night also because the Almighty brings down during it goodness, bliss, and forgiveness for His servants. One tradition of the greatest of all prophets Muhammad ibn Abdullah (S) states that when Lailatul-Qadr approaches, the Almighty orders Gabriel (as) to descend accompanied by a crowd of angels to the earth with a green banner.

He would mount the banner atop the Ka'ba while having six hundred wings one of which is not spread except on Lailatul-Qadr; so, he would spread them during that night, and he and all other angels would greet everyone who is standing for his prayers, sitting, adoring, or reciting the Holy Qur'an. They would shake hands with them and pray the Almighty to accept their pleas, and they would continue doing so till daybreak.

It is then that they would ask Gabriel: "What has the Almighty Allah done with the wishes of the believers among the nation of Muhammad (S)?" He would answer, "The Almighty Allah has looked upon them on this night and forgiven them, all of them, except the following: one who is addicted to drinking, one who severs his ties with his kin, and one who is a trouble-maker."

The Almighty has said, "Lailatul-Qadr is better than a thousand months," meaning, mathematically, that this night, which is comprised of a few hours, is honored by Allah the Exalted and Praised over about eighty-three years which is the equivalent of a thousand months. The Umayyads fought Islam since its inception, then they fought the family of the Prophet (S), that is, Ahl al-Bayt, the whole time they were in power.

The first self-declared Umayyad ruler was Abu Sufyan, and the last was Mu'awiya al-Himar. If you trace the period extending from the first year during which Abu Sufyan forced his authority on the Muslims until the Umayyad lost grip over power, you will come to a figure equivalent to a thousand months. It is as if the Holy Qur'an is saying that one night in the sight of Allah is better than all the thousand months those corrupt Umayyads ruled the Muslim masses by sheer force.

The Almighty has also said, "Peace, it is, till the break of the morn," that is, "Lailatul-Qadr is a night of peace and tranquility against all evils, tribulations, and the mischief of the devils. No evil can take place during it, nor can a demon practice his evil designs. It is peace for the devotees who are greeted whenever they are met by the angels. The angels greet them and greet you, O Muhammad, and so does My Spirit, since the moment they descend from heavens and till the time of daybreak."

According to the book titled *al-Iqbal* which cites *Kanzul Yawaqeeet* by Abul-Fadl ibn Muhammad al-Harwi, the Prophet (S) has said, "Whoever remains awake during Lailatul-Qadr and spends it in adoration will have his penalty postponed till the next year." According to the same reference, the Prophet (S) says that Moses (as) once addressed the Almighty saying, "Lord! I desire to be near to You." The Almighty said, "Whoever desires nearness to Me is one who remains awake during Lailatul-Qadr

(worshipping Me)."

He said, "Lord! I wish to earn Your mercy." The Almighty said, "My mercy is granted to anyone who is merciful to the indigent during Lailatul-Qadr." He said, "Lord! I wish to pass on the right path." He said, "This is granted to anyone who spends alms during Lailatul-Qadr." He said, "Lord! I wish to enjoy the trees and fruits of Paradise!" The Almighty said, "This is granted to anyone who praises Me during Lailatul-Qadr."

He said, "Lord! I wish to achieve salvation from the fire!" He said, "This is granted to anyone who seeks forgiveness during Lailatul-Qadr." He said, "Lord! I wish to achieve Your pleasure!" The Almighty said, "I shall be pleased with anyone who prays two (optional) *rek'ats* during Lailatul-Qadr."

The same book quotes the Holy Prophet (S) saying that the gates of heaven will be opened during Lailatul-Qadr; every devotee who performs prayers during it will receive a tree in Paradise for each prostration he makes, a tree under whose shade a rider may keep riding for a hundred years without leaving its shade. And he will receive for each *rek'a* a mansion in Paradise of pearls, sapphires, chrysolites and diamonds. For each verse he recites he will receive one of the crowns of Paradise. The tradition is lengthy and it contains quite a generous reward indeed.

Al-Dooryasti, in *Kitab al-Husna*, relying on the authority of Abu Ja'far al-Jawad who quotes his forefathers quoting Imam al-Baqir, peace be upon all of them, the Messenger of Allah (S) is quoted saying that whoever spends Lailatul-Qadr adoring his Lord will have all his sins forgiven even if they had numbered as many as the stars in the heavens, the weight of the mountains, or the measures of the seas. Al-Harwi reported a similar tradition which is recorded in *Kanz al-Yawaqeeet*.

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, is quoted on page 5351 of *Al-Sahih al-Jami'* citing the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, "Lailatul-Qadr is easy, airy, neither very hot nor very cold; the sun rises on its morning colored pale red." The Messenger of Allah (S) is also quoted saying, "At the morning of Lailatul-Qadr, the sun rises without rays, looking like a washbowl, till it is high." This tradition is reported by Muslim and al-Tirmithi. The Messenger of Allah (S) is also reported saying, "Lailatul-Qadr is a serene night, neither hot nor cold, and no comet is hurled during it. One of the signs of its advent is that the sun rises without a ray."

Zad al-Ma'ad quotes a few scholars who believe in its perpetuity, indicating that some of them say that it is at the conclusion of the year; therefore, it has to be observed during all nights of the year so that one of them will be it. Others say that it is in Sha'ban and the month of Ramadhan, while still others say that it is the night of the middle of Sha'ban.

Others say that it is the beginning of the month of Ramadhan, while others say it is the middle of it; yet others say it is the seventeenth. Still others say it is the twenty-ninth of it, while others say it is the last night of it, and most Sunnis of our time are of the view that it is the twenty-seventh. This proves that the reason why it was not determined exactly is due to the purpose of observing the entire month.

On Lailatul-Qadr did the night journey (*israa*) to heavens take place, and the Almighty raised Jesus son of Mary (as) to Him. On it, His servant and prophet Moses (as) died, and so did Joshua son of Noon, the *wasi* of Moses, peace be upon both of them. Also on it was the commander of the faithful Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) martyred.

Relying on the authority of Abu Ja'far, peace be upon him, a few narrators of *hadith* have indicated that the Prophet (S) had been asked once about the Night of Destiny (*Lailatul-Qadr*). So he ascended the pulpit and, having praised the Almighty, he (S) said, "You have asked me about the Night of Destiny. I have not concealed the knowledge of it from you out of my ignorance thereof.

Be informed, O people, that whoever during the month of Ramadhan is healthy, and he fasts during its days and performs prayers during a portion of its nights and is punctual regarding the obligatory prayers, and makes an effort to attend congregational prayers on Fridays during it and attends the Eid prayers as well, he will then have honored the Night of Destiny duly, and he will receive his reward from the Creator."

Do you need any more clues regarding the greatness of Lailatul-Qadr? Then let us tell you that the authors of *Thawab al-A'mal* and *Bihar al-Anwar* have cited the son of al-Mutawakkil quoting Muhammad al-Attar quoting al-Ash'ari quoting Muhammad ibn Hassan quoting Ibn Mahran quoting al-Bataini quoting his father quoting Abu Busayr quoting Imam Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq (as), the men whose truthfulness is not doubted even by the most skeptic scholar, saying that whoever recites Surat al-'Ankabut (The Spider) and Surat al-Rum (Romans) during the 23rd night of the month of Ramadhan will secure admission into Paradise without any exception. On p. 19, Vol. 94, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, the Imam (as) is quoted adding, "I do not fear lest Allah should record that I have committed a sin for having said s; surely these two Chapters enjoy a great status with Allah."

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