

The Night of Power

Part of the significance of the Night of Power, has been previously mentioned. Let's to analyze this topic with commentary, (*tafseer*) on chapter 97 of Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qadir* (the Night of Power).

Al-Qadr

This chapter (*surah*) was revealed in Makkah, and its basic theme is honoring the revelation of this blessed book, the Holy Qur'an. The Night of Power or honor is a special gift only to the community (Ummah) of Islam. The night is one which even the angels in the heavens see as worthy of witnessing. The night is so rich with holiness, as the night when good deeds are returned, and is equal to a thousand months in the sight of Allah.

Occasion Of Revelation

In a report by Abi Hatim and Al-Wahidi, by way of Mujahid, the Messenger (saas) mentioned that there was a man among the Israelites who devoted his life to the cause of Allah for a thousand months. The companions were amazed and impressed, but were saddened because they knew there would be no way that they could reach this status of devotion. So Allah (SWT) revealed this surah to inform them that He had just blessed this Ummah with the Night of Honor, which is equal to a thousand months.

“We have indeed revealed it, (Al-Qur`an) in the Night of Power.”

(Al-Qur`an 97:1)

There are several points pertaining to the meaning of this verse:

The meaning and the use of the pronoun “We” is a style in Al-Qur`an that when the Creator (SWT) is mentioned as a pronoun, He is referred to by “We” or “I,” as is evidenced in this surah. Elsewhere He said,

“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent...’ ” (Al-Qur`an, 2:30).

There is no problem when Allah uses the pronoun “I” to refer to His Exalted Self, but when he uses “We” the explanation becomes warranted because it cannot be perceived to indicate plural. There is unanimity among the scholars that “We” indicates respect and exaltation for the Creator and Cherisher of all the worlds, whose greatness is incomprehensibly vast and beyond our imagination.

Or, it is referring to Allah (SWT) and the angels who carry out his words to one all, in every level of His dominion. It cannot mean plural, or more than One Allah, for that would necessitate dropping in ranks, the absoluteness, and the powers of each competing deity. If each is capable of being absolute, each would have been independent from the other and the idea that each deity can be independent from the other, is evidence that none is absolute. This is inconceivable of Allah (SWT) therefore, “We” cannot mean anything but respect and exaltation of the One and Only.

“...Have Indeed Revealed It In the Night of Power”

(Al-Qur`an 97:1)

There is again unanimity among the commentators that “it” refers to *Al-Qur'an*, meaning “We revealed” *Al-Qur'an* in the Night of Power. He (SWT) did not mention *Al-Qur'an* explicitly because to refer to *Al-Qur'an* by the pronoun implies a certain divine uniqueness of this book, as well as greatness and honor that may not be attained if the word *Al-Qur'an* was used instead. First, it ascribed the revelation of *Al-Qur'an* to Him-

self, and not to anyone else. Second, referring to *Al-Qur'an* by pronoun is an indication that the revelation of this book was not a secret that no one knew about. Its revelation was an event widely known to all during the time of Muhammad (saas) and after, guarding against anyone who may like to challenge it or claim any honor of teaching Muhammad (saas) *Al-Qur'an*. Third, the statement also meant to honor and memorialize the time period in which *Al-Qur'an* was revealed.

By revealing *Al-Qur'an* in the Night of Power, Allah (SWT) inaugurated or started its revelation for the beginning of the prophethood (*'Bi'ethah*), and the Prophet's mission of *Al-Islam* began in the month of Ramadan on that Night. *Al-Qur'an* was not revealed in one night; it was revealed over the course of 23 years. Ibn Abbas (raa) said: The whole Qur'an was revealed to the lower heavens from the protective slate (*Lawhul Mahfuz*) on the Night of Power, then from there to the earth in the course of 23 years.

The word power, *Al-Qadr*, has several implications and meaning, but we cover only those implications which are relevant to the issues here.

Qadr implies having power over something, as in the case of the Creator over the creation. Allah's (SWT) excellence is *Al-Qadr*, capable, omnipotent, almighty, all powerful. It also implies excellence and high esteem, and as for this Night of Power, it is highly esteemed and regarded. For this night is equal to over 80 years in the sight of Allah (SWT).

It also implies to maintain, appoint, assign or decree an order. Thus, in the Night of Power, Allah (SWT) proclaims to the angels His commands and orders in regards to the affairs of the universe. From this meaning is derived the concept of *Al-Qada Wa Qadar*, the fifth article of faith, that Allah has decreed or preordained or, in other words, has full knowledge of all that the human being will do with his free will. A man's decision to

act freely in good conscience or bad conscience is all known to Allah (SWT), past, present and future.

Qadr also implies measurement, that is all the events of the year will occur in accordance to the exact measurement of what is in the knowledge of Allah, Who states:

“Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure.”

(Al-Qur`an, 54:49)

Why the name, the Night of Power?

As mentioned above, it is the night of Taqdeer, meaning the one in which Allah (SWT) announces to the angels His already decreed commands, rules, events, etc., for the coming calendar year, from the present Night of Power to the next Night of Power. Allah (SWT) states:

“We sent it down during a blessed night; We forever wish to warn (against evil). In that (night) is made distinct every affair of wisdom.” (*Al-Qur`an, 44:3-4*)

It should be known that most scholars believe Allah's commands and rules are not made on that night. It has already been decreed in the eternity what is known to Allah, but that knowledge is not known to anyone, including the angels, until He announces it to the angels on that night so that they will record it on the protective slate.

This is also the night of honor and prestige which may be awarded to the servant who devotes himself to special deeds, or to the deeds themselves for the higher value they contain on that night.

The Night Is Concealed

Allah (SWT) in His mercy, has concealed the Night of Power from us for the following reasons: The problems pertaining to an exact night on which the honors are attained are not unique with this Night. It seems that Allah conceals many things. He conceals his pleasure from us in all our good deeds so that we will strive in all of them. He conceals His wrath from us in all of the sins we commit so that we will avoid them. He conceals His most beloved servants (*'awliya*) so that we will respect all the believers. He has concealed the time of His acceptance of our supplications so that we will strive in all our supplications. He concealed his greatest name, so that we mention all His names. He has concealed the time of death so that we will be conscious of Him and our deeds all the time.

He has concealed the exact date of the Night of Power so that we would double our the efforts in the whole month of Ramadan, or at least the last ten days. He has concealed it also to test the serious and the non-serious. The seriously interested person will search for the night late and in the early hours until he or she attains it, regardless of the hardship.

Where Is The Night?

The majority of the scholars who agreed that the night occurs in the month of Ramadan, disagreed on the exact night. Some said it comes on the first day of Ramadan. Others said it is on the seventh; while others say its on the 19th night. All these opinions are not built on sound proof. There is evidence that the night comes on the last ten days of Ramadan, specifically on the odd numbered nights. In a report by Bukhari, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Seek it on the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan.”

In a hadith by Ibn Umar (raa), some men among the companions saw the night in a dream occurring in the last seven nights. Responding to this, the Messenger of Allah (saas) told them,

“I see your dreams coincide on the last seven, whoever wants to seek it should do so in the last seven.” (Agreed upon)

In Muslim's report, the Prophet (saas) said,

“Seek the night in the last ten days, and if any of you is weak, or can't observe it, he should not miss the remaining seven days.”

In Hadith by Ubayy bin Ka'ab (raa), he said:

“By Allah, I know which night it is. It is the night the Messenger commanded us to observe, the night of the 27th.” (Ahmed/Tirmidhi)

Analyzing all these citations indicates still no one knows for sure which night is the Night of Power, at least in a given year. It seems that the night shifts and rotates to different nights from one year to another. It may occur on the 27th in one year, while the next year it will be on the 25th, while on the following year it will be occurring on the 29th, etc. There is an indication to this in hadith by Bukhari, when the Messenger of Allah (saas) states:

“Seek it on the twenty-ninth; it may be on the twenty-seventh, or on the twenty-fifth.”

Imam Ibn Hajr, in his book, *“Fathul Bari”*, in the commentary of the Book of Bukhari, said:

“I accept the ruling that the night occurs on the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan, namely the twenty-first, twenty-third, twenty-fifth, twenty-seventh and or twenty-ninth.”

Seeking The Night

It is recommended to seek the night and spend it diligently in devotion, including night Sunnah prayers (*Tahajjud*), recitation of *Al-Qur'an* and supplications. In a hadith related by Abu Hurairah (raa), the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“He who spends the night in prayer on the Night of Power, as a sign of His faith, and seeking rewards from Allah, his previous sins will be forgiven.” (Bukhari/Muslim)

This citation indicates that regardless of whether a person knows the night or not, Allah will grant him forgiveness for previous shortcomings.

“ And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is?; The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.”

(Al-Qur`an 97:2 3)

Allah (SWT) is emphasizing by putting the second verse in question form. The answer being no one knows, or comprehends, the awesomeness and the depth of honor of the night. As if to say whatever merits Allah informs you about the night is just nothing compared to the things you have no idea about. Nonetheless, He mentions three honors in the credit of the night:

1. **“The Night is better than a thousand months.”**
2. **“Therein, come down the angels...”**, and
3. **“Peace!”**

“The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.”
This indicates that acts of worship such as prayer, charity, and recitation done on this night are better in reward than the same act done on other nights. The rewards (*thawaab*) are being multiplied several-fold.

Imam Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah (saas) was shown the long life span of people of previous nations, so the Prophet bemoaned the shortness of the life span of the Ummah, fearing that they might not be able to save many good deeds for the Hereafter. Therefore, Allah gave him the Night of Power to compensate for their lack of longevity. Hence, the devoted believer has as chance of adding 80 something years of worship to his life on the Night of Power. You see, for instance, if you worship Allah on this night every year for 65 years, by multiplying 65 by 80, you would have lived for 5,200 years, or achieved the reward of a person who lived that long.

You can see why the devotions were highly encouraged by the Prophet. Indeed, you can achieve the honor of the Night of Power if you so wish by spending the odd nights of the last ten days in acts of worship.

**“Therein, come down the angels and the Spirit
by Allah's permission, on every errand.”**

(Al-Qur`an 97:4)

This is far from the earlier cry of the angels who, when Allah told them,

**“...I will create a vicegerent on earth,” they said,
“Will you place therein one who will make mis-
chief therein and shed blood?...”**

(Al-Qur`an, 2:30)

You see, when the angels first looked at our spirit with its traits of mischief, vanity and desires, and the rages of anger, they, the embodiment of all that is good, did not like us at all. That explains their response in the above verse. So is the case with parents, when they first conceptualize the shape of the offspring, semen and congealed blood; they do not like it. They will even wash their hands, clothes and everything that this substance touches, a gruesome thing. They may even think about aborting the baby in the beginning.

But after the baby is being fashioned in the most beautiful shape and they feel the movement of life, they change from dislike to caring love.

That is seemingly what happened to the angels. When they saw in us this beautiful spirit of knowing the Creator, and worshipping Allah alone, they changed from dislike to complete love, and cannot wait for another Night of Power to come down so they can pray for us. Allah states:

“...And they implore forgiveness for those who believe...”

(Al-Qur`an, 40:7)

He used the form (*tanazzal*) “They come”, to indicate that the angels descend on the Night of Power, group after group; some coming down to earth while others ascend into the heaven. This heavenly, angelic organized traffic of good will continues until the break of dawn.

As for the reasons why they come, there are several explanations including:

- (1) they descend to witness how we worship and obey Allah, and
- (2) to show their deep love for the believers. This is why they seek permission from Allah to come and meet us. This is a once-a-year opportunity they do not like to miss.
- (3) Allah promised the believers that in the hereafter, angels will approach on them with greetings:

“...And the angels shall enter into them from every gate (with the salutation): Peace be unto you for that you persevered in patience...”

(Al-Qur`an, 13:23-24)

Now, if you preoccupy yourself with worship of Allah, the angels will descend on you with salutations.

(4) Allah (SWT) singles out this night with honors on the earth so the angels can come down and increase their rewards, and as a means to encourage the human race to worship.

(5) Realization that the angels are around is encouragement for the servants to devote more time to good deeds as a man will work harder when a foreman is present.

“...And the Spirit...”

(Al-Qur`an 97:4)

There are several explanations for the meaning of the Spirit:

(1) The Spirit is comprised of groups of special angels who are seen only on the Night of Power;

(2) it is referring to *Al-Qur`an*, as Allah (SWT) stated: “And thus have We, by Our command sent inspiration (spirit) to thee...” (*Al-Qur`an* 42:52),

(3) This is a reference to Angel Jibreel, as this is a special honor to Jibreel who has been mentioned twice Surah 42 first with another angel, and separately as the spirit of Allah (SWT) as the Qur`an says:

**“Verily this is a revelation from the Lord of the
Worlds. With it came down the spirit of faith
and truth.”**

(Al-Qur`an, 26:192-193)

Thus the correct explanation of the spirit, *Ruuh*, is Jibreel in this verse to indicate the angels on one side and Jibreel on the other, while they were descending.

“...By Allah`s permission...”

This indicates the angels extend a request to come to meet the believers; and to underscore the fact that angels are infallible; that they do not make a move without explicit permission from their Lord. Allah (SWT) states: