

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

LAILUT-UL QADR - AN UNDERSTANDING FROM A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE

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WHAT IS LAILUT-UL-QADR?

'Lailut-ul-qadr' is mentioned in the 97th Surah of the Quran.

097:001-5

"Indeed, We revealed it **(Arabic: Anzalnahu)** in the Night of Decree **(Arabic: Laylatul-qadr)**. And what will make you comprehend what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees. Peace it is until the rising of dawn"

The Arabic word '**Qadr**' forms multifaceted meanings from its root (Qaf Dal Ra) and usage from the Quran. It can mean to determine, measure, destiny, decree, to have power or to have ability. Therefore, common renderings such as Night of Decree / Destiny / Power / Glory / Ordainment / Majesty / Destiny are all often used in the English translations.

the meaning is, *I measured the thing; computed, or determined, its quantity, measure, size, bulk, proportion, extent, amount, sum, limit or limits, or number:*] *قَدَّرَ الشَّيْءَ* signifies *he computed, or determined, or computed by conjecture, the quantity, measure, size, bulk, proportion, extent, amount, sum, or number, of the thing, (حَزْرَهُ) in order that he might know how much it was. (IKtt.)*

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

We note from the above verse no immediate mention as to **what** was revealed in the Night of Decree. However, the night is given much significance from the description within the verses and it remains clear that this was a very important, blessed night. It is described as being better than a thousand months (Arabic: *alfi shahr*). The Arabic expression "alf" here does not necessarily carry a literal rendering (thousand) but can mean a certain round number or a certain number which may be well known.

If an analysis of the Arabic word 'Anzalnahu' (revealed it 97:1) is conducted from within the whole Quranic text, one notes that this is a term that has often been used to denote scripture or revelation and therefore, **the subject here is invariably the Quran.**

This sentiment is further corroborated by another Surah which confirms the subject as the Quran and the initiation of revelation as part of continuous Divine guidance.

044.002-4

"By the Book that makes things clear (manifests the truth). We revealed it (Arabic: *Anzalnahu*) in a Blessed Night (Arabic: *laylati-mubarkatin*). Indeed we are ever warning. Therein is made distinct every affair of wisdom"

From another verse of the Quran, we also note that this blessed night occurred in the month of Ramadan.

002:185 (Part)

"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong)..."

The Quran was also not revealed all at once or within the particular month of Ramadan. Rather, the Quran was revealed piecemeal throughout the Prophet's ministry as is clear from the following verse and the context themes addressed by the Quran.

017:106

"And it is a Quran which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it, revealing in portions **(Arabic: wanazzalnahu tanzilan)**"

Therefore the following points can be deduced from an analysis of the verses quoted above:

(1) The Quran's revelation was initiated on a blessed night (laylati-mubarkatin) as part of on-going guidance to mankind in the month of Ramadan and then completed gradually throughout the Prophet's ministry.

(2) The blessed night (laylati-mubarkatin) is also known as 'lail-ul qadr' (Night of Decree). In this particular night the angels and the spirit descended with God's commands.

(3) There is no mention whether this is a night which is repeated every lunar year. From the context of the verses and in particular from verse 44:3, (We revealed it on a blessed night - anzalnahu fi laylati-mubarkatin), it can be argued that this is a reference to an event that occurred **once** on a special blessed night in the life of the Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh)

(4) There is no prescription in the Quran to seek this blessed night. The Quran claims to be explained in detail (fusillat 41:3), full of guidance (huda), the only source for Islamic practice and law, a criterion to ascertain right from wrong (furqan), a balance (meezan) and a judge for Muslims.

The last paragraph above should not be simply overlooked as it remains a duty on all Muslims that they examine their inherited beliefs and practices and assess them through the lens of the Quran which remains their primary source of guidance.

WHY DO WE FAST IN THE MONTH OF RAMADAN?

Fasting was not only prescribed to Muslims but was also prescribed to nations before the revelation to Prophet Muhammad. ^(pbuh) This was to enable them to be of the 'tattaqun'.

002:183

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint **(Arabic: Tattaqun)**"

The Arabic word 'Tattaqun' is derived from its root Waw-Qaf-Ya and means to preserve, to guard against evil, to show self restraint and to observe Divine commands in one's life. The root forms common Arabic words such as '**taqwa**'. The reason for fasting is made clear in this verse as to enable one to be of those that show self-restraint and guard against evil.

However, it was the initiation of revelation (Quran) on a blessed night (Night of Decree 97:1) in the month of Ramadan (2:185) which was the reason why fasting was prescribed in this particular

month. The Quran was revealed as a blessed guidance and a mercy from God to His creation in which He imparted truth, judgement and the balance (meezan). The Quran invites one to 'taqwa' and complete devotion to the Only One True God of the Universe. The Quran as a complete message is an open invitation to 'taqwa' and submission to His will. Here we invariably note the link with fasting and why fasting has been prescribed in this particular month so that we may also give thanks for His guidance.

002:185

"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear proofs for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So whoever witnesses this month amongst you, then he should fast in it and whoever is sick or on a journey then a prescribed number from other days. God desires ease for you, and He does not desire difficulty for you, and (He desires) **that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of God for His having guided you and that you may give thanks**"

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is undoubtedly the [Islamic secondary sources](#) that are replete with furnished details of the blessed night and when it is to be found. Many Muslim beliefs have emanated from these sources and have become cemented as part of Muslim doctrine and practice.

Despite no command anywhere in the Quran, many Muslims search for the night on the 27th of Ramadan and some on the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan. Depending on when fasting is initiated, an odd night for one fasting Muslim could be an even night for another. Yet, the Quran's instructions are simple. One is to fast in the month of Ramadhan (2:185) offering much devotion (2:187) throughout it. Spiritual and mental devotion to God and His words are an ongoing endeavour and should not only be restricted just to the month of Ramadhan but should be a practiced throughout the year. (17:78; 73:1-8)

There are simply no 'shortcuts' to salvation. An individual's endeavour should remain consistent and one which strives with patience.

047.031

"And We shall try you until We make evident those who strive among you and persevere in patience; and We shall test your affairs"

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 7, Page 2494

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