

Lailat-ul-Qadr and its significance

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 29 April 2022

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾ لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٣﴾ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٤﴾
تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَكِ وَالرُّوحِ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٥﴾ سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ﴿٦﴾

“¹Surely We revealed it on the Night of Majesty — ²And what will make you comprehend what the Night of Majesty is? ³The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months. ⁴The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair — ⁵Peace! it is till the rising of the morning.”
— ch. 97

This is chapter 97 of the Holy Quran about the Night of Majesty or Power, *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. This was the night, falling in the last ten days of Ramadan, when the Quran was revealed for the first time. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, before his appointment as Messenger of God, undertook rigorous devotions and worship in the cave of Hira outside Makkah every year for a number of years in the month of Ramadan. These devotions included fasting for long periods of time and even his forgetting to eat when he was not fasting. It was after such intense and extended spiritual exertions by him by means of prayer, pondering and fasting that, at the age of forty years, when he was in that cave of Hira, the Quran began to be revealed to him.

The Quran was revealed to *his heart* by the descent of angels and the Spirit (i.e., the angel Gabriel). As the Quran says:

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾
بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾

“And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The faithful Spirit has brought it, on your heart that you may be a warner, in plain Arabic language.” — 26:192–195.

This shows that the descending of the angels is always experienced in the heart, and the same applies to the coming of the angels in *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. In *Surah al-Qadr* “peace” is mentioned after the coming of the angels. There is a verse of the Quran which refers to believers as follows: “He it is Who sent down tranquillity (*sakīna*) into the hearts of the believers that they might add faith to their faith” (48:4). That tranquillity, sent by Allah, brings satisfaction to their hearts that they are on the right path, and thus their faith becomes all the more.

As the revelation of the Quran commenced in the month of Ramadan, hence Islam instituted fasting in this month as a commemoration and anniversary of the revelation of the Quran. So there is a connection between fasting and the revelation of the Word of God to the human heart. In case of the Holy Prophet, the connection is that the Quran actually began to be revealed to the world through him after his hard fasting. Verse 4 says: “The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair”. The Holy Prophet had been exerting himself mentally and spiritually in the cave of Hira to find solutions to the problems of humanity. Then Divine revelation came to him, which was going to inform him of the solution of *all problems*, “for every affair”. His anguished mind was set at peace and rest thereby during the night. Then the dawn came, and it was time to go out to people and teach them what God had taught the Holy Prophet.

For Muslims, the connection between fasting and revelation from God is that in the month of fasting we should strive to increase our knowledge and understanding of that revelation, the Quran, and then with our minds at peace, and our hearts satisfied from all doubts, we should take that knowledge to the world in broad daylight.

We often commemorate an event of the past, when something new had started, even though when it started no one knew of its future importance or what it would lead to. *Lailat-ul-Qadr* marks the appearance of the Quran, its birth, in the world, although no one knew at that time what the achievements of the Quran were going to be. Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. In Islam the birth of the Quran is commemorated in the month immediately preceding *Id-ul-Fitr*.

The coming of the angels on the night of every *Lailat-ul-Qadr* is a spiritual experience. People perceive and experience it according to how much they have **striven beforehand to purify themselves and open their hearts** to receive the angels. If you don't strive for it, you don't see it on its arrival. It does not happen that praying during just this night brings reward equal to, or more than, prayers of a thousand months. A thousand months is about 83 years literally, or close to the *physical* life span of man. If we exert ourselves throughout Ramadan, then by the time *Lailat-ul-Qadr* comes we may have developed enough strength to bring about some **permanent** change for the good within ourselves. We may have developed some realization of God in our souls which brings us **permanently** near to Him than before. Then that night of realization will be better for us than a whole physical life of 83 years. One single night in which spiritual life is born is better than an entire merely physical lifetime.

So to make *Lailat-ul-Qadr* better than a thousand months lies in our own hands. God provides the ladder but we have to climb it to reach the top. All periods of time, like a day or a night, are equal in the forgiveness we can get from God, prayers that are accepted, and favours we can receive from Him. What makes them less or more in their value is how earnestly we turn to God at that time and what is our own condition. Towards the end of Ramadan we should have developed a condition which makes us turn our hearts fervently and passionately towards God.

Lailat-ul-Qadr is better than a thousand months, but still it needs to come every year! How many *Lailat-ul-Qadrs* have passed in our lives already? Added up together, they would be better than a few thousand years! It comes every year because each time it can give us a step up from what we achieved before. There is no limit or end to the process of getting rid of our faults and of becoming better and better.

Apart from being a night in the last days of Ramadan, *Lailat-ul-Qadr* can also be considered as **the whole period of the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad**. It was a time of the deepest darkness, in which the Quran was revealed, borne by angels.

The angels also descended on the hearts of the Muslims in that period, purifying them and strengthening their faith. The true believers are spoken of as follows in the Quran:

“These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and strengthened them *with a Spirit from Himself...*” — 58:22

At the end of this period of the Holy Prophet’s work, there was a dawn in the world and spiritual peace in the hearts. The great spiritual and moral progress that Muslims made during this period — people giving up evil habits, bad practices and customs, in an instant in some cases — they could not have achieved **any aspect of it** even in a thousand months outside the blessed period of the Holy Prophet.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes: “God the Most High says in *Surah al-Qadr*, in fact He gives the glad tidings to the believers, that His Word and His Prophet were sent down from heaven in the *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. And every reformer and *Mujaddid* who comes from God descends during the *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. Do you know what *Lailat-ul-Qadr* is? It is the name of that dark age whose blackness is total and complete. That period, by its very nature, demands the descent of a heavenly light to dispel the darkness. It has been figuratively called *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, but it is not in fact a night. It is an age which resembles the night because of its darkness. ... in this *Lailat-ul-Qadr* descend the angels of God the Most High and the Holy Spirit from heaven, accompanying that reformer, by the permission of the Lord, not without purpose but in order to reach the responsive hearts and to open up the ways of peace. So they remain engaged in opening all the pathways and lifting all the veils until the darkness of indifference disappears and the dawn of guidance breaks.” (*Fath-i Islam*)

There is in the world today a time of deep darkness for Islam. To the ordinary eye the future prospects for Islam do not seem bright as there are two major evils prevailing and dominating: the outside forces who have a wrong picture of Islam before them and the internal forces who also have a similar wrong concept of Islam. It is also a period of darkness for our Movement, facing so many dangers, so much opposition and such serious threats of all kinds to its existence. But this night is not depressing. It

is magnificent because in this very period we possess the light and guidance that has been brought to us by angels in the form of the picture of Islam presented by this Movement. That guidance has brought peace (*salām-un*) to our hearts. Our task is to spread that light until the darkness is replaced by the outbreak of dawn.

Let us pray that Allah grants us success in receiving peace in our hearts and in taking that message of peace to others, *ameen*.

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لَنَا وَكُم فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعْنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-
