

Lailat-ul-Qadr: The Night of Glory:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ
وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ
لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

“We have sent down this (Qur’an) in the Night of Glory...The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months.” [Qur’an: 97, 1-3]

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims generally engage in rigorous spiritual activities. The purpose of these intense efforts is self-reinvigoration and moral renaissance in personal behavior and social interactions that must continue to reverberate beyond the period of fasting. Ramadan, the 9th lunar month of the Islamic calendar, has been chosen for this purpose because the Qur’an, like all previous scriptures, was revealed in this month for the guidance of mankind [Q: 2, 185].

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن
شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ
بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُم وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ

‘[It is the month of Ramadan in which the QUR’AN was revealed, a guidance for mankind with clear teachings showing the Right way and a criterion of Truth and Falsehood-----].

Just as Ramadan has distinction over other months for the preeminent event that occurred in it, one of its nights is the most magnificent night

of the year. The Qur'an names it as *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, meaning *the Night of Glory* or *the Night of Power*. In this night the Qur'an began to be revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) when he was in his routine seclusion in the Cave of Hira – a process that then continued for the next 23 years. This inference is based on [Q: 2: 185 and 97: 1, as mentioned above].

The night when Allah SWT decided to send down His guidance was highly munificent for all mankind:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ

“We have sent it down in a highly blessed night, for We intended to warn the people.” [Q: 44, 3]

The scholars have offered two meanings of sending down the Qur'an in this night. Either the entire Qur'an was entrusted to the bearers (angels) of revelation, [Entire Quran was brought from Seventh Heavens to Louh Mahfooz] and then angel Jibreel (Gabriel) continued to reveal its portions to the Prophet (SAW) over a period of 23 years, prudently as the occasion and circumstances demanded; or the revelation to the Prophet began in this night, which continued over his tenure as Prophet for 23 years. The end result is the same, however.

Some commentators have interpreted *qadr* to mean destiny. That is, it is the night in which Allah SWT hands over the decrees of destiny to angels to be enforced during the ensuing year:

فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ

“This is a night in which every matter is decided wisely by Our Commands.” [Q: 44, 4].

This indicates the significance of this night in the Divine Administration. Allah SWT decides the destinies of individuals, nations, and countries on this night and turns His decrees over to the angels for subsequent enforcement. Thus, the revelation of the Qur'an on this night is not just a transmission of a sacred text of moral code, but an event planned to change the destiny of people and have an enduring impact on the dynamics of the community of nations of the world and their future.

During this night, it has been reported, that angel Jibreel as accompanied by other angels descends with the permission of Allah SWT to visit those who they find busy worshipping Allah SWT. The angels offer greetings to each man and woman and pray for them. Jibreel also shakes hands with them. The angels keep away, however, from those whose lives are dominated by evil desires and unlawful things. The Prophet (SAW) said when Ramadan began: “This month has come to you, and it contains a night, which is better than a thousand months. He who is deprived of it is deprived of all good, but only those who are denied prosperity are deprived of it.” [Ibn Maja]

In another narration the Prophet saw says: “He who fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking his reward from Allah SWT will have his past sins forgiven; he who prays during the night in Ramadan with faith seeking his reward from Allah SWT will have his past sins forgiven, and he who passes Lailat-ul-qadr in prayer with faith and seeking his reward from Allah SWT will have his past sins forgiven.” [Bhukari, Muslim] Prophet’s wife, Aisha RA, once asked him: “If I find Lailat-ul-qadr, what du’a should I make?” He advised her to ask Allah SWT: “*O’ Allah You are Forgiving and You love to forgive; so forgive me.*” [Ahmed, Tirmidhi]

Despite its significance, however, the specification of *Lailat-ul-qadr* itself is disputed. The opinions vary widely. A great majority of scholars, nevertheless, hold the opinion that it is one of the odd nights during the last ten nights of Ramadan. This is further narrowed down by many within that group as being the night of the 27th. There are numerous narrations of the Prophet(SAW) reported in this connection. For instance, Aisha RA quotes what Allah’s Messenger said: “Search for Lailat-ul-qadr among the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan.” [Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmed, Tirmidhi], She has also reported that when the last ten nights began, Allah’s Messenger prepared himself for religious exercises, stayed awake, and wakened his family. [Bukhari, Muslim] What is undisputed here is the understanding that it is one of the last ten nights of Ramadan.

To some, it may seem puzzling that a night of such magnificence has been left unspecified which may diminish the very spirit to find it. Perhaps, it is just the reverse. Certainty increases the understanding of a likely event for an exact response. But certainty in every case is not

necessarily beneficial as life is full of risks that also keep us venturing to advance and live a normal life. Uncertainty, likewise, in every case is not detrimental as in some cases certainty has a paralyzing effect, while uncertainty provides the stimulus to move forward. For instance, the only certain reality in life is its own termination, and the most uncertain reality is the day it will get terminated. That uncertainty is the very dynamics of life that keep it going. It urges a rightly fearful person to be at his best each day, as any day could be his last day. This sense comes across so clearly when we are reminded:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O’ Believers! Fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die unless as Muslims.” [Q, 3: 102]

Obviously, no one knows when one is going to die, nor can it be prefixed. The lesson learned is: Live today as righteously as if there is no tomorrow. One day there will be no tomorrow.

Furthermore, Islam is a transformational process for continual improvement in moral excellence and compliance with Allah’s plans by realigning our conduct. Were Islam be a human invention, it would be in man’s nature to determine a certain date for his own convenience or peace of mind. The fact that *Lailat-ul-qadr* is undetermined adds to the quality of divine creation. Allah *SWT* is beyond the time constraints. Just as with the inherent uncertainty in the determination of moon sighting or death, for instance, *Lailat-ul-qadr* also has its own degree of uncertainty. The hidden secrets are the design signatures of the Supreme that conform to the pattern commonly transparent in the Divine Administration.

The Islamic Shari’ah provides certainty when necessary for our daily routines, and it keeps things hidden when beneficial to ratchet up our loyalty. Every scenario in life is a test of our concurrence with Allah’s decisions. Knowledge associated with certainty is a great gift of Allah *SWT* and deserves our thanks. Uncertainty by design shrouds divine wisdom and patience is advised to bear with the inconvenience entailed, rather than being creative. There is a long list of events all around nature that echoes how the invisible forces of Allah *SWT* work.

Our compliance with His rules will ensure our success even when we are unable to understand the wisdom concealed in His secrets.

Allah *SWT* and the Prophet (SAW) have not singled out any particular night for a reason so that the followers should not ration their devotional efforts to just one night and be satisfied. Instead, in their fervor to benefit from the virtues of *Lailat-ul-qadr*, they should remain engaged in searching for it over several nights of dedication to Allah *SWT*, as each has the potential of being the hunted night. It should be noted that, contrary to the reward and punishment system in this world, Islam is not result-oriented, but rather process-oriented. In Allah's Justice System, it is the effort with the right intention that counts, not necessarily the outcome. All Prophets of Allah *SWT* had accomplished their mission, yet the chain of successive Prophets continued because most of them were unable to see the results of their efforts. Only Allah *SWT* produces the results. The excitement or reward is not in finding that particular night of glory; it is in engaging in the process of searching for that glory. Allah's treasures are boundless. Even if a person misses it, Allah *SWT* will still reward him fully for striving. In spirit, if a person experiences a life-changing manifestation of the Qur'an in any of these nights, he has for sure captured the essence of the night he was shooting for.

Yet another point is worth noting. It is true that the deeds performed on this night receive inflated rewards. The Prophet (SAW) himself as described great virtues of devotion on this night. The Prophet (SAW) once narrated the story of a righteous person of Bani Isreal, who had fought for one thousand months in the path of Allah *SWT* and had never put down his weapons. Upon hearing this, many Muslims felt envious that they did not have long enough life to worship Allah *SWT* as much. The piece of the Qur'an [Q, 97: 3] was then revealed stating that for the followers of Islam one night is better than a thousand months. The Prophet (SAW) added: "The one who remained standing in worship in the state of belief and for the sake of rewards from Allah *SWT* *during Lailat-ul-qadr* would have all his previous sins forgiven." [Bukhari, Muslim]. However, this benefit is a derivative of something more consequential that occurred this night making it the Night of Power.

The Qur'anic verse says that *Lailat-ul-qadr* is better than a thousand months. The scale of time used here signifies the enormous reformative

power of the Qur'an revealed in this night. It ignites a moral revolution in the character of societies and their outlook about this life that redirects them to their Creator and elevates them to the most exalted rank exclusively created for them in Allah's Kingdom:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

“Verily We have exalted the children of Adam...” [Q, 17: 70]

This transformation had already occurred in the Arabian society right before the eyes of the leader of that movement, who himself was appointed concurrently as a Prophet the same night as he received the first piece of the Qur'an. Allah SWT calls him:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“Mercy for mankind” [Q, 21: 107],

And his wife Aisha RA describes him as a: ‘walking Qur'an.’ Thus, this night is crowned with the two greatest favors of the Most Generous: The guidance for humanity to reach its glorious rank, and the embodiment of that guidance to follow in that worthy quest. Within a span of two decades, the most deplorable nation on earth at the time had become the most progressive moral leader in the world.

In the Grand Scheme, in this single night, a task was performed for the benefit of mankind the like of which had not been accomplished even during an indefinitely long period of time. Hence, as believers engage in their supplications during this night, they are tasked to internalize the teachings of the Qur'an to improve their personal character which must resonate to launch a living impact on their surroundings – a mission whose statement was articulated in the Night of Glory:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ

“We have sent it down in a blessed night, because We intended to warn people.” [Q, 44: 3] .